



HELP, I SELF-HARM

Self-harming means deliberately inflicting physical damage on your own body (e.g. cutting yourself, scratching, banging your head against objects, etc.) without the intention of taking your own life. Young people can have different reasons for harming themselves. It is often a way of coping with difficult feelings and situations. Many students are unaware of the difficulties, which makes them feel alone. But more people self-harm than you realise.

So you are not alone. The following 10 tips are intended to help you cope with self-harming behaviours.

ADMIT THAT YOU ARE NOT FEELING WELL

Not feeling well is OK. You are allowed to experience negative feelings, but after a while they are often too heavy to bear alone. Admitting to yourself that you do not feel well can provide relief and be a first step towards recovery.

MAKE A FOUR-STEP PLAN

STEP 1

Consider what the short- and long-term advantages and disadvantages of self-harming behaviour are for you. Make a list of pros and cons and indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 how important it is. A list can give you more insight into the causes and consequences of self-harming behaviour.

STEP 2

Maybe you don't (yet) know why you are exhibiting self-harming behaviour. A function analysis will give you a better idea of what your triggers are. Answer the following questions for the analysis:

- Behaviour: What did you do?
- Situation: Where and when? Were you alone or with someone? Who?
- Before: What did you do/feel/think?
- Purpose: Why did you do it and what did you feel/think?
- Alternatives: What did you do to prevent or delay it?

What could you have done instead?

STEP 3

Now that you know what your triggers are, you can try to understand or avoid them more actively. Please note that you cannot avoid all triggers.

STEP 4

List alternative behaviours (e.g. sports, drawing, listening to music, etc.) that are less harmful for your mind and body.

SUPPRESS YOUR URGE

The urge to harm yourself can be strong and even addictive. Try to see how long the urge lasts and how strong it is. This way, you will be able to better judge for yourself when it is best to call in the help of others or alternatives.

SET REALISTIC GOALS

Try to set achievable goals to stop self-harming step by step (e.g. Whenever I feel the urge to self-harm, I will contact a counsellor or another adult).

FROM NEGATIVE TO POSITIVE THOUGHTS

Self-harming behaviour is often accompanied by negative thoughts. These thoughts are not always right. Writing down the thoughts and asking yourself if they are right will make room for more positive thoughts. Try to write a positive thought next to the negative one.

STRUCTURE YOUR LIFE

Try to organise your day so that it has a certain structure. Getting out of bed, getting out of your room; every little victory is good. Try to eat healthy and get enough rest.

PREPARE FOR A RELAPSE

Anyone who has been ill can always become ill again. This is the same with self-harming behaviour. So be kind to yourself. By reverting to previous solutions, you can get back on track more quickly.

SEEK SUPPORT AND/OR PROFESSIONAL HELP

Find someone you can trust. You don't have to tell this person everything. Sometimes, it's enough to tell them that you are not feeling well. You can also contact Awel anonymously (102 or via www.awel.be), the Suicide Helpline (1813 or via www.zelfmoord1813.be), and the Tele-Onthaal helpline (106 or via www.teleonthaal.be).

CREATE YOUR OWN HELP CARD

Write who you can contact in difficult moments (e.g. confidants) down on a card. Put their phone numbers in your mobile phone so that you can quickly text or call them. Complete the card with what you can do to help yourself during a difficult moment.

References

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