

Self-Harm Calm

Ideas, skills and strategies to manage/reduce/stop self-harm

This booklet offers some ideas that you may find useful as alternatives, reduction skills, distractions or ways to manage your self-harm. Some of these ideas may not work for you, that is okay. You may find other ways that work better or you might adapt or change some of these ideas to make them more individual to you.

You may know what you use self-harm for. For example, if you feel zoned out or numb and use it as a way to feel something. Or, you may use it as a way of venting anger. These are reasons you might already know. This self-calm booklet is written in a way that offers ideas for the different reasons self-harm might be used, so you can think about the techniques or skills that might work best for you.

If you self-harm because you feel disconnected or numb, you could try the following:

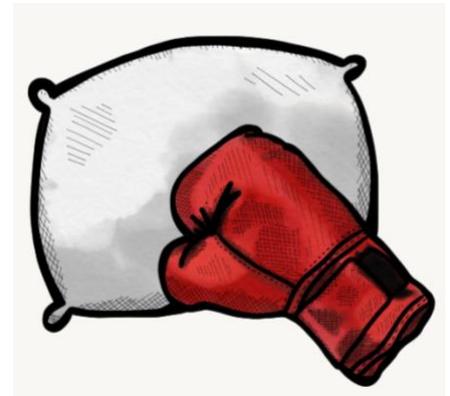
-  Call someone you might be able to talk to (you don't have to talk about the self-harm). Connecting with someone who will listen might help as a distraction.
-  Take a cold shower
-  Chew something with an extremely strong taste. This could be something like an extra strong mint, fisherman's friend, chilli, or something that is sour such as a sour Haribo, lemon or grapefruit.
-  Go online to a self-help website, forum or message board where you might see others are feeling similar to you.
-  Seek support from a helpline, email support or text support (see list at the end of this booklet)

If you self-harm to release anger or tension you could try the following:

-  Squeeze a stress ball. You can create this out of a balloon and playdough or buy one. Or, you could use clay, playdough on its own, or plasticine.



-  Punch a cushion or mattress or scream into a cushion
-  Write out your feelings onto paper and then rip it up vigorously. Or, you may just wish to rip up paper or a magazine. You could also try scrunching up bubble wrap or stamping on bubble wrap.
-  Make a noise. Play an instrument if you have one or use a pot or pan to bash and make noise with.
-  Exercise. Run, dance, jump or skip with a skipping rope



If you self-harm to express pain or intense emotions you could try:



-  Painting, drawing or scribbling on some paper. Remember this is about a process - just putting out feelings - it is not about the product, so you don't have to worry about what it looks like at the end.
-  Start a journal in which you express your feelings. Keeping a daily log of your emotions or thoughts can help put them out of your head and log patterns you might notice such as triggers etc.

- 🛁 Listen to music. You are the expert and you know what music will work for you according to your emotion.
- 🛁 Take a bath or a hot shower.
- 🛁 If you have a pet spend some time with them or spend some time in nature
- 🛁 Write a poem or song about how you are feeling in the moment.
- 🛁 Wrap yourself in a weighted blanket - a blanket that has a bit of heaviness to it- so you feel wrapped up.
- 🛁 Massage your hand or arm, hands or feet.
- 🛁 Write out your thoughts or feelings and rip up any you don't want to have.
- 🛁 Accept this current feeling will pass. Notice it, like a balloon, floating by. The feeling will move and you can watch it pass. Try not to judge it.



Things to do before you self-harm

Remind yourself:

- 🛁 I've been through painful situations before, and I survived.
- 🛁 I am strong enough to get through this.
- 🛁 This is a horrible feeling, but it will go away.
- 🛁 Write down things you like about yourself and why you want to stop self-harming so you can review it at times you're feeling low.
- 🛁 The 15-minute rule – If you're feeling the urge to self-harm, give yourself 15 minutes before you do. Distract yourself by going for a run or writing down your feelings. When the time's up, see if you can extend it by another 15 minutes. Try to keep going until the urge subsides. You might try and listen to a song and see if you can hold back the urge until the end of the song. Then see if you can listen to another.
- 🛁 Visualisation - try to picture the urge as an emotional wave you can surf. Imagine it reaching a crescendo then breaking as you successfully resist its force.



