

## Some Useful Tips

### Try To

- Be honest about the feelings and issues self harm raises for you and make sure you have good support to be able to off load the issues
- Show concern for injuries
- Be open and make time to listen
- Empower the person to make their own decisions
- Be calm and patient

### Try Not To

- Show disappointment if person continues to self harm despite all your support
- Give ultimatums
- Shout
- Force the person to talk
- Confiscate self harm equipment
- Make promises that might be difficult to fulfil
- Force a person to stop, remember self harm could be keeping them safe

**Penumbra** is a leading Scottish voluntary organisation providing services for people who are experiencing mental ill health. We provide a range of person centred, recovery-based support services across Scotland. We also aim to raise awareness of mental health issues and reduce stigma and discrimination.

We have many years experience working in this area. Of the total number of people that Penumbra's Fife Self Harm Project support face to face, all of them have current issues around self-harm, or have experienced difficulties in the past.

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your way to a brighter future

## Fife Self-Harm Project

[penumbra.org.uk](http://penumbra.org.uk)

**chooselife**  
A national strategy and action plan  
to prevent suicide in Scotland

## What is Self-harm and Why do People do it?

People self-harm in a variety of ways from cutting, burning and hitting themselves to abusing drugs and alcohol. The reasons behind such harm may be diverse and complex and may include the feeling of being cleansed, the physical expression of emotional pain and an escape from feelings of emptiness and numbness to name a few. Some of the reasons may be consequences of any form of abuse, being bullied, homelessness, stress, poor self image, physical and/or mental illness and undeveloped coping strategies .

### Feelings After Self-harm

The act of self-harm can leave a person feeling relaxed, peaceful and more in touch with reality. However there are many negative feelings attached to the act such as isolation, guilt, confusion, and feeling stigmatised. People are often reluctant to disclose their behaviour and the trauma behind it for fear of disapproval, being labelled or being judged and stigmatised. And as it is a taboo subject, people feel they cannot talk about it.

### What Self-harm is Not

A common myth around self-harm is that it is “attention-seeking” behaviour, however most people self-harm in private and attempt to hide their injuries. There is also a belief that it is an attempt at suicide. Whilst the two can be linked, self-harm is often a person’s way of coping and in many respects is keeping them safe.

### What is the Fife Self Harm Project?

Penumbra initiated a project in Fife which aims to offer support to people aged 18 or over who have issues around self harm.

Referral can be made by another organisation, doctor, psychiatrist, psychologist, parent, sibling or self. On receiving the referral, a member of staff will make contact with the person. Staff aim to meet the person as close to their area as possible.

By actively listening and being completely non-judgemental, staff endeavour to guide the person towards appropriate sources of support and strategies for coping.

### How the Service can Help Professionals

The project can also offer information and awareness-raising for professionals to increase confidence in supporting people who self harm.

### How the Project can Help Families and Carers

The resources and materials we have will also be available for anyone involved in supporting a person who is self harming. Advice will be given on coping techniques and how to help the person.

### Useful Telephone Numbers

Samaritans 08457 90 90 90

Breathing Space 0800 83 85 87

Saneline 0845 767 8000

Stresswatch Scotland 01563 574 144

Parentline Scotland 0808 800 2222

NHS24 08454 24 24 24

Debtline 0808 808 4000

Cruse 0870 167 1677

Domestic Abuse Helpline 0800 027 1234

Sexual Abuse Helpline 08088 01 03 02

Eating Disorders Association 0845 634 1414