

Self Harm

How can I help my friend / flatmate?

Quick Response:

1. Stay calm. Show that you are concerned, but acknowledge that self harming might be a way of coping for them.
2. Don't make assumptions—self harming does not necessarily mean they are thinking of suicide.
3. Ask what, if anything, they would like you to do to help. Ask if they want to talk about it, or need medical help.
4. If they need medical help, contact Elms Reception (if living in University halls) or call 999 (off campus)
5. Make the person aware of support available to them. If in doubt, speak to one of the support services below.

Support Available:

University Counselling
Service 028 9097 2774

Queen's Elms Reception
(University accommodation
only)
028 9097 4525

Lifeline (24 hour)
0808 808 8000

Your own GP

www.qub.ac.uk/studentinfo

What is self harm?

Most of us act at some time in a way that is harmful to our body, whether by drinking, smoking or other excesses. This info sheet is about when people inflict injury in a more deliberate way, which may include causing a physical injury, putting oneself in dangerous situations, or self neglect. Such actions are rarely an attempt at suicide, but indicate that difficulties exist, and may be an attempt to cope with problems.

What should I do if someone tells me they are self harming or thinking about it?

Things to do...

Ask them what, if anything, they would like you to do to help

If they are willing to talk about it—encourage them to seek professional help

Let the person remain in control as much as possible

Offer ideas for distractions—talk about things not related to self harm, watch a film, go for a walk

Show them that you care and can see the person beyond the self harm

If they tell you they have just self harmed, stay calm and ask if they want to talk about it, or need any medical help

Get help for dealing with and understanding your own feelings and emotions

Only help as much as you feel able to—you need to look after your own wellbeing

Things not to do...

Don't assume what they need and want, or take any action without discussing it

Don't force them to get help or take control away

Don't try to make them stop self harming or give ultimatums. Asking them to 'promise' not to harm themselves only adds more pressure.

Don't assume that they always need to talk about self harm, or not allow them time and space alone

Don't change your perspective of them as a person—they are an individual, not a 'self harmer'

Don't get angry, shout or show shock

Don't blame yourself or take it personally

Don't blame them for making you worry or talk about how much this is impacting on you—contact the Counselling Service

Adapted from National Self Harm Network, "Advice for friends, family and carers"
<http://www.nshn.co.uk/friends.html>