

A GLIMPSE INTO



Self-Injury

A guide on what self-injury is and to raise awareness on what might be going on for a person with self-injury.

Acknowledgements

SHINE ResiL!ence would like to thank the following partners and individuals for their invaluable contributions to the guide:

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SingHealth





What is Self-Injury?

Self-injury is any form of behaviour where someone causes harm or injury to themselves.

Usually used as a way to help cope with difficult or distressing thoughts and feelings.

Self-injury can include:

- Cutting
- Burning
- Scratching
- Hitting self or against objects
- Non-lethal overdoses

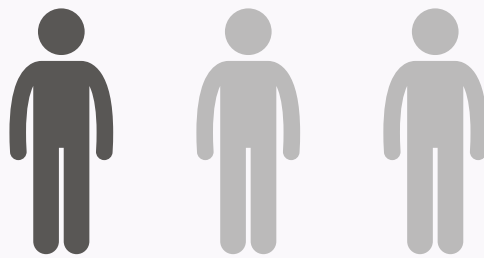
Boys and girls may engage in different self-injuring behaviours

- These behaviours are equally concerning



Some Background on Self-Injury

Self-injury affects more of us than
one might think:



Approximately 36% of young Singaporeans
have engaged in self-injurious behaviours.¹

**However, with the right help and
support, many who self-injure
can and do fully recover.**





What Self-Injury Is Not

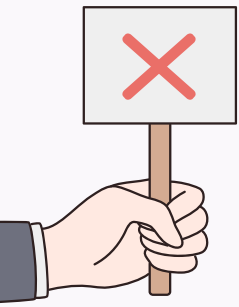


1 Myth: Self-injury is attention-seeking

Many who self-injure actually don't talk to anyone about what they are going through for a long time.

It can be very hard for some to feel safe enough to ask for help.





What Self-Injury Is Not

2 Myth: People who self-injure enjoy it

No evidence to support this.

The immense pain from the injury is often described as a relief or distraction from overwhelming emotions.

- Some also described the pain as a form of self-punishment.
- For others, feeling depressed can leave them distressingly numb. Self-injury has also been described as a way to feel something, to remind themselves that they are alive, even if it hurts.



What Self-Injury

Is Not



3 Myth: Everyone who self-injure is suicidal

Sometimes, self-injurious behaviours may be viewed as suicide attempts.

However, it is often more about coping with difficult feelings and circumstances.

That being said, there are **some** who also feel suicidal and may attempt to take their own life, which is why this must always be taken seriously, with steps taken to ensure their safety.



Why Do People Self-Injure?



Everyone has different sources of stress and worries

When the pressure builds up and becomes unbearable...

- Some may hurt their bodies as a way to express the thoughts and feelings that they struggle to say aloud.
- Others may find the pain from their injury a great relief or distraction from the overwhelming emotions.



Why Is It Hard To Stop Self-Injury?

The maintaining cycle of self-injury

Emotional Suffering

Emotional Overload

Relief ends or shame/guilt for injuring self

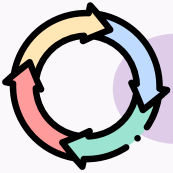
Urges to self-injure

Temporary Relief

Self-Injury



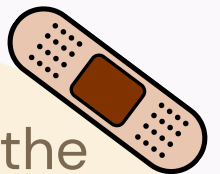
Why Is It Hard To Stop Self-Injury?



The maintaining cycle of self-injury

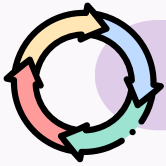
The quick relief experienced after the injury can reinforce the continued use of self-injury as a coping strategy.

Yet this relief is only temporary because the underlying trigger and difficulties dealing with overwhelming emotions remain unresolved.



Start breaking the cycle by becoming aware of where you're at in the cycle and try out safer strategies to cope with the overwhelming emotions.

Breaking Free From The Cycle



Tips to try out at different points in the cycle

Emotional Suffering

When you notice your distress rising, seek support from trusted adults to help with comforting you, identifying triggers and tackling them.



Urges to self-injure

Become aware of urges to self-injure and seek support from people or activities that can keep you safe until your emotions subside to a manageable level.



Relief ends or shame/guilt for injuring self

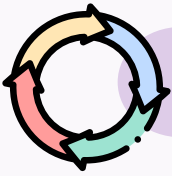
When the relief ends or distress feelings come up again, be kind and patient with yourself. You are going through a tough time. Gently encourage yourself to learn a safer way to cope with the distressing emotions.



