Help for Self-Harm. Confide in someone

If you’re ready to get help for cutting or self-harm, the first step is to confide in another person. It can be scary to talk about the very thing you have worked so hard to hide, but it can also be a huge relief to finally let go of your secret and share what you’re going through.

Deciding whom you can trust with such personal information can be difficult. Choose someone who isn’t going to gossip or try to take control of your recovery. Ask yourself who in your life makes you feel accepted and supported. It could be a friend, teacher, religious leader, counselor, or relative. But you don’t necessarily have to choose someone you are close to.

Eventually, you’ll want to open up to your inner circle of friends and family members, but sometimes it’s easier to start by talking to an adult who you respect—such as a teacher, religious leader, or counselor - who has a little more distance from the situation and won’t find it as difficult to be objective.

Tips for talking about cutting and self-harm

- **Focus on your feelings.** Instead of sharing sensational details of your self-harm behavior—what specifically you do to hurt yourself—focus on the feelings or situations that lead to it. This can help the person you’re confiding in better understand where you’re coming from. It also helps to let the person know why you’re telling them. Do you want help or advice from them? Do you simply want another person to know so you can let go of the secret?
- **Communicate in whatever way you feel most comfortable.** If you’re too nervous to talk in person, consider starting off the conversation with an email or letter (although it’s important to eventually follow-up with a face-to-face conversation). Don’t feel pressured into sharing things you’re not ready to talk about. You don’t have to show the person your injuries or answer any questions you don’t feel comfortable answering.
- **Give the person time to process what you tell them.** As difficult as it is for you to open up, it may also be difficult for the person you tell—especially if it’s a close friend or family member. Sometimes, you may not like the way the person reacts. Try to remember that reactions such as shock, anger, and fear come out of concern for you. It may help to print out this article for the people you choose to tell. The better they understand self-harm, the better able they’ll be to support you.
Talking about self-harm can be very stressful and bring up a lot of emotions. Don’t be discouraged if the situation feels worse for a short time right after sharing your secret. It’s uncomfortable to confront and change long-standing habits. But once you get past these initial challenges, you’ll start to feel better.