Stop trying not to Self-Harm and start not needing to

There is nothing worse than the feeling of not having enough reserves of strength to overcome something you know you must get over in order to survive.

Yet that feeling of weakness, that lack of trust in yourself to bear the weight, that overwhelming desire for the floor to just swallow you up and take it all away - is something most people with self-harming urges will understand well.

Quitting Self Harm, for most people becomes a nightmare - often leading to a situation worse than the one before. This is one reason why one should not force anyone until they are ready - until they know the path they have to take. Removing Self Harm from your life at the wrong time is like pulling the only layer of stability you might have from under your feet, and does so often result in people hating themselves even more "because they can't even do that".

However - most will be relieved to hear that while quitting Self Harm is never easy, it can be made somewhat more possible, achievable, and can happen more quickly than just 'going in guns blazing'.

Most of the time people 'quit' - they do so for the wrong reasons, at the wrong time - or in the wrong way. But with a few hopefully helpful pointers quitting can be done in such a way as to reduce the 'danger' of quitting, and certainly the danger of Slipping Up ... and the large majority of that is frame of mind.

Self-harm is a coping mechanism, which, ironically works very well in the short term. It provides escapism and release, even punishment to those who use it...but the one thing it totally fails on is even getting close to helping you with the problems that caused you to want to escape in the first place. The next day you wake up with the same stress, the same issues - but with extra wounds and pain and guilt...not the ideal recipe for making yourself feel better about things.

And that is why so often people quit out of frustration - probably the hardest route to take quitting wise. You find yourself totally unprepared when trouble next hits your life; things break down, resulting in slip ups and you hating yourself worse than ever.

The key is not to find something that causes you to feel you HAVE to quit - because all that does is place more pressure on you, when that is the very last thing you need. The key is to work away at the root issues and get to a stage where the urge to harm becomes less frequent. It’s only possible if you know where you want to go, if you keep good advice fresh in your mind - and if you really, really want to follow it.

Getting to that stage is far from easy, and different for each and every person who has to do it - so sadly all the answers can't just be spelled out...part of the destination comes in the journey - and many of the answers you need you won't even have the questions for right now...and that doesn't matter one bit. In fact going into it with an open mind is often a lot more successful than those who feel they know it all.
So to be successful in your quest to quit, stop feeling as though you have to stop Self Harming - and start exploring the reasons why you do. It will be a mixture of self-worth, self-respect, communication, family unit, trust and confidence in support, among others but with some exploration, with the help of those around you, a therapist or school councillor, or just a friend you can trust (online or offline) it soon becomes clear what it is that is creating the pressure that constantly tests your strength and sanity. That is the first step - find out how big the mountain is you have to climb.

The next step is to accept outside help. RYL is a great place to get understanding and support - but it should really only act as the stepping stone to offline help. RYL is here to prove people can and do care - even when they are half way around the world, but it is offline help - opening up to friends, family or a therapist that often holds the best chances of successfully tackling the issues that are currently being stashed away at the back of your mind...that are now overflowing and causing you to get urges.

Only then should you even consider stopping - you should and must already have the other mechanisms in place before you decide to cut loose...or else you are doomed for failure that really hurts. Quitting SI is quite possible and manageable if it is done when a number of other leaves are turned over at the same time, and the reason for this is because the single biggest factor you have to rely on to get you through all this is your own mental strength.

Now some won't believe they have it in them, some honestly won't - but as I said, few succeed on their own anyway. Opening up does not always mean releasing each and every dark secret....not at all - it simply means finding people around you to trust enough to bounce daily issues and problems off, as a way of quantifying them within yourself - and starting to DEAL with them, rather than just filing them away for later at the back of your mind. We all know that after a while, it all becomes too much - and it is exactly that you are trying to avoid with this method of stopping.

Exploring yourself is fundamental to the process. Often it is so easy to push things away and leave them unsorted - that you end up distancing yourself from yourself... finding it hard to understand yourself. By finding out what makes you happy, what makes you sad, what makes you feel weak, and what makes you feel strong - you can start developing the spread of coping mechanisms that you need to work towards.

By turning over a series of new leaves, it is possible to launch into 'quitting' in a very different mindset than ever before. A mindset where slipping up isn't reason to hate yourself - only a useful alarm bell to remind you that the healthy release channels need some more input. Instead of feeling you have to quit - if you start finding other things that help, you will start noticing you cut less and less frequently after a while - and the more effort you put in, and the longer that goes on for - the less and less strong the urges will become until you simply bore of harming.

Join a gym, or a new class - review your eating and drinking and sleeping patterns. Take the step to start outing some of the things that hit you during the day that you would normally keep to yourself...slowly try taking off that mask to the right people. Try as many new coping mechanisms as you can, go for a walk, or a ride - help others on RYL or elsewhere (offline or online...both are great for raising self-esteem) or even take a look at starting new ways of expressing yourself. A new instrument, a new journal (a great way to turn over a new leaf) a set of paints or something else creative. These are all things that will reduce your need to Self Harm - often without you realising they are.
Breaking habits, throwing away all but the most necessary of ‘tools’ in as ritualistic fashion as possible, learning new ways of releasing pressure and most of all communication will, after not all that long at all - start having a profound effect on your urges and the strength of them.

Each time you get an urge - you talk to someone, you take a walk, you write in your diary, you scream into that pillow, you squeeze that ice cube hard in your hand - all of them all at once if that is what it takes. The trick is to always challenge yourself to see if you can reduce the urge using another method than Self Harm...see if you can last another 15 minutes by doing something else you know is healthy.

Not all methods will work - not all times you will stop that urge...but after a while of sticking with it - of constantly exploring it - and most of all of really, really wanting to stop with every bone in your body you will suddenly realise you need it so much less than ever before. At that stage you have the choice of continuing to reduce your harming until it passes completely - which does work, or you can go to a cliff, throw all your tools off it and say goodbye to SI for good - because at this stage it will be infinitely more possible.

If you can work to the stage where you are eating, drinking and sleeping properly, where you talk about problems in your day with those around you, where you can know the right buttons to push to change your moods and most all of to the stage where you really want to quit for yourself - then it is very possible indeed...because the frequency, length and intensity of the urges will grow less and less over time. For most - that is a much softer, easier way of getting there than a single promise to never do it again, that is so easily shattered and so impossible to stick to.