

## Self Harm Information

Self harm is something that is misunderstood by a lot of people, most seem to think its just moody teenagers hiding in their rooms cutting their arms with scissors to get attention, but although that does happen, self harm and self harmer's can take many different forms.

An important thing to remember is that if you think somebody is doing it 'just' to get attention, then always think about why. Self harming can be a cry for help and when somebody cries out for help its important to listen to them! Nobody gets up feeling great, without any problems and suddenly decides to cut themselves or do other forms of self harm.

People have complained about the increase in self harm after TV programs like Hollyoaks have featured stories on self harm. I don't see much of a problem with it, as I have said its not the sort of thing people do for the sake of it and maybe the people watching were in need of a way of expressing feelings they can't cope with and in some cases it will have helped them.

For some the first reaction when a lot of people hear a friend or family member self harms is to hide anything sharp, but if somebody is determined to do it, then they will do it and it can be safer for somebody to use a sharp knife, than for them to have to find something more creative and less safe.

Another very important thing is that they are SELF harmers, most will NEVER do anything to hurt anybody else, it is also NOT a form of suicidal behavior. Self harming can actually be a way of preventing suicide attempts, because it can help to release emotional pressure and stress.

For many self harming is just a defence mechanism that they feel they need to do. They feel the need to punish themselves, express anger or maybe even just test if they can still feel, there are too many reasons why people self harm to list here. If you are going to do it, then please at least try to do it as safely as possible. There is help available for you if you self harm and want to stop and also for the family and friends of those who self harm and want to understand why we do the things we do.

Which of these could be classed as a form of self harm?

Cutting yourself	Drinking	Smoking	Punching walls
Having tattoos	Working too hard	Drugs	Getting into fights
Having piercings	Eating too much	Eating too little	Sleeping around
Driving too fast	High risk jobs	Letting yourself go	Extreme sports

To some extent they are ALL forms of self harm or self destructive behavior. That does not mean that if you do any of those things you have a mental health problem, I am just trying to help you understand that the chances are that whoever is reading this, no matter who you are, has probably done a form of self harm at some time in their life! Many people do the things on that list to rebel or just take some control over their lives. During our lives we are always being told you can't do that, don't do this and sometimes it makes you want to do something you shouldn't do. Self harmers can feel they have no control over their lives, so its a way of regaining control over it.

If you notice strange cuts on somebody you know, please think before you judge them. When I was taken into hospital with kidney problems I was treated with total respect and everybody was taking great care of me, that was until they helped me change into a hospital gown and spotted many cuts on my leg. Once they knew I self harmed they changed completely, acting almost uncaring and they kept asking me what I had done to cause the kidney problems, but I had not done anything and the self harm was totally unrelated.

I hope this helps to give you a basic understanding of what self harm is and why people do it.

This is based on my experiences and others that I have worked with, self harm may mean very different things to others, there is probably still a lot I don't know as we all never stop learning in life.

I am not actually pro self harm, but I do understand why some people do it.

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