



Family Mental Health Bulletin



19 November 2020

The focus for this bulletin is:

Self-Harm

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. [Young Minds].

Since Covid-19 mental health in adolescents has been recorded as increasing. The Samaritans suggest ...many of the ways young people may have maintained emotional wellbeing in the past – such as private contact with friends, sport or other hobbies, or accessing mental health support – have been less available during lockdown.

Reasons for self-harm

In many cases self-harm helps someone cope with negative feelings and difficult experiences. It can also be so they feel in control, or as a way to punish them self. It can be a way of relieving overpowering feelings that build up inside. It can be to:

- reduce tension
 - manage extreme emotional upset
 - provide a feeling of physical pain to distract from emotional pain
 - express emotions such as hurt, anger or frustration
 - regain control over feelings or problems
 - punish themselves or others
- [Young Minds]

Is my child self-harming?

If you have concerns about your son/daughter, boys self-harm as well, then look out for the following:

- unexplained cuts, burns, bite-marks, bruises or bald patches
- keeping themselves covered; avoiding swimming or changing clothes around others
- bloody tissues in waste bins
- being withdrawn or isolated from friends and family

- low mood, lack of interest in life, depression or outbursts of anger
- blaming themselves for problems or expressing feelings of failure, uselessness, or hopelessness

What can I do?

- Avoid asking lots of questions at once
- Keep an eye on your child
- Consider whether your child is self-harming in areas that can't be seen
- Remember the self-harm is a coping mechanism. It is a symptom of an underlying problem.
- Talk to your child but try not to get into a hostile confrontation
- Keep firm boundaries and don't be afraid of disciplining your child. It is helpful to keep a sense of normality and this will help your child feel secure and emotionally stable
- Seek professional help. Your child may need a risk assessment from a qualified mental health professional.

Talk to your GP

- Discovering and responding to self-harm can be a traumatic experience – it's crucial that you seek support for yourself. It's natural to feel guilt, shame, anger, sadness, frustration and despair – but it's not your fault
- Adapted from Young Minds website

Support Links:

- **Young Minds Parents Helpline** – 0808-802-5544 (Monday to Friday 9.30am – 4pm, free for mobiles and landlines)
- <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-self-harm> [Video Lounge link]
- Other videos of parental experiences are also available on this link
- Samaritans Website - <https://www.samaritans.org/>
- NSPCC - www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/childrens-mental-health/self-harm