

PARENTS HAND OUT MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT CUTTING AND SELF-HARM

Because cutting and other means of self-harm tend to be taboo subjects, the people around the young person—and possibly even the young person themselves—may harbour serious misconceptions about the young person's motivations and state of mind.

MYTH: Self-harm is a suicidal act.

FACT: Although people do die from self-harm, these instances are accidental; in general, self-harmers do not want to die. In fact, self-injury may be a way of coping, of regaining control of pain—in order to go on living.

MYTH: People who self-injure are crazy.

FACT: Those who self-harm are usually dealing with trauma, not mental health problems. There are exceptions, but by and large, the young person is probably trying to cope with problems in the only way they know how.

MYTH: Injuring yourself is a cry for attention.

FACT: Friends, family, and even healthcare professionals may think that if a young person hurts themselves, they are seeking attention, but the painful truth is that people who self-harm generally try to hide what they are doing—rather than draw attention to it—because they feel ashamed and afraid.

MYTH: Self-harm is just the latest fashion which young people will grow out of.

FACT: Self-harm is not a phase or a fashion. Listening to certain music, or dressing in certain ways does not lead to self-harm. People of all ages, backgrounds and of both genders self-harm. Self-harm is always a signal that something is seriously wrong.

MYTH: Don't approach a young person who self-harms; send them straight to the doctor.

FACT: Taking time to listen without judging encourages young people to get their problems out into the open—the first step along the road to recovery.