Stop Self-Harm Behaviours by Changing the Environment

What role does the environment have on self-injury behaviour? Think about keeping a log or journal of times that you have felt overwhelmed, is there any pattern? Notice what contributes to you feeling like you need to self-harm.

For example:

- 🛁 Do you self-harm at a specific time of day?

-  Do you self-harm in a specific place?
-  Do you use certain tools to self-harm?
-  Do you have a ritual around your self-harm?

Knowing the answers to these questions can help you change those aspects of your environment that contribute to your self-harm behaviours. (Causes of Self-Injury)

Changing the environment can be done once the urge to self-harm strikes, but it is easier to do before the urge comes.

For example, to help stop self-harm, you can:

-  Keep yourself busy at the times of day you are likely to self-harm. Don't be alone during these times.
-  Stay away from any place where you typically self-injure.
-  Put distraction items in the place where you go to get your self-harm tools, to help you to pause before you begin to self-harm.
-  Add a self-care kit next to, or in, the same place you have your self-harm tools.
-  Stop yourself from committing self-harm rituals by adding or removing steps from them. Altering your rituals will likely make you uncomfortable and this discomfort can help stop self-harm.

Ideas for self-care kits (this kit could be used as an aftercare kit or before self-harm)

Within your self-care kit you could add the following;

-  An essential oil or smell of some kind that you love the smell of. This should be something that makes you feel calm.
-  A photograph of a time/moment/person/animal that makes you feel happy or relaxed. This could be a real photograph you have taken or images from a magazine that you create into a collage.
-  TCP or cleaning disinfectant to keep wounds clean. Also, for when wounds are healing you might add argon oils or bio-oil or moisturisers that might help with the healing of scars. Some small first aid kit within your self-care kit to keep areas clean, implements clean or wounds clean.
-  A playlist, cd or Spotify music list that you know helps to calm or relax you.



-  The phone number of a close friend or person you feel is someone you could talk to if you need support.

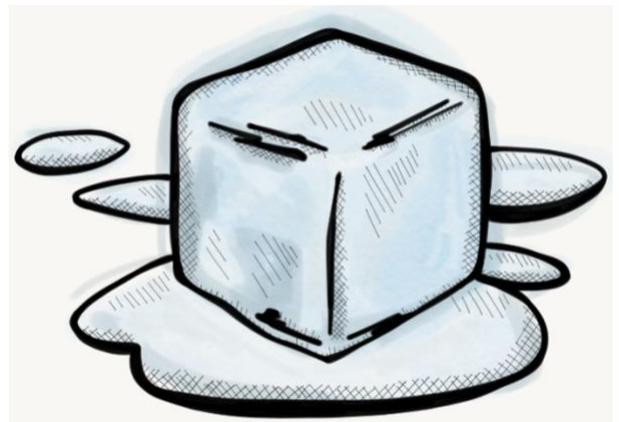
- 🏠 Something soothing to touch. This might be a piece of fabric or a collected pebble or crystal or object that you have had for a long time that means something to you.
- 🏠 Colouring pages. You could photocopy the page in this booklet so you have lots of them to colour in or have a sketchbook or journal in the kit that you can draw or write into yourself.
- 🏠 Something that is repetitive can help with soothing, such as mandala colouring pages. These are detailed drawings that you have to concentrate hard to complete. Alternatively, knitting, kneading playdough or writing something over and over can help with soothing.

Distraction Coping strategies

1. Drawing on yourself in red marker in the place you would want to self-harm.



2. Snapping an elastic band on your wrist.
3. Putting a plaster/bandage where you would want to self-harm.
4. Use ice. Put ice on your wrist or side of neck when you have the urge to self-harm.
5. Using playdough or plasticine to use as a soothing, squidging activity when you want to self-harm.
6. Have a hot shower.
7. Draw over old scars, which may provide a repetitive action and hopefully will relieve urges.
8. Using henna to draw patterns onto skin which will be semi-permanent.
9. Mapping out a body shape. Draw where you would want to self-harm on that. Self-harm a paper version of your body.



