

CLEAR

Emotional Trauma & Therapy Specialists

Let's talk about.....self-harm

This can be a difficult topic to talk about as there are lots of myths and misconceptions surrounding it. Added to this, people who self-harm are often confused, embarrassed and ashamed which can make it feel hugely challenging to discuss.

What is Self-harm?

Self-harm is generally defined as a deliberate act of self-injury or self-poisoning and for many people, is a way of coping with difficult or distressing feelings and circumstances. It can include a wide range of behaviours, with some of the more common forms listed below:

- Cutting
- Scratching
- Banging/hitting
- Burning
- Hair pulling
- Overdosing or withholding medication
- Object insertion
- Biting

Why do people self-harm?

Self-harm is complex and the experiences and intentions behind it can vary from person to person. Many people use it as a way of coping with difficult or distressing emotions or circumstances.

Research by Harmless, a charity specialising in Self-harm and Suicide Prevention, found that people's reasons for self-harming can be grouped into three broad themes:

1. **Interpersonal:** to get a reaction from somebody, so someone notices my pain, cares.
2. **Emotional regulation:** Because I feel out of control, to feel calmer, to cope, to get a release, to express my feelings, to punish myself
3. **Habitual:** I don't know what else to do, out of a habit

But of course, a person's reasons are as unique as they are!

Relationship between suicide and self-harm

Most people who self-harm are **not** suicidal, in fact they want to be here and use self-harm as a way to cope with life.

However, most people who suicide have self-harmed, therefore self-harm **can** be a predictive factor. Like self-harm, suicide is complex, individual and rarely the result of a single factor. It is therefore important not to over-simplify the factors that lead to suicide or view the role of self-harm in isolation from other factors.

How common is self-harm?

It is impossible to know as it is usually hidden and rarely comes to the attention of health professionals, but it is estimated to be at least 1% of the population (approx. 4 million).

The U.K. has one of the highest rates of self-harm in Europe and Cornwall has higher than average rates. It is prevalent in all ages, genders and backgrounds and most common in young women aged 16-24.

In 2019, The Samaritans supported someone with self-harm once every 2 minutes, but we know that the stress of the Pandemic and lockdowns has increased the numbers of people self-harming and the severity.

About *Hope for Harm*

Hope for Harm is a service which was set-up in 2021 to provide specialist counselling to adults (18+) who self-harm. Up to 18 fully funded sessions of counselling are provided and people can self-refer. Funding has been provided by The Fore and The National Lottery Community Fund, and at the moment all funds have been allocated to clients on the waiting list. This means that our waiting list is temporarily closed until we secure further funding.

In order to extend the scope and reach of our service, we will be coming under the umbrella of CLEAR from April 2023, which will enable us to offer our counselling service across Cornwall and to work with children and young people who self-harm (as long as funding allows).

Our website is www.hopeforharm.co.uk and we can be contacted on 01736 447220 or via email hello@hopeforharm.co.uk