

# Lancashire Mind's weekly wellbeing newsletter



w/c 8th June 2020

## This week's theme is Support for Self-harm

COVID-19 is having a huge impact on the way most of us live our lives. Staying at home, not being able to go out and see friends or family, and not being able to do the things we usually do, can affect us in different ways. We might feel concerned or upset by the news, or by things we hear or read about online. It might make us feel isolated, lonely, angry, or depressed about the future. Some of us might have thoughts of hurting ourselves, as a way of controlling our emotions, or wanting a release from how we feel. Self-harm, or self-injury, describes a wide range of things people deliberately do to themselves that appear to cause some kind of physical hurt. If you are thinking about hurting yourself, it is important to know that **you are not alone**. You can still get the right support and help you need during the COVID-19 outbreak. This newsletter explains self-harm, including possible causes, tips for helping yourself, and guidance for friends and family.

### Children and Young People

#### *'What is self-harm?'*

Self-harm is when you hurt yourself as a way of dealing with very difficult feelings, painful memories or overwhelming situations and experiences. There are no fixed rules about why people self-harm. It really can be very different for everyone. For some people, self-harm is linked to specific experiences and is a way of dealing with something that's either happening at the moment or which happened in the past. For others, the reasons are less clear and can be harder to make sense of. Sometimes you might not know why you hurt yourself. If you don't understand the reasons for your self-harm, you are not alone and you can still get help. *Take a look at page 2 for more info and support on how to talk about self-harm.*

### Staff

#### *'Responding to Self-harm'*

The National Education Union surveyed 730 education staff working in early years, primary, secondary, sixth-form colleges and FE colleges and found, overall, that more than half (56%) of pupils' mental health issues are leading to self-harm. As a staff member, it is important to recognise that self-harm can be distressing for you. Be honest with yourself about your emotions – it is common to experience sadness, shock, anger, fear, disgust, frustration and helplessness. And because self-harm is self-inflicted, it can be more difficult to empathise with the person. Discuss your feelings with colleagues or managers, seek support and make sure that you prioritise your own health and wellbeing.

*More info on page 3.*

### Parents/Carers

#### *'How can I help my child?'*

It can be difficult to know what to do or how to react if you find out your child is self-harming. It can still be very hard for parents and carers to know about - or witness - self-harming behaviour in their children. As a parent, you might suspect that your child is self-harming. If you are worried, keep an eye open for the following signs on *page 4, and click on the links for support.*

Lancashire Mind are gathering opinions and experiences of parents/carer of children who self-harm in an [anonymous survey](#)

Follow us on social media - @lancsmind

Find more resources for Children and Young People, Adults and Parents on our website:

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



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# Talking about Self-Harm

We are in uncertain times. But no matter what's going on outside, your mental health shouldn't take a back seat. The impact of lock-down and the anxiety it causes may well make self-harm harder to control. If you are self-harming, talking to someone is a crucial step towards recovery. Here's some tips and info for opening up...

## Talking to friends and family

Talking to people who care about you can be really good for your mental health. But it might be scary, or you might not know where to start. Are you nervous about telling your friends and family what's going on? Don't know how to start the conversation? Before you talk to anybody, try to ensure you're ready to share. Doubts are normal, and it's OK to give yourself time if you aren't ready. **We're here to help you find a way.**

Click on the links below to find support on the following:

[Why should I tell someone?](#)

[How do I know who I can trust?](#)

[Getting ready to tell them](#)

[What should I say?](#)

[What if they tell someone?](#)

[What if they don't understand?](#)

[What if I don't have anyone to talk to?](#)



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Don't be afraid to tap into alternative support networks; social media is filled with friendly mental health communities. Keep creating, writing and finding ways to process your emotions.

Now, take a deep breath. **You can do this.** Remember you have nothing to be ashamed of. Self-harm is a coping mechanism in response to intense emotional distress.

It's OK if you aren't yet ready to talk. Give yourself a goal. Use apps such as [Calm Harm](#), [text The Mix](#) and contact the [NHS](#) if you have seriously injured yourself.

*If you are isolated with people you aren't close to during Coronavirus isolation, The Mix has a message, phone and online helpline, and discussion boards dedicated to self-harm. You can anonymously [ask for help, support or just for someone to listen.](#)*

## Helping Yourself Now

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### Understanding

Understanding your patterns of self-harm can help you to work out what gives you the urge to self-harm, and recognise when the urge is coming on. Remember, even when you are unable to resist the urge to self-harm, it is helpful to reflect afterwards on what happened. This will enable you to better understand the next time you have similar feelings.

### Distractions

The main way people help themselves when they want to self-harm is through distraction. Different distractions work for different people, and the same distraction won't necessarily work for you every time. For example, distracting yourself from anger feels very different to distracting yourself from fear, so it's important that you have a few [different strategies to choose from.](#)

### Delay

Another technique is to wait five minutes before you self-harm. This can feel difficult, so don't worry if you're not able to wait that long at first. If you can, slowly increase the time you wait and gradually build up the gaps between each time you self-harm. For some people, distracting or delaying feels a far too simplistic. In this case, information on [helping yourself long-term](#) might feel more useful.

A guide from the University of Oxford and the Charlie Waller Memorial Trust offers practical ways in which schools and school staff can support young people at risk from self-harm:

<https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/best-practice/self-harm-how-teachers-should-respond/>

## Why do people self-harm?

Any difficult experience can cause someone (children or adults) to self-harm. Common reasons can include:

- pressures at school or work
- bullying
- [money worries](#)
- [sexual, physical or emotional abuse](#)
- [bereavement](#)
- homophobia, biphobia and transphobia (see [LGBTIQ+ mental health](#))
- breakdown of a relationship
- loss of a job
- an illness or health problem
- low [self-esteem](#)
- an increase in [stress](#)
- difficult feelings, such as [depression](#), [anxiety](#), [anger](#) or numbness

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Self  
injury  
Support

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Some people self-harm particular areas of their body that are linked to an earlier trauma. For more information, see our information on [trauma](#).

