



Etone College
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Etone Mental Health

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Parent's Guide to Self Harm

What is self-harm?

Self-harm is when someone hurts themselves on purpose as a way of trying to manage distressing or overwhelming feelings and experiences. Someone who is self-harming might be dealing with lots of intense thoughts and feelings, and hurting themselves may feel like the only way to cope. Or, they might feel numb and hurt themselves in order to feel something.

If your child is self-harming, or you're concerned they might be, it can be incredibly worrying and upsetting for you as their parent. The important thing to remember is that you and your child are not alone - lots of young people go through this and come out the other side with different ways of coping with their feelings. On this page, you can find out how to support your child and where to find professional help.

Signs a young person is self-harming

If you're worried that your child is self-harming but they aren't talking to you about it or showing visible injuries, it can be difficult to know what's going on.

Some ways that young people self-harm include:

- cutting themselves
- scratching skin with fingernails
- burning skin
- biting skin
- hitting themselves, or banging their head or another part of their body on a wall
- pulling hair out from their head, eyebrows or eyelashes
- inserting objects into their body



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Things to look out for

If you are worried your child may be self-harming, here are some things to look out for:

- unexplained cuts, burns, bite marks, bruises or bald patches
- keeping themselves covered, for example wearing long sleeves or trousers even during hot weather, not wanting to change clothes around others or avoiding activities like swimming
- bloody tissues in waste bins
- seeming low or depressed, for example withdrawing from friends and family
- blaming themselves for problems or expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or hopelessness
- outbursts of anger or argumentativeness

Resilience and self-esteem

Resilience is being able to deal with the ups and downs of life, and is key to raising self-esteem. There are a lot of different factors that determine whether a young person is able to cope well, or not so well, when times are tough. Being able to 'bounce back' is more likely when a child:

- Has had secure early attachments
- Has a clear sense of identity
- Communicates well with others
- Can set goals and try to meet them
- Understands how to go about solving problems
- Is able to think and act independently
- Is able to manage sometimes negative thoughts and feelings, and move on from them
- Is loved and valued by family and friends

Support available at Etone College

Students can access support through various channels at Etone College. They are able to speak with their Heads of House to ask for a referral to the Success Centre. There is also lots of signposting of support around the school with the contact details to various local and national support groups and charities.