

Signs of self-harm and how to respond

Sometimes when teenagers are struggling with overwhelming internal pain or uncomfortable emotions, they turn to the temporary relief of physical pain by engaging in self-harm behaviors, such as cutting. While often done in secret, here are warning signs to watch for if you suspect a teen is self-harming:

- Dressing in a way that covers up self-harm
- Frequent isolation
- Increased guilt, shame, and negative self-talk
- Unexplained cuts, bruises, scars, or burns
- Secretive behaviors
- Reluctance to participate in activities (like sports) that may include wearing clothing that would show self-harm areas

If your child tells you that they are self-harming, it's important to take action:

1. Stay calm. Your child is likely to respond better if you are calm, supportive, and helpful. Additionally, if they see you reacting emotionally, they may decide to keep it a secret.
2. Assure them that they did the right thing by coming to you with phrases like "I'm going to help you get through this" or "You won't be alone."
3. Seek professional help.

