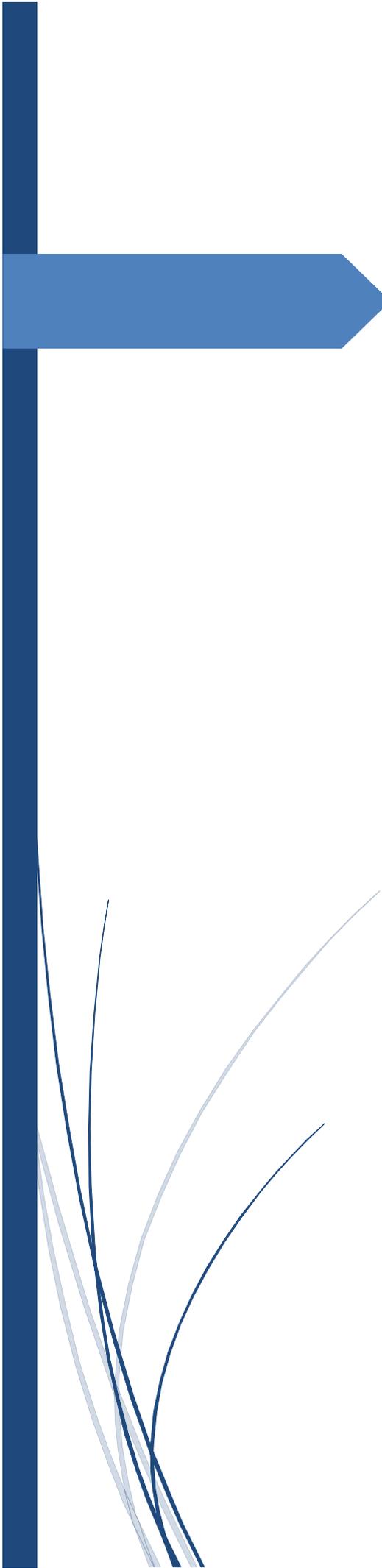


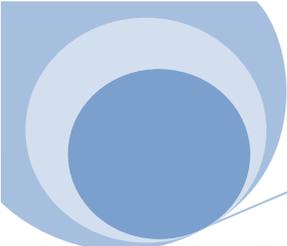


Self-Harm Stabilisation Pack



**Cwm Taf University Health Board –
Psychological Therapies Department**





Self-harm

Deliberately harming yourself is a common way of coping with overwhelming feelings. People who self-harm do not usually intend to die, although they may feel suicidal at times. Many, but not all, people who use this way of coping have experienced trauma in their lives.

Self-harm can take various forms, such as deliberately cutting or burning yourself, overdosing, scratching your skin, pulling out your hair, and lots of other ways of hurting yourself. Some people harm themselves several times a day while others do it only when they are under a lot of stress. Some are open about it while others keep it very secret, for fear of other people's reactions. They may avoid short sleeves, swimming and so on.

Self-harming can be very difficult to stop, because even if you want to break the habit, it can bring a powerful sense of relief. This is hard to resist when you don't know how else to survive or cope with your feelings. It is important that others understand this and do not judge you. It is also important that you do not judge or blame yourself.

Here is a list of some of the reasons for hurting yourself:

To relieve tensions, pressure and anger
To escape from feelings of depression or shame
To feel something if you are numb and 'empty'
To punish yourself because you feel you deserve it
To keep voices happy by doing what they say
To communicate to others how bad you feel
To feel more in control

There are many other possible reasons which may not be clear to you at the moment.

We know that trauma can lead to feelings of shame, anger and being 'bad', and so it is not surprising that people may turn to self-harm as a way of coping with its effects.

Getting more control over self-harm

Few people are able to stop self-harming immediately, but there are ways to start getting more control over it so that you can gradually replace it with other ways of coping. You may want to talk to your mental health worker, or other supporter such as partner or friend, about whether you feel ready to start this process. There are a number of resources that can offer you support (see below.)

These are some of the steps towards reducing self-harm:

UNDERSTANDING MORE ABOUT WHY YOU SELF-HARM.

If you keep a diary and perhaps share it with your mental health worker or supporter, you may find that particular situations or feelings are more likely to trigger the need to hurt yourself.

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

Look after yourself when you do hurt yourself even if you are not able to stop yet. For example, keep cuts clean and use clean instruments. Run cool water on burns. Use dressings and antiseptic cream afterwards. Get medical attention if you need it. Be kind to yourself.

FIND OTHER WAYS OF COPING.

This might include ringing a friend, distracting yourself, exercise, or any of the skills and ideas discussed in the other sections ('Distraction'; 'Soothing and safety'; 'Grounding' and so on.)

FIND OTHER WAYS OF COMMUNICATING THE MESSAGES THAT SELF-HARM IS DOING FOR YOU AT THE MOMENT.

For example, choose a trusted person to share your feelings with; or say 'No' to activities that you don't want to do.

RELEASE YOUR FEELINGS

Find another way of releasing your feelings such as writing, painting, drawing, punching a pillow, allowing yourself to cry and so on

IF YOU HAVE A BACKGROUND OF TRAUMA, YOU MAY NEED TO DO SOME IN-DEPTH WORK ON IT ONCE THE CUTTING IS UNDER BETTER CONTROL. THIS MAY LEAD TO THE URGE TO HARM YOURSELF GRADUALLY FADING AWAY AS YOU COME TO TERMS WITH EVENTS IN YOUR PAST. YOU CAN DISCUSS THIS WITH YOUR MENTAL HEALTH WORKER OR GP.

Reading and Resources

The National Self Harm Network has information, resources and a discussion forum.

Website: www.nshn.co.uk

It offers support available via **email** at support@nshn.co.uk.

It also operates a **freephone helpline** for individuals who self-harm, friends, family and carers. The number is 0800 622 6000 and the helpline is currently open from 7pm to 11pm Thursday-Saturday, 6.30pm-10.30pm Sunday.

'Self-harm: a self-help guide' by Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust can be downloaded from <http://www.ntw.nhs.uk/pic/selfhelp/>

MIND has a leaflet on self-harm which can be downloaded from:

<http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/self-harm/>

The Basement Project has information and support about self-harm and childhood abuse. **tel:** 01873 856 524

web: www.basementproject.co.uk.

Bristol Crisis Service for Women (BCSW) provides information and support for people who self-harm, including a template for a self-harm diary and support groups for men and women. You can order their booklets 'Understanding self-injury,' 'Self-help and self-injury' and 'For friends and family.' **tel:** 0117 927 9600 text support: 0780 047 2908

web: www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk

www.Scar-tissue.net This website has a great many ideas for how to cope with self-harm.