How does cutting and self-harm help?

It’s important to acknowledge that self-harm helps you—otherwise you wouldn’t do it. Some of the ways cutting and self-harming can help include:

- Expressing feelings you can’t put into words
- Releasing the pain and tension you feel inside
- Helping you feel in control
- Distracting you from overwhelming emotions or difficult life circumstances
- Relieving guilt and punishing yourself
- Making you feel alive, or simply feel something, instead of feeling numb

Once you better understand why you self-harm, you can learn ways to stop self-harming, and find resources that can support you through this struggle.

If self-harm helps, why stop?

- Although self-harm and cutting can give you temporary relief, it comes at a cost. In the long term, it causes far more problems than it solves.
- The relief is short lived, and is quickly followed by other feelings like shame and guilt. Meanwhile, it keeps you from learning more effective strategies for feeling better.
- Keeping the secret from friends and family members is difficult and lonely.
- You can hurt yourself badly, even if you don’t mean to. It’s easy to misjudge the depth of a cut or end up with an infected wound.
- If you don’t learn other ways to deal with emotional pain, it puts you at risk for bigger problems down the line, including major depression, drug and alcohol addiction, and suicide.
- Self-harm can become addictive. It may start off as an impulse or something you do to feel more in control, but soon it feels like the cutting or self-harming is controlling you. It often turns into a compulsive behavior that seems impossible to stop.

The bottom line: self-harm and cutting don’t help you with the issues that made you want to hurt yourself in the first place.