



support | information | training | consultancy

### Support

Harmless provide short and long-term face to face therapy, Skype therapy, regular drop in sessions, and email or postal support for individuals who self harm, their friends, families and professionals. It is important that everyone gets the right support at the right time.

### Information

We produce a number of leaflets and resources about self harm, challenging stigma, and helping people move towards a better quality of life. All our resources, including a DVD, Workbook and Policy Guidance, are available from our online shop. ([www.harmless.org/store](http://www.harmless.org/store))

### Let's Talk Training

We provide a range of both bespoke and standardised accredited courses across the UK. Training is levelled and therefore suitable for anyone who supports or works with individuals who self harm. Courses are both research led, and evidence based with service user informed insight to enhance the learning experience. Our aim is to equip everyone with the confidence and skill to be able to respond and support someone in distress. Speak to the team today [training@harmless.org.uk](mailto:training@harmless.org.uk)

### Consultancy

We offer a consultancy service to advise and inform services about self harm to provide better awareness, understanding, policy and service delivery.



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**Self harm does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, age, religion, disability or sexual orientation.**

**Neither do we.**

### Contact us:

[www.harmless.org.uk](http://www.harmless.org.uk)

[info@harmless.org.uk](mailto:info@harmless.org.uk)

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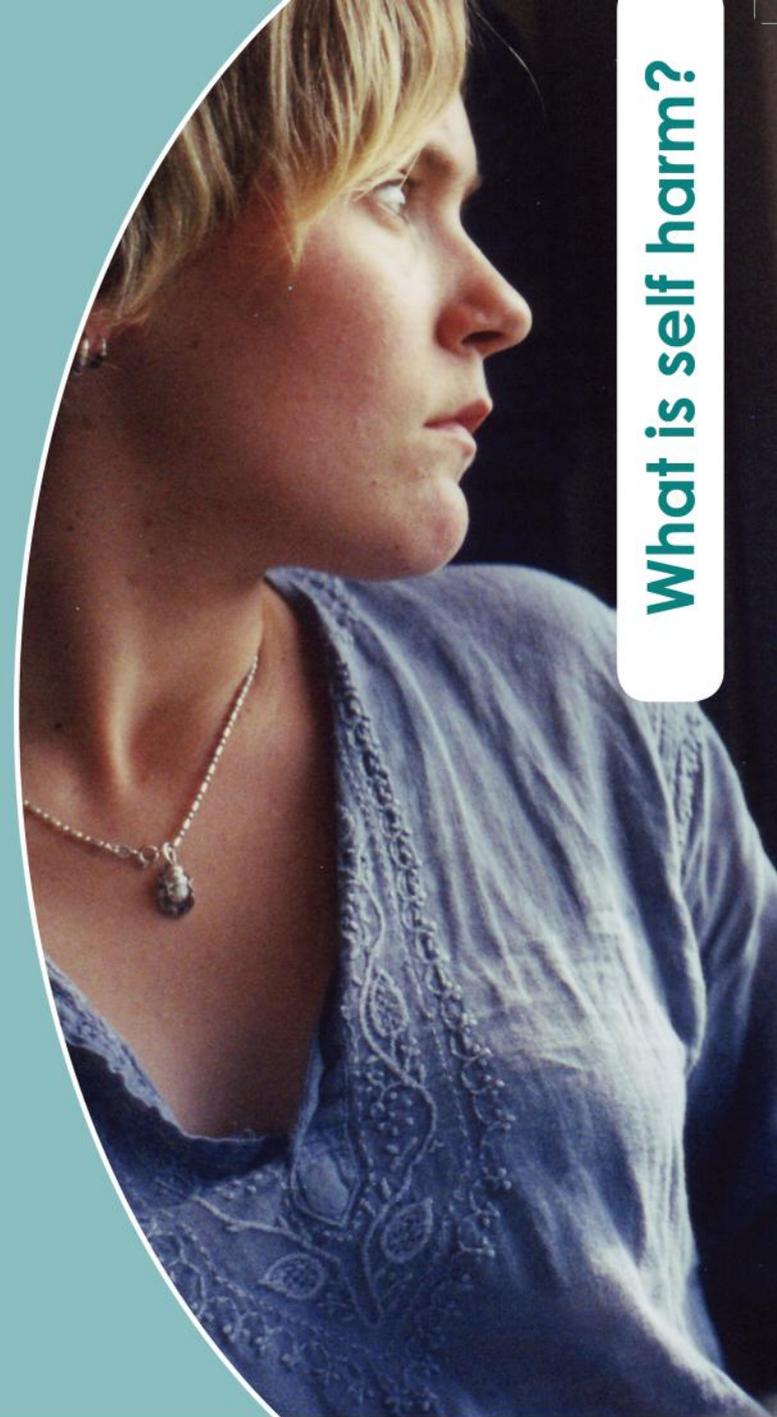
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**What is self harm?**



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## What is self harm?

Self harm is the term used to describe when someone deliberately hurts themselves as a way of dealing with their emotions. They may do this in a number of ways,

- Cutting or scratching
- Burning with a flame or something hot
- Causing bruising to the body
- Taking overdoses of tablets or medication
- Inserting objects into the body
- Hair pulling (also known as trichotillomania)

This is by no means an exhaustive list.

## Why do people self harm?

Self harm is a coping strategy that helps people to manage their emotional hurt or stress. It is important to remember that it is not attempted suicide, but it is something that people do in order to survive. Often people self harm to try and feel as if they have more control over their emotions, or to get immediate relief from high levels of distress. Sometimes people harm themselves because of self hate, or because they want to punish themselves.

## Who self harms?

There is no straight forward answer to this. The truth is - anyone is at risk from self harming at some point in his or her life depending on the experiences they have and the way they feel about these experiences. People self harm for a variety of reasons and in a variety of ways, and what can cause one person to harm themselves, may not create the same level of distress in another person.

Popular culture would have you believe that it is predominantly young girls that self harm; findings suggest that in fact for the age range of mid 30's men represent the majority of people attending Accident and Emergency for the treatment of self harm.

## What causes people to self harm?

There are many things that can cause distress in someone that can in turn lead them to harm themselves. Such issues that may trigger the onset or a period of self harm might be bullying, trauma, abuse, school or work pressures, bereavement and difficult relationships but no experience can be disregarded. There doesn't always need to be a triggering event in someone's life that makes them turn to self harm, sometimes individuals just experience a period of decreased self-esteem or increased distress that leads them to harm themselves.

## The language that we use...

It is advisable not to describe the person who self harms as a 'self harmer', as this defines the individual only in terms of their self harm, and leaves little room for other areas of their personality to be described or explored.

## Self harm...

- Self harm is not attention seeking or manipulative.
- Self harm is not a mental illness; it is a symptom of internal stress or distress.
- Self harm is not just a young person's problem.
- Self harm is not a suicide attempt, but about staying alive.
- Self harm is a symptom of emotional distress, it is not the problem, but would suggest that the person is struggling with something else.
- Self harm is not a problem that can't be solved. People can learn to manage their emotions in a different way.
- People self harm for the respite from their emotions that they gain from harming, not for the pain of the harm.
- People who self harm are not a danger to others.

The severity of self harm is not directly related to the level of distress that the individual is feeling. The fact that someone has harmed themselves is what is significant, not what they did or how severe their harm was.

## What can help?

You need to treat the reason you are self harming in order to stop. Mostly this is through a psychotherapist or counsellor. Although sometimes just talking to a friend or family member about your problems might be enough. You need to learn to recognise your feelings before, during and after you self harm. Then you can figure out what your 'triggers' are and start to deal with them. We have a coping strategies page on our website with ideas on how to avoid self harming that might be helpful.