



Youth Services, Counselling Team
Ph: 9742 8155
Monday – Friday, 9am – 6pm
youth.wyndham.vic.gov.au

Is someone close to you self-harming? What can you do to help?

What is self-harm?

Self-harm describes a wide range of behaviours in which people deliberately inflict harm upon themselves. People who self-harm, often do so because of some difficulty they have had. This may include bullying, relationship or friendship break-ups, family issues, anxiety, physical, sexual or emotional abuse, depression or stress, but can also involve many other difficulties that people face in their everyday lives.

Many people cope with their problems in ways that are risky or harmful to them. Some drink or eat too much, smoke or drive too fast, gamble or make themselves ill through overwork and stress. They may do this to numb or distract themselves from problems, thoughts or feelings they cannot bear to face. Like drinking or over exercising, hurting oneself sometimes provides an escape from intolerable emotional pain.

Many adolescents experiment with self-harm and it is much more common than most people think. This is because self-harm is typically a very personal act conducted in private. Adolescents rarely disclose their behaviour to an adult, seek psychological help or medical attention for self-harm. Consequently, no one really knows how many young people in our community are self-harming.

How to respond to self-harm

- **Remain calm.** If there are any immediate medical concerns deal with them in a calm and practical manner with minimal fuss. It may be unhelpful if the young person sees your distress.
- **Acknowledge** the self-harm without judgement. Remember there is an underlying feeling that the young person is having difficulty expressing.
- **Be available** and offer the opportunity for the young person to talk about how they are feeling, for example, “I can see you’ve harmed yourself. Would you like to talk about how you’re feeling?”
- **Hold back** from telling someone not to harm themselves. This could form a barrier to effective communication.
- **Get help** with your own reactions. The behaviours of others can have a profound effect on you, so it is important to take care of yourself emotionally, mentally and physically. It often helps to talk to a professional to get further information about self-harm, talk about your relationship with the person and discuss what thoughts and feelings their self-harm raises for you. Some local agency contacts which offer support like group programs and individual counselling include:

ISIS Primary Care

8734 1400

117-119 Warringa Crescent
Hoppers Crossing

Lifeworks

9974 3200

237-239 Hogans Road
Hoppers Crossing

Remember:

- *See the person, not the injuries.*
- *Try to be available to talk about the young person’s feelings at all times, not just after they have harmed themselves.*
- *Reinforce all efforts and achievements made by the young person, regardless of how small.*
- *Seek support for yourself.*
- *Always seek further professional advice if you have ongoing concerns about a young person.*

In the case of an After Hours Emergency, the following services may be helpful:

Telephone Counselling Services

Lifeline: 13 11 14 Kids Help Line: 1800 551 800 Parentline: 132289

Mental Health Services

Under 15 years of age

Royal Children’s Hospital Mental Health Services: 1800 44 55 11

Over 15 years of age

ORYGEN Youth Health: 1800 888 320