

# You Are Not Alone

## Understanding and Coping with Self-Harm

Self-harm is a way some people cope with overwhelming feelings, but it doesn't define who you are. You are not alone, and there is support out there to help.

### What is Self-Harm?

Self-harm is when someone hurts themselves on purpose to cope with feelings like sadness, anger, or frustration. It can be a way of trying to feel in control when emotions feel too big, but there are other ways to handle tough feelings that are healthier and more effective.

### Why It's Important to Talk About It

Many people feel ashamed or embarrassed about self-harm, but it's important to remember that it's okay to reach out for help. You are not bad, weak, or broken — you are just someone who is struggling and deserves support. Talking to a trusted friend, family member, or professional can make a big difference.

### You Are Not Alone

There are many people who understand what you're going through. Seeking support from others, whether it's through therapy, support groups, or friends, can help you feel understood and less isolated.



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# Healthier Ways to Cope

When your feelings are so overwhelming, it might feel like nothing else can calm you down or help deal with them. However, there *are* ways to do this; by getting into your body in other ways you can regulate yourself and work towards reducing self-harm behaviours.

## Here are some things to try when you feel the urge to self-harm:

- **Pause and Breathe:** Take slow, deep breaths. Inhale for four counts, hold for four, and exhale for four. Repeat until you feel calmer. If you make your exhale longer than your inhale this can calm the nervous system.
- **Change the temperature:** Hold an ice cube in your hand or press it against your skin; this can help distract and soothe. Putting your face in a sink of cold water or having a cold shower and holding your breath can trigger a diver's response which has a calming effect on the body.
- **Journaling:** Write down your feelings. You can scribble or make it as messy as you want. Expressing your emotions on paper can give you a sense of release and control.
- **Physical Activity:** Go for a walk, do as many push ups as you can, dance, or stretch. Moving your body helps release tension and boosts mood.
- **Grounding Techniques:** Focus on your surroundings. Try the "5-4-3-2-1" technique: Name 5 things you can see, 4 you can touch, 3 you can hear, 2 you can smell, 1 you can taste.

# Mindfulness & Meditation

Mindfulness and meditation can help you find peace in stressful moments. There are lots of guided meditations on YouTube or that you can find on the internet.

## Here's a simple meditation to try:

1. Sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Close your eyes and focus on your breath.
2. Breathe deeply and slowly, focusing on the sensation of air entering and leaving your body.
3. Notice any feelings or thoughts that come up, but don't judge them. Let them pass like clouds in the sky.
4. Focus on the present moment — tell yourself you are safe, here and now in this moment.

## It doesn't have to be meditation...

You might find that you don't enjoy meditating, particularly when you are experiencing such difficult emotions. There are many different activities you can do whilst being mindful, for example cooking, painting, or going for a walk in nature. Any activity you enjoy and can become engrossed in is worth trying during difficult times.



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# Where to Get Help

Even though it can be difficult, reaching out to someone can help. There are so many organisations, professionals, and trusted adults that can and will support you.

## Where to Seek Support

- A trusted adult, such as a friend or family member
- Trusted professionals such as teachers, support workers, and mental health practitioners
- The GP can be a gateway to getting additional support for self-harm
- Crisis text line for self-harm (text SHOUT to 85258)
- Hotlines such as Samaritans (116 123)
- Mental Health charities like Mind UK

## Remember:

Healing is a journey, and it's okay to take it one step at a time.

Self-harming isn't naughty or bad, you are simply trying to process very intense feelings.

You are worthy of love and care, and you are strong enough to reach out for support.

You are valued, you are enough, and you deserve peace. Help is available — take the first step today.

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