

Telling Others About Your Self-Harm

Objective

To tell others you trust about your self-harm so you can receive support.

You Should Know

You might keep your self-harming behavior a secret from your family and friends. You may feel ashamed or guilty, and you might worry that others will think you're "crazy" or a "freak." You may even worry that you will be hospitalized.

Hiding a secret can be very lonely. By hiding your wounds and behavior from others, you may feel even more isolated and misunderstood - and end up injuring yourself even more. Telling people you trust about your self-harm will enable you to get the help you need.

What You Should Do

Most people have incorrect assumptions about what self-harm is or why a person would choose to do it. By explaining why you self-harm to people you trust, including how it makes you feel, they will begin to understand what you have been going through. It will make it easier to get the support you need, and you will probably feel very relieved that you're not hiding this secret any longer.

Here are some phrases to prepare for a conversation with your parent or someone else you trust. You can use this as a "script." Complete the following sentences, and use extra paper if you need more space.

I have something to tell you, and I need you to listen without interrupting me. You can ask me anything you want once I've finished talking.

I hurt myself when I feel _____.

When I self-harm, it makes me feel _____.

I have been hurting myself since _____.

I hurt myself by _____.

I am letting you know because I want _____.

You can support me the most by _____.

I would like to get help because _____.

What other things would you want this person to know? Add it here:

Who do you plan to tell about your self-harm (family member, friend, teacher, guidance counselor, pastor, coach)?

How would you like them to react?

What would you like to have happen after that?

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything in particular you learned from this exercise?
