

Coping Mechanisms

Sometimes for people who tend to self-harm, talking things through and keeping a diary might not always be effective, and they might need something physical to help them. If that is the case, try suggesting the following:

- Playing with fidget toys
- Mindful colouring books
- Blowing bubbles
- Tearing up pieces of paper
- Eating sour sweets
- Using a stress ball
- Playing with play dough
- Running hands under cold water
- Throwing something – safely, and unbreakable
- Use a pen to draw on themselves, rather than hurting themselves
- Doodle
- Say the alphabet backwards
- Eat an ice cube
- Get fresh air:
 - Go for a walk
 - Go for a jog
 - Meet up with friends
 - Take up a sport
- Take up a hobby
- Punch or squeeze a pillow/blanket/duvet
- Listen to music
- Tidy up – this is great for keeping busy
- Cry – let emotions out that way

Self-Harming Coping Mechanisms



The Lotus Mental Health

www.thelotusmentalhealth.org

What is Self-Harming?

Self-harming refers to a person who deliberately injures or hurts themselves as a way of coping with painful, intense, distressing, or overwhelming emotions. It can be used as a way of gaining a level of control over how they are feeling, or as a form of release from the emotional pain they are feeling. To some people who self-harm, they are doing so in order to heal themselves from the emotional pain they are feeling, by turning it into something physical that they can treat, or that will heal – wrongly believing that it will heal their emotional pain too.

One of the many ways in which self-harming is dangerous, is because it has an addictive nature. When the body heals natural endorphins are released that can make the self-harmer feel good – albeit briefly.

What can you do?

Seeing someone self-harming is extremely distressing and upsetting, because of the dangerous and damaging nature of self-harming, it is important for coping mechanisms to be put in place.

It is important for you to find what works for you, your child, and your family, so here are a few examples to get you started...

Coping Mechanisms

If your child(ren) are feeling anxious, there are things that you can encourage your child to do that can help them. They are:

- Nobody should go through difficult times alone, and this is something that your child needs to learn to understand, because of this, it is important for your child to learn how to open up to people about how they are feeling. A parent, carer, brother, sister, grandparent, auntie, uncle, cousin, a trusted friend, a counsellor – it doesn't matter who, as long as your child feels comfortable talking to someone who they trust, about how they are feeling.
- Encourage your child to get the thoughts that are in their head – out. An effective way that they can do this by keeping a diary. Simply writing down how they are feeling can be really useful. Not only will that work because it helps them put a place for their negative thoughts, but it can also be used as a point of reference for any particular anxiety triggers that they didn't realise they had.
- Writing a letter – this might seem a bit daft, but if they can write letters to themselves, particularly after difficult times when they didn't turn to self-harming, they can use the letters to read back and see themselves, through their own words, that they have overcome difficulties in the past, and therefore they know that they are capable of overcoming them again.