Some people find that certain actions, such as drinking alcohol or taking drugs, increase the likelihood of self-harm, or that self-harm is more likely to happen at certain times (e.g. at night).

Sometimes people talk about self-harm as attention-seeking. If people make comments like this, it can leave people feeling judged and alone. In reality, a lot of people keep their self-harm private, and it can be painful to have your behaviour misunderstood in this way.

However, if children or adults do self-harm as a way of bringing attention to themselves, remember that **there is nothing wrong with wanting to be noticed and to have your distress acknowledged and taken seriously.** They also deserve a sympathetic response from those around you,.

## Five things to remember

1. Building a positive school culture that encourages resilience and promotes help-seeking is the most important thing schools can do in relation to enhancing mental wellbeing.
2. If you suspect self-harm, do not ignore the signs. Let the person know you have noticed a difference in their behaviour and be open about your concerns.
3. Create a supportive and non-judgemental atmosphere that will make it easier for pupils to seek help
4. Involve parents and carers wherever possible.
5. Support is always available.

# Supporting Your Child

As a parent, it's really hard to cope with a child/young person with self-harming behaviour. It's natural to feel angry, frightened or guilty. It may also be difficult to take it seriously or know what to do for the best. Try to keep calm and caring, even if you feel cross or frightened; this will help your child/young person know you can manage their distress and they can come to you for help and support.

## Signs of self-harm in children and teenagers

It can be hard to recognise the signs of self-harm in children and teenagers, but as a parent or carer it's important to trust your instincts if you're worried something's wrong. The NSPCC has a list of signs to look out for - [click here](#)

Whether someone tells you directly, or you suspect that someone is hurting themselves, it can be difficult to know what to say and how best to approach the situation. Mind also have support pages for family and friends who know someone who may be self-harming - [click here](#).

## What helps?

There are lots of things you can do to make a difference to someone you know who self-harms. Your attitude and how you relate to them is one of the key things that can help them feel supported. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Try to be non-judgemental.
- Let the person know that you are there for them.
- Relate to them as a whole person, not just their self-harm.
- Try to have empathy and understanding about what they are doing.
- Let them be in control of their decisions.
- Offer to help them find support (see [Useful contacts](#)).
- Remind them of their positive qualities and things they do well.
- Try to have honest communication, where you take responsibility for any fears you have.

## What doesn't help?

Sometimes, even with the best will in the world, attempts to support someone can backfire. Here are some potential pitfalls to watch out for:

- Trying to force change.
- Acting or communicating in a way that threatens to take control away from your loved one.
- Either ignoring their injuries or overly focusing on them.
- Labelling self-harm as 'attention seeking'.

Although it often isn't, self-harm can sometimes be a person's way of asking for attention. If so, it is important to remember that there is nothing wrong with wanting attention, and that deep distress can get in the way of someone's ability to be direct about what they need.

## Breaking Down The Myths

There are lots of myths attached to self-harm. This isn't surprising – myths and misunderstandings often arise when a problem like self-harm is poorly understood. Negative stereotypes can be powerful. They need to be challenged because they stop people talking about their issues and asking for help. These myths also mean that professionals, family and friends can misunderstand people who self-harm. Read about some of myths at the [Mental Health Foundation's website](#)

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Self injury Support



[Click here for some ideas on how to support yourself.](#)

Lancashire Mind are gathering opinions and experiences of parents/carers of children who self-harm in an [anonymous survey](#). Get in touch if you would like more info.

## Links to helpful information & resources

### General Government Guidance and Updates

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-the-public-on-the-mental-health-and-wellbeing-aspects-of-coronavirus-covid-19>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing>

### NHS Guidance

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/caring-for-children-and-young-people/children-and-young-peoples-services/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>

### Lancashire Mind Resources

<https://www.lancashiremind.org.uk/pages/148-coronavirus-and-your-mental-health>

### Mind.org Resources

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/#collapse77625>

### Other Mental Health Resources

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/for-children-and-young-people/>

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak>

<https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/blog/health-and-other-forms-of-anxiety-and-coronavirus/>

<https://www.healthyyoungminds.org.uk/information/children-and-young-people>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/looking-after-yourself/coronavirus-and-mental-health/>

### Other Coronavirus Resources for Parents and Carers of Young People

<https://nursedottybooks.com/dave-the-dog-is-worried-about-coronavirus-2/>

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3210-tips-for-families-coronavirus>

<https://www.abc.net.au/life/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-coronavirus-covid-19/12084666>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/what-to-do-if-you-re-anxious-about-coronavirus/>

<https://www.studentminds.org.uk/coronavirus.html>

### Crisis Help and Helplines

If the person is in a crisis and in need of medical attention, you should call 999 and ask for an ambulance to take them to A&E.

If the person is presenting as a danger to themselves or members of the public you should contact the Police on 999.

Samaritans on free phone 116 123 (open 24 hours a day every day of the year)

<i>Local area</i>	<i>9am-5pm</i>	<i>5pm-9am</i>
Blackburn	01254 226430	01254 226074
Blackpool	01253 951225	01253 956280
Chorley & South Ribble	01772 676173	01772 773525
Hyndburn, Rossendale & Ribbles Valley	01254 226006	01254 612640
Lancaster & Morecambe	01524 550550	01524 550198 or 01524 550199
Pendle & Burnley	01282 628455	01282 657222
Preston 01772 647024	01772 773433	
South Cumbria	0300 024 7247	0300 024 7247
West Lancashire	01695 684161	01695 684356