

# Teenage Self Harm

Originally written 2012

Cummings, E. E., (1971) Six  
Nonlectures. Antheneum, New York

... remember one thing only: that it's you - nobody else - who determine your destiny and decide your fate. Nobody else can be alive for you nor can you be alive for anyone else.

The most common reasons given by pupils for deliberate self harm were 'to find relief from a terrible state of mind' or because they had 'wanted to die'. Contrary to popular belief few were 'trying to frighten someone' or simply 'get attention'.

The majority of those who self-harm cut themselves.

Girls are nearly four times more likely to self-harm than boys.

The most common reason given was 'to find relief from a terrible situation,' the least common reason was 'to get my own back.'

up to half of those who self-harm seek help from friends before acting.

This page of mine was first written back in the early 2000s. So much supportive information is now available on line you would be more informed, now, to go to MIND/Self Harm

However I would like you to read through this information...

## Websites

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

[www.siari.co.uk](http://www.siari.co.uk)

[www.self-injury-abuse-trauma-directory.info](http://www.self-injury-abuse-trauma-directory.info)

## Useful organisations

National Self-harm Network (NHSN)  
PO Box 7264, Nottingham NG1 6WJ  
email: [info@nshn.co.uk](mailto:info@nshn.co.uk) [www.nshn.co.uk](http://www.nshn.co.uk)

Supports survivors and people who self-harm

YoungMinds  
102-108 Clerkenwell Road, London  
EC1M 5SA

parents information service: 0800 018  
2138

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

For anyone concerned about a child's  
mental health

The Basement Project  
PO Box 5, Abergavenny, Wales NP7  
5XW  
tel. 01873 856 524

## What does it mean to self-harm?

Self-injury, such as cutting or burning yourself, is a way of expressing very deep distress. Often people don't know why they self-harm. It's a means of communicating what you can't put into words or even into thoughts, and has been described as expressing an inner scream. Afterwards, you may feel able to cope with life again, for a while.

We all have times when we behave self-destructively. We may not recognise it, because we are doing perfectly ordinary activities, such as smoking or overeating. People often overwork, for example, to try and lose themselves and avoid being alone with their thoughts and feelings.

## Why do some people self-harm?

Self-harming behaviour is a way of dealing with unbearable feelings. These feelings are released through the body, where they can be seen and dealt with. You may be overwhelmed by painful emotions, such as rage, sadness, emptiness, grief, self-

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Publications, groups and workshops for people who self-harm

British Red Cross  
9 Grosvenor Crescent, London SW1X 7EJ  
tel. 020 7235 5454, web:  
[www.redcross.org.uk](http://www.redcross.org.uk)

Free training in camouflaging scars

MindinfoLine  
tel. 0845 766 0163

Mind is the leading mental health organisation in England and Wales, providing a unique range of services. MindinfoLine is Mind's helpline and information service. Contact them for details of Local Mind Associations

NAPAC  
42 Curtain Road, London EC2A 3NH

helpline: 0800 085 3330,  
[www.napac.org.uk](http://www.napac.org.uk)

National information service for people abused in childhood.

Survivors UK  
16 Swan Court, 9 Tanner Street,  
London SE1 3LE

helpline: 0845 122 1201,  
[www.survivorsuk.org.uk](http://www.survivorsuk.org.uk)

For men who have experienced any form of sexual violence

Bristol Crisis Service for Women  
PO Box 654, Bristol BS99 1XH  
helpline: 0117 925 1119

Helpline for women, with a focus on self-harm

Threshold Women and Mental Health Helpline  
14 St George's Place, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 4GB  
helpline: 0845 3000 911, email:  
[thrwomen@gloablnet.co.uk](mailto:thrwomen@gloablnet.co.uk)

Information line for women with mental health problems

hatred, fear, or guilt. Injuring yourself may help you cope in a number of different ways. It may be a way of getting the pain out, distracting yourself from it, communicating how you are feeling, or of finding comfort from someone else. It may be a way of punishing yourself, or of attempting to get some control over your life.

Self-harming behaviour is common, but not well understood. Although statistics are misleading, because people are often unwilling to admit to injuring themselves, the numbers seem to be rising. It's a problem that affects more women than men (except in the prison population) and tends to involve more young people. A significant number of people who self-harm come from minority groups, who are discriminated against within society.

Young people

Young people often feel under great pressure from their family, school and peer group to conform or to excel. If there's no chance of living up to these expectations, even high achievers may express their anger through aggression and destructiveness. Others may express feelings of powerlessness and lack of self-worth in the same way.

Is self-harming behaviour attention-seeking?

Self-harm is often treated with mistrust or fear and described as attention-seeking and manipulative behaviour, because it can be hard to understand.

It's important to remember that a person who is self-harming

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Hearing Voices Network (HVN)  
c/o Sheffield Hearing Voices Network,  
Limbrick Day Service, Limbrick Road,  
Sheffield, S6 2PE  
[www.hearing-voices.org](http://www.hearing-voices.org)

Runs local self-help-groups

British Association for Counselling and  
Psychotherapy (BACP)  
BACP House, 35-37 Albert Street,  
Rugby CV21 2SG  
tel. 0870 443 5252, minicom: 0870 443  
5162  
email: [bacp@bacp.co.uk](mailto:bacp@bacp.co.uk)  
[www.bacp.co.uk](http://www.bacp.co.uk)

See web or send A5 SAE for details of  
practitioners in your area

may be using the only way they can to communicate their plight to other people, and to try and get the attention, care and comfort they need. However upsetting it may be for you, it doesn't necessarily mean the person's intention is to upset you.

### What makes people start to self-harm?

You may harm yourself once or twice, when dealing with a particularly difficult time or difficult feelings, and never do so again. But self-harming can sometimes become a regular way of coping with life on a monthly, weekly, or even a daily basis, in some circumstances. This is because it becomes a way of dealing with problems in the present, not just in the past. It may be triggered by something that reminds you of feelings from the past, such as an anniversary or a particular event, which sets off a hidden memory. Sometimes, it can start because something out of the ordinary happens to shake you up. It could also be that the circumstances of your ordinary life are so difficult that self-harm is the only way you can cope.

### What help can I get?

If your experiences have been so painful that you needed to deal with your emotions by hurting yourself, you may now seriously doubt whether you can deal with them in any other way. But people do move forward, to grieve over a lost childhood and work through the fear and confusion surrounding it. With the aid of plenty of support they learn that they can cope with the pain, anger and rage, which have to surface. The important thing is to find ways to start talking to someone you trust. It could be to a friend, a family member, a professional counsellor, a psychologist or a psychotherapist.

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What can I do to help myself?

Learn about yourself

Knowledge is power. Gather as much information as possible about your own behaviour. Keep notes of what is going on when you feel the need to harm yourself, so that you can identify, over a period of time, specific thoughts which come up. Its also useful to keep a daily diary recording events and feelings. Powerful emotions of happiness, anger or pain can be difficult to deal with. Its helpful to record how you cope with and channel these.

Treat yourself well

Stay within safe limits. If you are cutting yourself, use something clean, and preferably sterile, which hasnt been used by other people.