

# Ways of managing an urge to self-harm

[www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk](http://www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk)

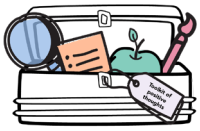


## Distraction techniques

When you feel an urge to self-harm try some of the following and find out what works for you:

- Phone or arrange to meet a someone you trust. Talk openly about how you are feeling.
- Relax quietly and do some diaphragmatic breathing or relaxation exercises. Or try yoga, mindfulness, meditation or listen to some calming music.
- Call a helpline for emotional support
- Go for a run or a swim.
- Take a walk in nature.
- Dance around the room or shout out loud.
- Tear something up.
- Hold ice cubes or take a cold shower.
- Eat something strong or spicy.
- Flick an elastic band on your wrist.
- Hit, or scream into a cushion.
- Play a mobile phone or computer game.
- Focus on a domestic task like making a drink, cooking, baking, tidying up, doing the ironing or gardening.
- Go to a public place like the supermarket, library or shopping mall.
- Do a puzzle.
- Pamper yourself or do something you enjoy - take a massage, go to a café or cinema, eat a piece of chocolate (a small amount) or watch a TV comedy.
- Read a magazine or favourite book.
- Doodle or be creative with an adult colouring book.
- Express yourself through art - paint, draw, take photos or write down your feelings.
- Sing along to a favourite song.
- Do a craft you enjoy - origami, sewing, knitting.
- Try aromatherapy.
- Take a hot bubble bath.
- Stroke an animal.
- Start doing voluntary work, join a club or start a part-time course.





## A toolbox of positive thoughts

Create a 'toolbox' which can help boost your mood whenever you find yourself feeling low or anxious:

- Make lists of things you like about yourself, successes, things you are grateful for, good experiences and compliments.
- Come up with a list of things that you can do for a quick mood boost - a walk in nature, playing with a pet, a craft activity.
- Include some upbeat music, a funny movie, a favourite book and photographs that make you feel happy.
- Write a note to remind yourself that how you are feeling now will pass - 'It will pass'.



## Delay technique

You could also try this technique to help you delay the need to self-harm - wait 10 minutes and then another 10 minutes, delay for an hour and keep increasing the length of time for as long as you can.