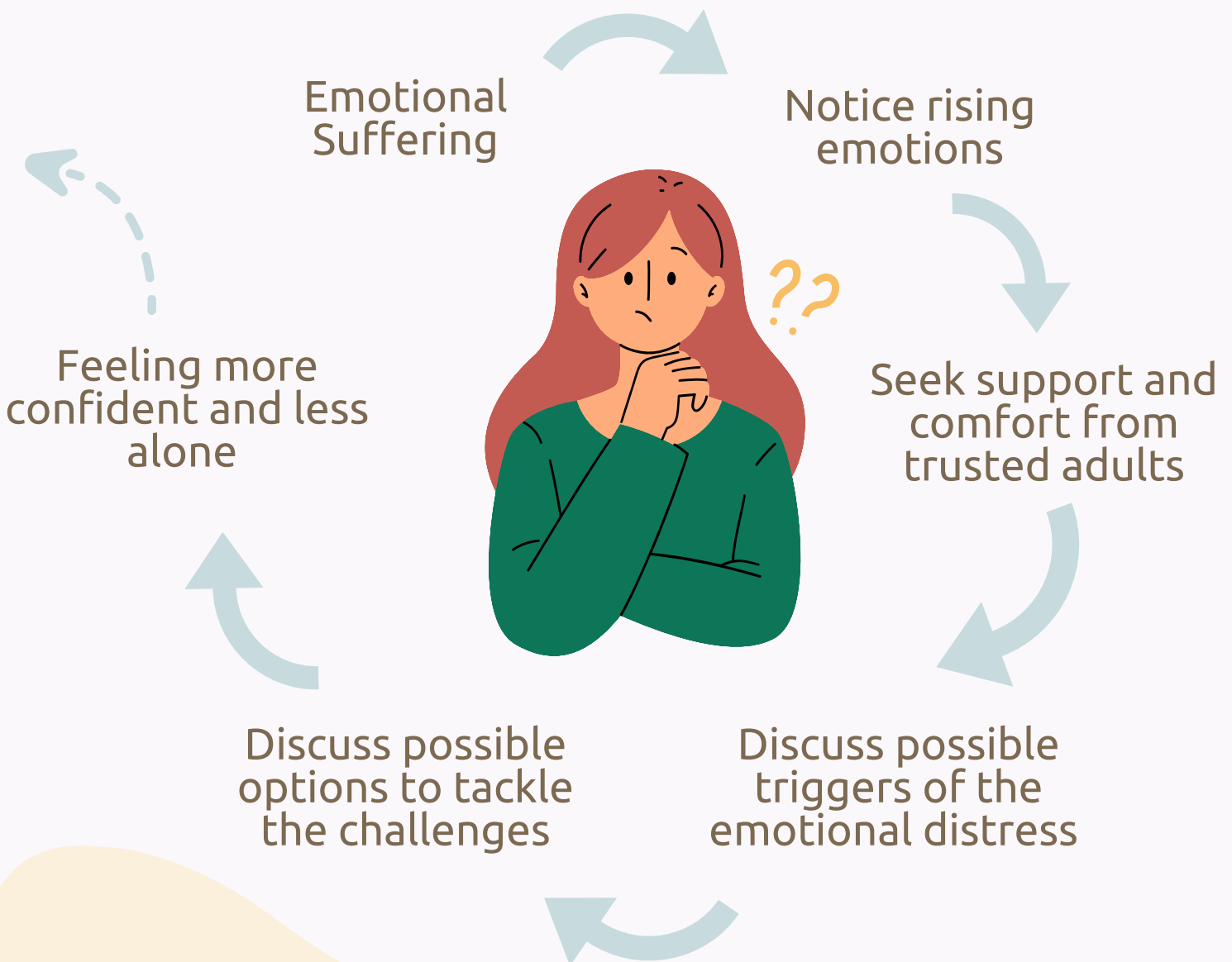
At any point in the cycle, remind yourself that you are valued and self-injury is unhelpful for you in the long run.



Breaking Free From The Cycle

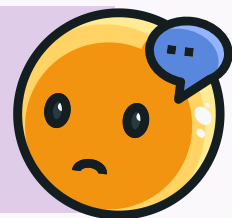


Start by noticing where you are at in the cycle

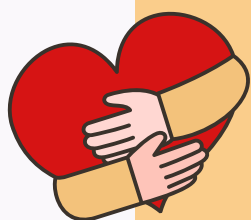


Breaking free from the cycle of self-injury is not easy. Many people benefit from consistent support and practice.

The urge to self-injure can be tempting because nobody wants to stay in a heightened, distressed or numb state.



Finding out what makes you happy, sad, angry, isolated, vulnerable or strong can help you develop healthy ways of coping with distress.



Remember, adolescence is hard!

This is a period of self-navigation, while juggling with friends, family and school demands. It can be a challenging time.



It is okay to take things one step at a time. Give yourself time and practice so as to learn how to cope with the accompanying emotions.



Talk to someone when you feel ready

This may be a friend, teacher, school counsellor, youth worker, family member, mental health hotline or anyone you can trust and feel comfortable with.

Talking to someone you trust can allow you to explore what leads you to self-injure and discover new ways of working through difficult thoughts or regulating painful emotions.



**For more specific support on self-injury,
please approach your school counsellor or
a youth worker in the community.**

Self-help

I want to download the Myloh app!



Screening and Support Services

Community Health Assessment Team (CHAT)
Youth Community Outreach Teams
Youth Community Intervention Teams

Crisis

SOS 24-hour hotline: 1-767 (1- SOS)

SOS 24-hour care WhatsApp: 9151 1767

Non-immediate SOS support: pat@sos.org.sg

IMH Hotline: 6389 2222

Emergency support: 995

Youth Community Outreach & Intervention Teams



Outreach

Focus on outreach, mental health screening, basic emotional support, and caregiver engagement

Intervention

Focus on mental health assessment, community based intervention, caregiver engagement



Temasek Foundation Youth Connect

An initiative by



KK Women's and
Children's Hospital
SingHealth

**TEMASEK
FOUNDATION**

Published by KK Women's and Children's Hospital

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