

When trying to stop engaging in non-suicidal self-injury, it can take time to find new ways to cope.

While you are waiting for professional help, or when times are tough, it's good to have a few alternatives to self-injury. The best option is one you come up with yourself; but if you're feeling overwhelmed it can be hard to think of anything.

This list below might help you find healthier alternatives.

TALK TO SOMEONE

- You could tell a friend or family member how you feel, and why you are upset.
- Or, you could talk to a friend or family member about other things, and see if focusing on something different helps you to cope with the urge to injure.
- If you don't think you can talk to someone you know, try calling a helpline.

Kids Helpline (for people aged 5-25 years): 1800 55 1800

DELAY - *The urge to injure doesn't last forever*

- Wait five minutes. Congratulate yourself on that achievement, and then wait five minutes more, or maybe ten. Your level of distress will come down, but it will take time.
- Are you in a place right now where you often injure yourself? It might be your bedroom or bathroom. Get out of there. Change your environment. Go for a walk.
- Are you alone? You're less likely to injure yourself if there is someone present. Can a friend come and spend time with you? Is there a family member you can talk to?

DISTRACT YOURSELF - *Do something engrossing*

- Watch a film, something that might make you laugh or feel good.
- Do some exercise. Exercise boosts brain chemicals such as endorphins and can help you feel better.
- Do something creative. Maybe you can find others ways to express negative emotions such as art, creative writing, making music or dancing.

DO SOMETHING ELSE - *Can you figure out what has brought on the urge to injure yourself? Think about what injuring yourself will help you with, and try to fulfil it in a different way, one that isn't harmful.*

- Needing to feel something can be fulfilled by holding ice or touching textures.
- Needing to see blood can be fulfilled by drawing on skin with red ink or paint.
- If you feel the need to punish yourself, try looking for a way to forgive yourself, and do yourself a kindness instead.
- Feeling overwhelmed by negative emotions, and needing to lash out, can be helped by expressing anger against a pillow or a punching bag.

AVOID ACTIVITIES THAT ARE HARMFUL OR CAUSE PAIN, so that your brain stops associating physical pain or harm with relief or feeling good

(This document accompanies the Mental Health First Aid Guidelines for Non-suicidal Self-injury: bit.ly/mhfanssi)