

Self-Harm Conversation Tips

It can be hard to know what to say when you're worried that someone is self-harming. Whether you approach someone you are worried about, or someone opens up to you about their self-harm, try to respond in a non-judgemental, caring and respectful way. Here are some tips that may help:

Start a conversation

Starting a conversation is half the battle. Set plenty of time aside to talk to them, somewhere you will be free from interruption. Acknowledge how difficult it might be to open up about their self-harm but don't focus on getting them to tell you details. Instead, use open questions to ask about how they're feeling and what they're going through.

“Hey, I've noticed you haven't seemed yourself lately... how are you?”

Listen

Show them that you care by paying attention and encouraging them to continue talking. Try not to react shocked or disgusted – negative reactions can hurt the other person and may put them off talking. Let them know they don't need to be apologetic.

“That sounds really tough. Tell me more.”

Encourage

You might not understand what they are going through or why they do it but remind them that there are many sources of support available to them. Offer them help in seeking professional support and provide information on ways to do this. Be positive and let them know that things will improve and recovery is possible!

“Shall we look at where we can get some professional support to help you through this?”

Act

Someone who has experienced self-harm might tell you to keep it a secret. If you believe they are in immediate danger or have injuries that need medical attention, call 999.

Self-care

Having these conversations are tough. Make sure to take time out to look after yourself and find someone to talk to about your own feelings.

For more advice, visit:
startaconversation.co.uk/self-harm