Reinforcing

1. Thinking about scars.
2. Thinking about not wanting to need to have treatment for wounds.
3. Set yourself target e.g. 10 minutes and promise yourself not to harm in this time. Once you get to the 10-minute point, set a new target of 15 minutes and continue.
4. Use a glowstick. When you feel the urge to harm, snap the glowstick to start it glowing. Tell yourself that you can't harm until it stops glowing. The glow will last for a few hours by which time your urges will hopefully have passed.
5. Write down your thoughts or feelings and rip up the piece of paper.



Relaxation techniques

There are many different relaxation techniques you could try. These are just a few ideas. These might help you to pause before you self-harm or reduce how much you do it. Or, they may even replace or stop the self-harm. It is important you find what works for you. Again, some of these might not work, you can experiment with what works for you.

Breathing skills

Sometimes drawing attention to breathing can be overwhelming, so if you do not feel comfortable with bringing attention to your body or breathing this might not work.

When we are stressed, or overwhelmed, our body can go into flight, fight, freeze or flop responses. These can cause our breathing to become shallow and can make us feel dizzy. Try out the following breathing techniques:

Breathe in slowly counting to 5 as you breathe in, and then breathe slowly out for the count of 7. 

Breathe in through your nose slowly, hold  for five and then let your breath out with a sigh.

Imagine your breath is air that is filling up a balloon in your stomach. Imagine your tummy is filling up with air so your stomach goes outwards as you breath in, then feel your tummy slowly release as you breath out.

Imagine your breath is a colour, imagine that colour is filling up your body with a positive energy and you can feel the colour. Now imagine your outward breathe is a different colour and you are letting out any negative feeling and breathe through this colour.

Imagery

You can use your imagination and thoughts as a way to relax. You can focus your thinking to a specific moment or time when you felt calm or relaxed or felt amazing. It must be specific, so for example if you feel good when you are with your cat, think of a specific moment like when you first got the cat when it was a tiny kitten and imagine that specific moment. It might be a place, for example a beach, try to think of touch, taste, sight, sound and smell and the emotion you feel or sensation you feel when you think of that specific moment on that particular beach.

Example: I am thinking of a precise moment at the beach. I was with my best friend, sitting on a little blanket, eating crisps on the beach. I can remember the feel of the breeze on my face, the taste of the salty crisps, and my friend and I laughing and the sound of her laugh and the sound of the sea and a feeling of calmness and contentment. When I think of this right now, I feel calm in my tummy because my friend distracted me in that moment, and I felt very present and was having fun.

Progressive muscle relaxation skills

When we become stressed and overwhelmed our body goes into fight, flight, freeze or flop responses automatically. This causes our muscles to become tense or sometimes the opposite, completely over-relaxed. Either way, it can be scary and feel like we don't have control. Bringing attention back to the muscles can help and feel like you have more control.

Find somewhere you can be quiet without disturbance

This skill is to bring attention and tension purposely to each muscle and then release it

-  Scrunch up your toes by curling them up into your foot. Hold that tension for 5 seconds.
-  Let your toes uncurl and relax now notice any difference in your foot after you have released the tension.
-  Hold tension in your calf muscle by pushing your toes to the floor. Hold the tension, then slowly slowly release it over 15 seconds counting backwards.
-  As you have let the tension go slowly notice how your calf feels now.
-  You can try these kinds of exercises throughout your body, noticing holding a tension and then releasing it slowly or quickly.

Further support

Samaritans – call 116 123 (open 24 hours a day), email jo@samaritans.org, or visit your local Samaritans branch

Mind – call 0300 123 3393 or text 86463 (9am to 6pm on weekdays)

