

A Parent's Guide to Supporting a Child Struggling with Self-Harm

UNDERSTANDING SELF-HARM

Definition: Self-harm, or self-injury, is a way some individuals cope with emotional pain, stress, or difficult feelings. It involves intentionally hurting oneself through actions like cutting, burning, biting, hitting, or picking.

Not a Solution: While self-harm might provide temporary relief, it's essential to recognize that it is not a healthy or effective long-term solution to problems.



WHAT YOU CAN DO?

- **Talk To Someone:** Encourage your child to open up about their feelings to a trusted friend, family member, teacher, or counselor. Sharing emotions can be a crucial first step.
- **Professional Help:** Seek help from mental health professionals such as therapists, psychologists, or counselors. They are trained to provide support and guidance and will help your child identify the situations, thoughts or feelings that may trigger self-harming behaviors.
- **Develop Coping Skills & Strategies:** Assist your child in exploring and developing alternative coping strategies for managing stress, anxiety, and emotional pain. This could include mindfulness, journaling, art, exercise, or other positive activities. Modeling these behaviors may have a positive impact as well.
- **Create a Safety Plan:** Work with your child to create a safety plan that includes emergency contacts, coping strategies, and steps to take when they feel the urge to self-harm. Having a plan in place can provide a sense of control.
- **Be Understanding:** Be supportive, validate your child's experience, and recognize that they are in pain. Punishment and disappointment will not serve as a solution.

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