

# How to avoid, delay or reduce self-harm



**Distractions** help re-direct the mind's attention and give it something better to focus on. **Must be used as early as possible after they urges start in order to work.** The distractions need to match your mood, the urges' intensity and the emotions you feel at the time.

Many of these ideas drop into more than one category.

## Ground:

Feet firmly on the ground (sometimes better to be barefoot outside)

54321: 5 things you can see, 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, 1 thing you can taste (or favourite taste)

Breathing exercises

Be in nature

Focus on comforting textures

Hold something warm/cold and focus on the sensation

Stroke something smooth/rough and focus on the sensation

Squeeze a stress ball

Make a ball out of rubber bands

Count whatever is around (floor tiles, ceiling tiles, patterns on wallpaper, cars going past your window etc.)

Stand under the water in the shower or in heavy rain

Drink some water

Listen to birds

Fidget toys/play with coins

Play with blue tac

Smell/hold things that remind of safe times (perfume, scented candles, blanket/soft toy/item belonging to favourite person etc.)

Notice what is different today than it was yesterday (blooming trees, flower buds etc.)

Receive a massage, reiki or energy healing from a person you trust

## Find comfort:

Curl up under a duvet/(weighted) blanket

Sleep

Hug a loved one

Stroke/hug/cuddle a pet

Hug a soft toy

Have a hot drink

Have a pyjama day and watch TV

Use a Worry Bear

Massage own hands

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## Listen/watch:

- Music through speakers or headphones
- Watch favourite TV series
- Watch favourite film
- Watch something easy
- Watch something engaging
- YouTube videos (funny, engaging etc.)
- Put together a new playlist on your phone
- Watch documentaries on a subject you are interested in
- Listen to the sound of waves/stream
- Gaze into a flame (candle or campfire/firepit)
- Cloud watch
- Star gaze

## Be active but do not overdo it:

- Go for a walk somewhere quiet, a park or in nature
- Run
- Tai chi
- Go to the gym
- Ride a bike
- Bounce a ball against a wall
- Wash the car
- Walk the dog
- Play outdoor games with the dog
- Do some tidying up (remove clutter)
- Do some cleaning (create a better environment for yourself)
- Do some vacuuming
- Swim
- Yoga
- Play sports
- Dance
- Gardening
- Play with pets
- DIY

## Create:

- Draw (from own imagination or copy depending on what is safer/more effective)
- Paint
- Colour in
- Sew
- Embroider
- Felt shapes (sewing)
- Needle felting
- Cross stitch
- Decorate glass
- Painting/stickers by numbers
- Creative kits (making candles/soap etc.)
- Do Origami
- Modelling clay
- Draw/doodle/squiggle on your legs or arms (use a felt tip pen or poster paints – NOT red)
- Carving (wood, candles etc.)
- Make models (from paper planes to kits)
- Paint nails
- Make greeting cards
- Write in a journal
- Write a blog
- Write poetry
- Sing
- Cook
- Learn a new craft/new skills
- Doodle
- Knit
- Crochet
- Weaving
- Write stories
- Write a song
- Bake

## Play: games, toys, puzzles:

Video games	Games on the phone
Board games	Word searches
Crosswords	Sudoku
Rubik's cube or similar puzzle	
Lego	Geomag

## Reach out to others/be a part of the community:

- Be with others who accept you as you are
- Be with loved ones – just be
- Speak to a friend/family member
- Meet up with a friend
- Post on the Battle Scars Facebook group
- Reply to posts in the Battle Scars Facebook group (or similar) and help yourself by helping others
- Post or reply to posts on web forums
- Talk to your therapist
- Join in the Battle Scars groups (face-to-face or virtual) or similar mental health/self-harm support groups
- Help someone else
- Call a helpline
- Spend time at a day centre/community centre/club
- Go out to a public place (instead of being alone)
- Text/message/video friends/loved ones

## Vent:

- Punch a pillow
- Scream into a pillow
- Loud music in the car and sing as loud as you like, scream or swear
- Cry
- Use a punch bag (or hay bale if you have access to one) – use boxing gloves and avoid bruising
- Smash things you do not need/want (such as bottles at a bottle bank)
- Write what is annoying/winding you up or swear words on the things you break
- Scrub/vigorously clean (doors, skirting boards etc.)

## Be productive:

- Write a to-do list for one day or longer (keep it small!)
- Write a have-done list (make it as big as you can!)
- Schedule some things to avoid procrastination (be sensible)
- Make a weekly plan but be flexible
- Do some admin/paperwork
- Work on a project
- Focus on work
- Catalogue your books or CD's or collectables etc.
- Do some voluntary work
- Help educate others about self-harm

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## Other:

- Read
- Play a musical instrument
- Meditate
- Do a guided meditation
- Write a list of things you are grateful for
- Write a list of things you are looking forward to
- Change your body temperature by having a warm/cold bath/shower, hold on to something cold (but not frozen), put an ice back on the back of your neck
- Write whatever words come to mind (extra: using different colours and/or styles)
- Write down thoughts and destroy them (crumple or burn them)
- Pampering (facemask, haircut etc.)
- Feed the ducks at the park (not bread)
- Let craft glue/PVA dry on your body and peel it off

## **Delaying techniques can result in avoiding self-harm- Be aware of your safe self-harm limits and when delaying becomes more dangerous than beneficial**

Put obstacles in the way: keep self-harm tools or tablets out of easy reach.

"Not enough time now", "too many people about", "not now, later/after I've done this" etc.

Walk away from food sources (if bingeing/overeating is one of your self-harm methods)

## **Deterrents – not meant to create guilt or negative emotions but might work for some**

Consider the discomfort of healing injuries

Consider how hard it can be to hide scars (if you hide them)

Consider the difficulty explaining new injuries

Consider the time it can take at the Emergency Department if you need treatment or the possible negative staff attitude **(ALWAYS get help if you have badly hurt yourself or if you have overdosed)**

## **Harm reduction – use with caution, these are still self-harm methods causing pain/discomfort or resemble self-harm. They reinforce the self-destructive programming in the brain that pain or blood is the solution to emotional distress. Use as a last resort**

Snap a rubber band/hair tie on the wrist

Draw on yourself using a red felt tip pen

Clutch ice cubes or hold them on the area of the body you are planning on injuring (red food colouring can be added [may stain])

Hold strong mouthwash in your mouth

Eat very spicy food, eat a chilli

Suck on extra strong mints (extra: drink cold water afterwards)