Recovering from Self-Harm

Who recovers from Self-Harm?

It is possible for all sufferers to learn to live without needing to self-harm, but for some it can be a long and difficult journey back to good health. The longer someone harms, the harder it can be to break the pattern of behaviour, but with the right support, understanding and motivation to get better, it is possible for everyone to recover from self-harming actions.

An important step forward is making the decision to learn to live without self-harm, and being prepared to face underlying issues that may have caused the behaviour in the first place. No one can make a harmer ‘get better’. Hiding sharp objects, medicines or anything else thought to be harmful will not stop someone from hurting him or herself unless they want to stop.

Why it can be hard to talk about – for everyone concerned

Self-harm can be difficult to talk about. It can be difficult for sufferers because they may scared of feeling embarrassed, ashamed or ‘told off’ for their behaviour, when actually what they’re looking for is support and understanding. It can also be difficult to talk about because it’s not always possible to put in to words how you feel.

It can be difficult for parents to talk about because they may not understand it and may have a lot of emotions of their own to deal with when they see that their child is hurting.

Friends and siblings may also have lots of emotions of their own to understand and they may feel embarrassed or think the problem is ‘weird’. Young people also mature at different speeds and this can play a part in how far someone is able to offer support - some friends may deal with it really well, while others may find it too hard to deal with.

Self-harm is a big problem in the UK but is rarely spoken about in the media or on television. It remains something that carries stigma associated with mental ill health – people fear being labelled as ‘mad’ or ‘crazy’. Harmers may not understand why they do it – which makes the task of helping others to understand them so much harder.
Who can help?

Unfortunately there are limited resources at the present time. Some may find help and support through an understanding GP, and psychiatric services can be of help, depending on availability and expertise. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service provision varies across the country and waiting lists can be long. CAMHS can be accessed through a referral by your GP, school nurse, teacher, learning mentor, or family workers etc. There are a number of private Clinical Psychologists and Psychotherapists who may offer specialist support but these can be costly and it’s important to ensure they are recognised by a professional body. Sometimes just having someone to listen can make a big difference - it’s not always important who is listening, as long as someone is. Some young people will work though their difficulties without needing 'professionals' - everyone is different and everyone will need different levels of support.