



Parental Guidance: Self-Harm

Discovering that your child has engaged in self-harm can be distressing and confusing. This leaflet offers guidance and support to help you navigate this challenging situation and provide the best possible care for your child.

Self-harm is often a way of coping with overwhelming emotions, stress, or trauma. It's important to remember that it's usually not a suicide attempt, but rather a way of seeking relief from emotional pain.

Advice and Guidance

Safety First:

- **Remove Access to Sharp Objects:** Immediately remove access to any sharp objects that could be used for self-harm, such as knives, scissors, razors, pencil sharpeners, etc.
- **Secure Medication:** Ensure all medications, both prescription and over-the-counter, are stored securely and out of reach of your child.

Support and Supervision:

- **Supervise and Prevent Isolation:** Supervise your child as much as possible and discourage them from isolating themselves. While respecting their need for some personal space, maintaining a supportive presence is important.

Seek Professional Help:

- **CAMHS Duty Line:** Contact the CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) Duty Line at 020 3228 5980. This service is available Monday to Friday from 5 pm to 10 pm and Saturday to Sunday from 9 am to 10 pm. They can provide advice, support, and guidance on next steps.

Emergency Care:

- **A&E at Queen Elizabeth Hospital:** If you have significant concerns about your child's immediate safety, if there is any escalation in their self-harm behaviors, if there is an immediate risk of harm, or if they require urgent medical attention, take them to the A&E department at Queen Elizabeth Hospital. The CAMHS Crisis Team is located there and can provide emergency support.



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Beyond Immediate Actions

- **Communicate Openly:** Maintain open and honest communication with your child. Encourage them to express their feelings and concerns.
- **Address Underlying Issues:** Explore potential triggers and underlying issues contributing to self-harm, such as depression, anxiety, trauma, or bullying.
- **Develop Coping Strategies:** Work with your child and a therapist to develop healthy coping strategies for managing difficult emotions.

Supporting Conversations

- **Stay Calm and Listen:** Try to remain calm and create a safe space for your child to express themselves without judgment or interruption.
- **Acknowledge Their Pain:** Validate their feelings by acknowledging their pain and distress. Avoid dismissing their experiences or offering simplistic solutions.
- **Express Your Concern:** Let your child know you're concerned and want to understand what they're going through. Reassure them that you're there to support them.
- **Avoid Blame and Guilt:** Refrain from blaming yourself or your child. Self-harm is often a complex issue with multiple contributing factors.
- **Focus on Support:** Emphasize your love and support. Let your child know they're not alone and that you'll work together to find help.

External support

There are a number of external organisations that can support both you and your child

- **Kooth** - A free, safe, and anonymous online mental health and wellbeing service available to all young people aged 10-25.
- **Young Minds** - The UK's leading mental health charity for children, young people and their parents, making sure all young people get the mental health support they need