

Bristol Crisis Service for Women - Support for women experiencing emotional distress, especially those affected by abuse or self-harm. National helpline service.

Phone: 0117 925 1119

Web: www.users.zetnet.co.uk/bcsw

National Self-Harm Network - Website with facts and myths about self-harm. Plus details of local contacts and help.

Web: www.nshn.co.uk

Self-Harm Alliance - Website and helpline for anyone worried about self-harm.

Phone: 01242 578 820

Web: www.selfharmalliance.org

Self Injury and Resources - Information and contacts for anyone affected by self-harm.

Web: www.selfinjury.freeserve.co.uk

Scottish Self-Harm Forum - Forum open to anyone with an interest in self-harm. Currently co-ordinated by Penumbra.

Penumbra - One of Scotland's leading mental health organisations, providing a wide range of support services and training for adults and young people.

Phone: 0131 475 2380

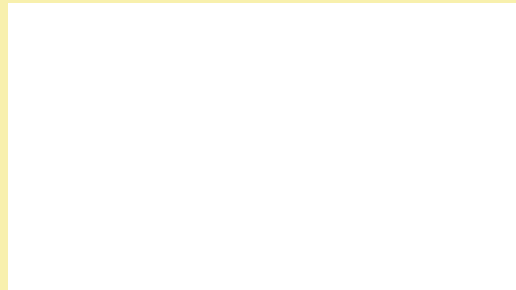
Web: www.penumbra.org.uk

Useful Publication - Penumbra has a report available on action research it did in Edinburgh with young people who self-harm. It is called "No Harm in Listening" and is available from Penumbra's Head Office.



The word 'Penumbra' means the partial shadow around the sun during an eclipse. Penumbra's work aims to bring mental health out of the shadow and into the light.

We are one of Scotland's leading mental health organisations, providing a wide range of support service for adults and young people.



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Self-Harm

What's that then?

Self-harm can take many forms:

- cutting
- burning
- hitting
- bruising
- interfering with wound healing

Why might people self-harm?

The underlying reasons why someone might self-harm are often complex and may feel difficult to understand. Different people self-harm for different reasons at different times. Self-harm is much more common than you think especially among adolescents and young people.

Some reasons might include:

- Escape from feelings of emptiness or unreality
- Relief from overwhelming anger, emotional or physical tension
- Physical expression of inexpressible emotional or physical tension
- Feeling they deserved to be punished for some reason
- Seeing blood flow may be like watching bad things being flushed away particularly in relation to abuse
- Some people describe intense feelings of anger or distress before harming themselves
- Others describe themselves as feeling numb
- Self-harming may be a way of managing their moods and feelings making them feel in control

Self-harm is often misunderstood

People who self-harm are often unaware of the effect their self-harming has on others and we should recognise that self-harm is usually more about the difficulties they are experiencing.

Self-harm is not:

- Attention seeking. Most people actually try and hide their injuries.
- A failed suicide attempt. Many people who self-harm see it as a way of actually staying alive.

How can I help?

Helpful attitudes and approaches might include:

- Non-judgmental acceptance and respect
- Acknowledge and accept the person's pain and distress
- Be supportive, calm and practical
- Listen respectfully - people who self-harm are the experts of their own situation
- Treat the person with dignity
- Respect the person's right to confidentiality and privacy
- Don't take it personally
- Don't force things - trust takes time
- Never issue ultimatums

Useful National Contacts:

Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH) - Information service, promoting mental health, campaigning and training on mental health issues.

Phone: 0141 568 7000
Web: www.samh.org.uk

Saneline - Telephone helpline for sufferers, their families and voluntary/statutory organisations. Can provide details on symptoms and treatments as well as health and social services in caller's local area.

Phone: 0845 767 8000
Web: www.sane.org.uk

Samaritans - 24 hour confidential phone line for people who are in despair, feel suicidal and need someone to talk to.

Phone: 08457 90 90 90
Web: www.samaritans.org

Youngminds - Simple, clear advice on mental health problems aimed at 8 - 16 year olds, but also offers guidance to adults.

Phone: 020 7336 8445
Web: www.youngminds.org.uk

Read the Signs - Website run by MIND with information about a variety of mental health difficulties and where you can go for help.

Web: www.readthesigns.org

Breathing Space - Breathing Space is a free, confidential phone-line you can call when you're feeling down. You might be feeling stressed about work or exams - or relationships or money - or just fed up for no specific reason. Whatever your reason, you can call Breathing Space to talk things over.

Phone: 0800 83 85 87
Web: www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk