

SELF HARM

Self-harm is often linked to anxiety and depression, and can affect people of any age. Some people who self-harm may be at a high risk of suicide. However a lot of people who self-harm don't want to end their lives. Self-harm is a coping mechanism for the distress that they're feeling and, as they have a way to cope, they don't feel the need to end their life.

Why do people self-harm?

People do not self-harm to be 'attention seeking', 'manipulative' or 'cool'. They self-harm for a number of reasons:

- some people may believe that they deserve to be punished more than they can punish themselves mentally
- people may feel that the rest of their life is out of control and self-harm is the only thing they have control over
- people who are unable to express their feelings may feel many emotions but can't release them and find that self-harming reduces the amount of turmoil they feel
- self-harm may be a way to communicate that something is wrong

Self-harm can also be a cry for help- it can be very isolating and the person may not know who to turn to.

For more information on self-harm, visit the NHS website:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/self-harm

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

If you think that someone you know is self-harming, you should look out for any of these signs:

- unexplained cuts, bruises or cigarette burns
- keeping themselves fully covered at all times even in hot weather
- signs of depression
- self-loathing/expressing a wish to punish themselves
- signs of low self esteem
- becoming very withdrawn and not speaking to others

People often try and keep their self-harm a secret because of shame or fear, so it is very important if you notice someone self-harming to approach the subject with care and understanding. Although it may be hard not to, telling someone to just "stop" is not necessarily helpful, and making sure the person is safe while they harm takes priority.

How can self-harm be treated?

If you are self-harming you should see your GP for help. They will be able to treat any physical injury and recommend any further assessment or help, such as referring you to a Self-Harm Intervention Programme (SHIP). Treatment for self-harm usually involves talking therapies, and how they are affecting you.

You can also come to the **Student Wellbeing Service Drop-In** (via the Student Information Point, One Elmwood) Mon-Fri, term time, 11am-3pm, or you can **email** studentwellbeing@qub.ac.uk to book an appointment with a Wellbeing Advisor.