

Self-harm: the facts

- Fact People self-harm in different ways.** Some cut their arms or legs, others bang or bruise their bodies. Self-harm also includes burning, scratching, hair-pulling, scrubbing, or anything that causes injury to the body. Some people take tablets, perhaps not a big overdose, but enough to blot things out for a while. Some people hurt themselves just once or twice. Other people use self-harm to cope over a long time. They might hurt themselves quite often during a bad patch.
- Fact Self-harm isn't necessarily about suicide.** Sometimes people harm themselves because they want to die. But often it's more about staying alive. People may hurt themselves to help them get through a bad time. It's a way to cope.
- Fact It's not 'just attention-seeking'.** People self-harm because they are in pain and trying to cope. They could also be trying to show that something is wrong. They need to be taken seriously.
- Fact It doesn't mean you're off your head.** All sorts of people self-harm. Even people in high-powered jobs. It's a sign that something is bothering and upsetting you, not that you are mad. You may not have met anyone else who self-harms and may even think you are the only one who does it. There's a lot of secrecy about self-harm. But many thousands of people cope in this way for a while.
- Fact Other things can be 'self-harm' too.** Things like starving, overeating, drinking too much, risk-taking, smoking and many others are also types of 'self-harm'. Some coping methods (like burying yourself in work) may be more acceptable, but can still be harmful.
- Fact People do stop self-harming.** Many people stop self-harming - when they're ready. They sort their problems out and find other ways of dealing with their feelings. It might take a long time and they might need help. But things can get better.
- Fact You can get help.** If you are worried about self-harm you can get help. Self-harm is often a way of coping with painful experiences. These might include being abused or neglected, losing someone important to you, being bullied, harassed or assaulted, or being very lonely and isolated. It helps to tell someone supportive about painful things that have happened to you and the ways these have made you feel.

About The Basement Project

Our work is founded on respect for individuals and for their rights to determine their own needs and make choices for themselves. We provide low-cost books on self-harm for those who cope in this way and for workers, families and friends. Please contact us for details.