



Deer Park School

[wecare@deerparksecondary.org](mailto:wecare@deerparksecondary.org)



*“We care about every mind and everybody”*

# Coping with Self- Harm - A brief guide for Parents and Carers

**It is normal for parents/carers to experience strong emotions when finding out your child is self-harming so it is important you look after yourself as well as your child.**

**For guidance and support, you can contact:**

**Professional Help:**

GP or school nurse

Young Minds Parent Helpline: 0808 802 5544

CAMHs

Call 111 or go online at: [111.nhs.uk](https://111.nhs.uk)

**Websites:**

- <https://hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk/help/parents-carers>
- <https://www.thecalmzone.net>
- <https://www.lifesigns.org.uk>
- [www.harmless.org.uk](http://www.harmless.org.uk)
- [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)
- [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)
- <https://calmharm.co.uk>

# Coping with Self-Harm - A brief guide for Parents and Carers

## Is your child self-harming?

As a parent/carer, you might suspect your child is self-harming. If you are worried, watch out for these signs:

- Unexplained cuts, burns or bruises
- Keeping themselves covered, avoiding swimming or changing clothes around others
- Being withdrawn or isolated from friends and family
- Low mood, lack of interest in life or depression
- Blaming themselves for problems or expressing feelings of failure, uselessness, hopelessness or anger

## Other ways to help:

- Take talk of suicide very seriously
- Stay calm, let them know you want to understand, help and support
- If they don't want to talk, see if they will write a note, email or text you how they feel
- Don't let self-harm become the focus of your relationship with your child
- Try to deal with self-harm in a matter-of-fact manner
- Try to think of ways to handle strong feelings that don't involve risk behaviour. Make a mini-crisis plan.
- Let your child know of their strengths and abilities
- Explain that you want to help but may not know the best thing to do and try to come up with a solution together (e.g. visit the GP)
- Work out with your child how to make it more difficult for them to self-harm (e.g. by storing medication securely or removing sharp objects)
- Watch out for signs of bullying or abuse that may be triggering the self-harm

**\*For alternatives to Self-harm: See student self-harm information sheet**

## Managing injuries from self-harm:

**If you're concerned about a wound (if it is too deep to manage at home) or other serious injuries you should seek emergency medical help.**

### **Overdoses: Call 999 immediately**

- Get your child to an emergency department as soon as possible
- Try to find out what they have taken and tell emergency medical staff
- If your child won't tell you, look around for empty pill bottles or blister packs.

### **Cuts or Wounds:**

- Apply pressure to bleeding cuts using a bandage or towel. (a tea towel may be less likely to stick to the wound)
- Clean the wound under running tap water and apply a sterile adhesive dressing
- If the wound has become infected e.g. swelling, pus forming, spreading redness seek medical help

### **Burns:**

- Cool with cold water for 10 - 30 minutes, then cover with cling film
- Don't use ice or any creams or greasy substances such as butter

\*For info on handling wounds contact a doctor or [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) or ring 111

### **Scars:**

- Scars can also be covered by makeup
- Remind your child that scars will eventually fade.

There are many reasons why a young person is vulnerable to self-harm from **individual factors** such as anxiety, low self-esteem, bullying, race, sexuality etc to **family factors** - unreasonable expectations, excessive punishments, a family history of self-harm etc - to **social factors** - peer rejection, peer relationships, friends who self-harm, media and internet influences and more..

It is important to tackle self-harming behaviours as early as possible