

Do's and don'ts when talking to young people about self-harm



Be honest about your role and the limits of confidentiality



Use a safe, calm and private space to have the conversation

- **Respect your limits**
- **Be aware** of your own preconceptions and prejudices.
- **Listen** and give encouragement to them for sharing.
- **Show concern** for their injuries whilst remaining calm.
- **Ask** what they would like to happen.

If you don't feel able to have the conversation, find somebody who can facilitate. Be aware of your body language. Be patient and acknowledge that it may be difficult for them to talk. Accept that they may have mixed feelings about their self-harm.

Try not to tell them the behaviour is wrong or punish them



Try not to let your own feelings about self-harm compromise your response



Try not to:

- **Judge** them
- **Blame** them for your own feelings of shock and upset
- **Assume** that you know why they are self-harming
- **Avoid** talking about self-harm.
- **Make them promise** you that they won't self-harm.

Do not make them promise you that they won't self-harm. This is likely to add emotional pressure and could make them feel guilty. It can be dangerous to take away objects they are self-harming with. Hiding their means of self-harm can lead them to harming in secret and finding other means.