



I want to stop hurting myself

It is a really brave step to think about letting go of self-harm. There are lots of things that you can do that will help you to do this. It is important to know that there is not a magic solution or a quick fix. Stopping might take time and effort but with determination and patience you can make the changes that you want to. This info sheet can help you take some steps but may also bring up feelings. Take breaks and find ways to look after yourself as you explore.

To stop self-harm it helps to understand why you do it.

There are always reasons why people hurt themselves. Your self-harm has probably helped you deal with difficult experiences and feelings and it may even have kept you alive. If you are still dealing with some of the things that make you hurt yourself you will need to find other ways of supporting yourself in life when you stop self-harming.

Finish the following sentences to give you an idea of why you self-harm

- The reason I hurt myself for the very first time was.....
- Before I hurt myself I feel.....
- After I hurt myself I feel.....
- The situations that I am most likely to hurt myself are.....
- Self-harm helps me to cope by.....
- What I like about my self-harm is.....
- Reasons I hurt myself include.....

Imagining the future without self-harm.

Letting go of something that has helped you cope can feel frightening. Like throwing away a crutch that helps you stand up, giving up self-harm may leave you feeling wobbly and vulnerable so it is important that you recognise what you may feel so that you can develop other ways to help steady yourself in life.

- When I think about giving up self-harm I feel.....
- Things that I might find hard without self-harm are.....
- Things I would miss about self-harm include.....

Identifying other ways of supporting yourself

Everyone in life needs their own ways of managing stress and difficult feelings. For some people it is exercise or watching soap operas or drawing and for others it is eating or self-harm. By deciding you want to stop self-harm you are also saying that you want to find other ways of supporting what feels difficult. One thing that will help you is if you have identified your alternatives before you get the trigger to hurt yourself again:

Five things I can do as an alternative to self-harm are:

• 1

• 2

• 3

• 4

• 5

You can get some ideas from our list of [distractions](#)

Different alternatives will work better for different feelings.

Sometimes you might hurt yourself because you feel angry and sometimes you might hurt yourself because you feel sad or scared. The same alternative won't necessarily work for all the different emotions and what helps one day may not help in the same way on another day.

Check out our [dealing with feelings](#) to give you ideas for different feelings.

Words of wisdom

Distracting yourself from self-harm and really understanding and moving on from it completely are both important steps in the process of stopping. Identifying distractions will give you space and help you to resist the urge to hurt yourself.

Doing the work of fully letting go of self-harm may be a long process that you take steps forward and then feel like you go backwards in. When people try to make changes it can often be a stop-start process and it's important to develop a kind inner voice that doesn't criticise you if you are not able to make the shift as fast as you hoped.

Remember that the work of letting go of something that has supported you will involve letting yourself feel things that may have felt too painful or overwhelming to feel before. It is important to know that you don't have to do this alone, there are lots of different ways of bringing support into your life.

See our [getting support](#) page for some ideas and also our [having counselling page](#). And remember the future comes one day at a time.