



Newsletter October 2024  
**Spotlight on self harm  
or self-injury**

Some information on this page may be difficult to read or may cause strong or upsetting feelings.

In focus in this month's newsletter: Self harm or self-injury At St John Plessington Catholic College, we are dedicated to supporting the mental health and well-being of all our students. This month, we are addressing the sensitive topic of self-harm or self-injury. Unfortunately, **self harm or self-injury** is relatively common in young adults. Self harm is a behaviour rather than a mental health condition.

### **Reasons why young people self harm:**

The reasons vary, and it's important to realise that self-harm is usually done in response to some level of distress and an attempt to gain control or self-punish. . Young people may not be able to name any one reason they're self-harming. For many young people, the physical pain is a distraction from the emotional pain they're struggling with. It's a coping mechanism, so when you decide to help, you should focus on solving the distress, not the self-injuring behaviour.

### **Understanding Self-Harm:**

Self-harm is when someone intentionally injures themselves, often as a response to emotional pain or stress. It can include cutting, burning, or other forms of self-injury. For young people, it can sometimes feel like a way to express feelings that they can't put into words or manage otherwise. Self-harm is often a sign that a young person is struggling and needs support, rather than an attempt to seek attention.

### **How You Can Help:**

- **Open Communication:** It's crucial to maintain a safe, non-judgemental environment at home. Encourage your child to talk to you about how they're feeling, and reassure them that they can share their emotions without fear of criticism or punishment. When discussing self-harm, it's important to avoid judgemental or guilt-inducing language. Responses like 'why are you doing this to yourself?' or 'this is so upsetting' can unintentionally create feelings of shame and make it harder for young people to seek help.
- **Know the Warning Signs:** Some potential signs of self-harm include wearing long sleeves in warm weather, frequent unexplained injuries, withdrawing from friends and family, or sudden changes in mood. If you notice these signs, approach your child gently and let them know you are there to listen and help.

- **Seek Professional Support:** If you believe your child may be self-harming, it's important to seek support. Please contact your child's Head of Learning, or contact [safeguarding@stjohnplessington.com](mailto:safeguarding@stjohnplessington.com) where we will offer guidance on where to seek further help, if needed. We also have resources available to help you understand self-harm better and provide strategies for supporting your child.

### **Further information and support:**

We are actively working to promote emotional well-being and mental health literacy through our Personal Development curriculum. We encourage all of our students to seek help if they are struggling with their emotional wellbeing and to recognize that asking for support is a sign of strength. You can find more information on self harm and self injury from the **NSPCC** and **Mind**. In addition Mind offers some **useful tips** for coping for young people that self harm. or immediate support, you can also reach out to helplines such as Papyrus (**HOPELINEUK**) for suicide prevention or YoungMinds, which offers a **Parent Helpline** and advice on supporting young people. Shout provides a confidential text service for anyone in crisis 24/7—**just text 'SHOUT' to 85258**.

Calm Harm is an award-winning app funded by teenage mental health charity stem4, to help manage the urge to self-harm. It was developed by Clinical Psychologist Dr. Nihara Krause MBE, in collaboration with young people and uses principles from an evidence-based psychological treatment called Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT). In addition to the Calm Harm app, encouraging healthy coping strategies such as journaling, physical exercise, engaging in hobbies, or practising mindfulness can also help young people manage their emotions in healthier ways.

If you have any concerns about your child's wellbeing or are worried about self-harm, please don't hesitate to contact your child's Head of Learning or safeguarding team. Together, we can ensure that young people feel understood, supported, and empowered to face challenges in healthy ways.