

How to talk to your child. Some helpful do's and don'ts.

Sometimes it can be handy to identify how the child wants to talk about self-harm.

Is the word self-harm or hurting OK? If it is not, then ask what they would like to call it. Some choose 'set-back' or 'one of those incidents'. Some like to name it as something that visits them for example 'Impulsive Isabel called today' (Not child's own name) which can externalise the behaviour away from themselves. This can be helpful as these 'visits' might not happen for ever.

You can also agree with the child how she/he might communicate with you about the coping strategy (self-harm) so you can know how it is going. Using a post box or area to place messages can be useful. Questions or concerns can be raised or a parent can send a positive message. You can also talk about self-care, using creams or lotions to prevent scarring but be mindful that some children want to scar or feel unworthy of being scar less. This may be because they want to show they are vulnerable or need help or feel this is 'being honest' Whilst you can educate a child, you can't take away their choices. For some children very deep into self-harming, scars are part of coping.

Keep using a safety plan (See separate notes on this page) to agree on what to do after an incident.