

LINKING THE FEELING WITH COPING TIPS AND DISTRACTIONS HAND-OUT

Using alternatives to self-harm will help your young person get through an intense moment when they may feel a strong urge to hurt themselves. But it's never going to be easy, especially when they are trying to break the cycle for the first time. Doing something like squeezing ice won't cure the roots of the distress, but it may help them to use a more productive coping mechanism and show them that they can cope with stress in a less harmful way. They will have to make a conscious effort to not hurt themselves, but the important thing is that if they do decide to use an alternative, they made that choice themselves.

If you cut to express pain and intense emotions:

- Paint, draw, or scribble on a big piece of paper with red ink or paint
- Express your feelings in a journal
- Compose a poem or song to say what you feel
- Write down any negative feelings and then rip the paper up
- Listen to music that expresses what you're feeling

If you cut to calm and soothe yourself:

- Take a bath or hot shower
- Pet or cuddle with a dog or cat
- Wrap yourself in a warm blanket
- Massage your neck, hands, and feet
- Listen to calming music

If you cut because you feel disconnected and numb:

- Call a friend (you don't have to talk about self-harm)
- Take a cold shower
- Hold an ice cube in the crook of your arm or leg
- Chew something with a very strong taste, like chili peppers, peppermint, or a grapefruit peel.
- Go online to a self-help website, chat room, or message board

If you cut to release tension or vent anger:

- Exercise vigorously—run, dance, jump rope or hit a punching bag
- Punch a cushion or mattress or scream into your pillow
- Squeeze a stress ball or squish Play-Doh or clay
- Rip something up (sheets of paper, a magazine)
- Make some noise (play an instrument, bang on pots and pans)

