

DO

Stay Calm - do not show anxiety, disapproval or disgust. Be prepared to be shocked - then ...

Listen - just being listened to can be a brilliant support and bring great relief to someone: particularly if they have never spoken to anyone about their self-harming before.

Listening intently - does not just require ears. Observe the young person's non-verbal clues - look at their body language - does what they say and what you see match up?

What is the underlying mood state – is it

- Anger?
- Sadness?
- Frustration?

Think carefully before you act - what is in the best interest of the young person?

Remember - most episodes of self-harm have nothing to do with suicide. The easiest way to differentiate between suicidal intent and self-harm is by asking the young person what was their intent was: Did they intend to seriously harm or kill themselves? If they did, ask what plans they had made or what their continuing thoughts of suicide are. The act of asking this will not increase their chances of attempting suicide in the future. Treat a suicide intention as an emergency - do not leave the young person alone or in a vulnerable environment - get help and support as soon as possible and remain calm.

DON'T

Panic - Unfortunately, many young people self-harm - it is a complex issue and each young person will have a different reason or story behind their behaviour - panicking will not help the young person feel safe and contained.

Don't send the young person away - make some time for them - either help them find other ways of coping or support them in getting the right kind of support.

Don't be judgemental - keep an open mind about the behaviour and don't refer to it as "attention seeking / needing".

Don't work alone - you may still see a young person alone, but you will need to offload with an appropriate staff member or colleague from another agency.

Don't offer to take the young person to your home environment.

Don't give them your mobile number or house number - or get into texting the young person. It is more appropriate and professional for you to help the young person identify their supportive network, than for you to take this upon yourself.

Self harming behaviours can be extremely concerning, but you cannot offer objective support if you become enmeshed within the young person's difficulty.

Self Harm and Suicide Awareness Information for Workers



Taking pride in caring

SELF HARM CARE PATHWAY

What you should do if you discover a young person is self harming

