

The best way to help someone you know that is self-harming is to encourage and support them to seek professional help.

How to respond to self-harm.

- **Remain calm**

If there are any immediate medical concerns deal with them in a calm and practical manner with minimal fuss. It may be unhelpful if the young person sees your distress.

- **Acknowledge** the self-harm without judgement. Remember there is an underlying feeling that the young person is having difficulty expressing.

- **Be available** and offer the opportunity for the young person to talk about how they are feeling, for example, "I can see you've harmed yourself. Would you like to talk about how you're feeling?".

- **Hold back** from telling someone not to harm themselves. This could form a barrier to effective communication.

If you or a friend is hurting themselves deliberately it is important that you take care of the injuries caused and if necessary, seek medical help.

Lifeline (13 11 14) or
Kids help line (1800 55 1800)
www.oyh.org.au

Supporting someone who self harms can be a stressful experience so getting support for you is also recommended.

Galileo House provides counselling and support for children and young people who have been subjected to sexual abuse. We provide counselling and support to family members and other support people. This service also provides counselling and support to children 0 - 12 years and their families for problem sexualised behaviour issues.

73 Federal St., North Hobart.

Open Monday to Friday 9 am to 5 pm.

Please phone (03) 6231 0044 for appointments.

Melaleuca House provides crisis counselling for all survivors as well as parents and carers. The crisis service also offers support with police statements, and coordinates medical and/or forensic examinations if required by victims of recent sexual assault.

24 hours 7 days a week (03) 6231 1817

Melaleuca House provides individual counselling and group programs for any survivors of sexual assault 18 years and older, also family members and support people.

The service is located at 95-97 Campbell St. Hobart and is open Monday to Friday 9 am to 5 pm. Please phone (03) 6231 1811 to make an appointment.

Website: www.sass.org.au



This project was assisted by the Glenorchy City Youth Task Force.

SASS is a free service funded through the Department of Health and Human Services and SAAP.

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Self Harm

Information for people who
self harm,
are thinking of self harming

or

family and friends of people who
may self harm.

What is self harm?

- Self-harming is a behaviour and not a mental illness.
- Self-harm is when someone deliberately hurts or mutilates their body without meaning to die (although death may still occur).

There are many different types of behaviours that can be considered self-harming. These include:

- cutting (with a razor blade, scissors, etc.)
- burning or branding
- hair-pulling or plucking
- bone-breaking
- self-poisoning
- head-banging

Why do people self-harm?

There are many reasons why people engage in self-harm. It is usually a symptom of underlying problems rather than an end in itself.

Self-harm can be viewed as a coping mechanism, providing relief from conditions such as:

- anxiety
- depression
- self-hatred
- grief
- tension
- distress

People who self-harm often claim that the sight of blood provides a sense of relief.

Most people feel disorientated after self harm experience.

Reactions may include headaches, nightmares, insomnia, depression, fear of certain people or places, denial, emotional numbness, guilt and shame. These are all common reactions and may take some time to subside. In the healing process, everyone must be allowed to progress at their own pace.

What causes self-harm?

People self-harm for different reasons and sometimes it can be difficult to put the reasons into words. Some people who self-harm may not know other ways of telling people about their emotional pain, and some may feel a sense of control over pain when they self-harm.

A history of sexual and emotional abuse is often associated with self-harm and links have been made with Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome.

Who engages in self-harming behaviour?

Self-harmers are mainly women. People who self-harm come from a diverse range of socio-economic backgrounds, religions, race, physical abilities and professions.

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What can you do if you self-harm?

Try to talk to someone about it. If you repeatedly self-harm it is best to get some counselling. One aim of counselling is to help you to feel better and find safer and more helpful ways of coping.

Sometimes, this can take time so it's best to continue counselling even if you think it's not helping the first couple of times. It may be difficult to accept counselling after self harming because you might be feeling guilty, angry, and/or ashamed.

If you are not finding counselling helpful it is important to let your counsellor know.

In trying to stop hurting yourself there are a number of things that you may try to distract yourself. Make sure that you are around people and remove sharp objects.

Some ideas for releasing energy or feelings include:

- **Do some exercise** – go for a run or walk to use up some excess energy.
- **Play video games** – this may be a good way to distract you and help until the anxiety passes.
- **Learn relaxation techniques** – activities like yoga or specific relaxation techniques are often helpful in reducing anxiety.
- **Talk to someone** – talk with supportive friends or call a helpline.
- **Gather information** – www.reachoutpro.com.au