Harmless – email info@harmless.org.uk

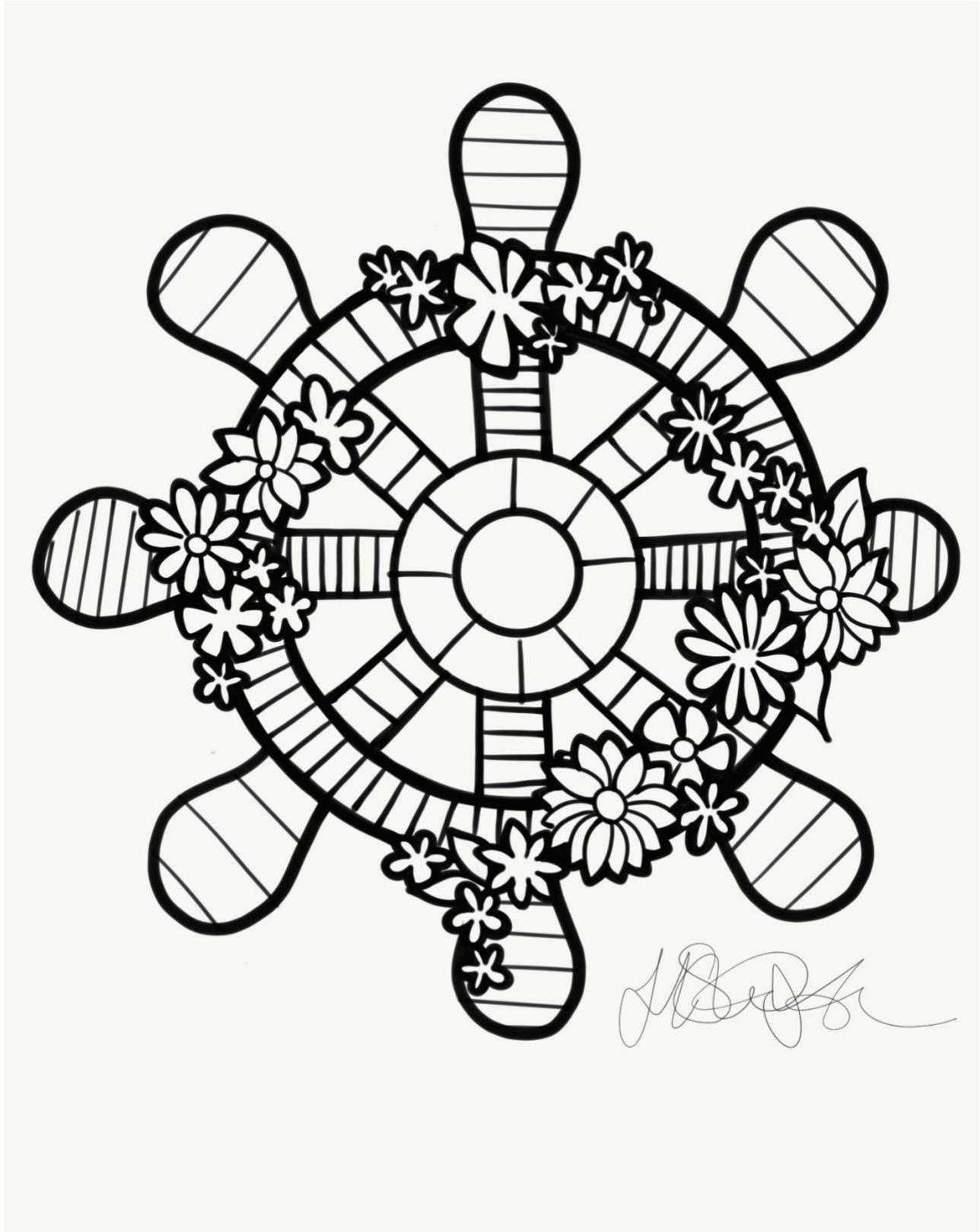
National Self Harm Network forums

YoungMinds Parents Helpline – call 0808 802 5544 (9.30am to 4pm on weekdays)

C.A.L.L Helpline: 0800 132737 or text help to 81066

Colouring pages for you to try as distraction:







If you would like to see more of these artworks go to www.happyart.uk

New Pathways

Offers counselling and support for men, women and children survivors of rape and sexual abuse, we also offer SARC services and ISVA support, group therapy, courses, workshops and training.



Merthyr: 01685 379310

Cardiff: 02920 220390

Newport: 01633250205

Swansea: 01792 966660

Carmarthen: 01267 235464

Aberystwyth: 01970 610124

Risca: 01495 233971

Newtown: 01267 226166