



Linking the feeling with coping tips and distractions.

Using alternatives to self-harm can help you through an intense moment when you may feel a strong urge to hurt yourself. But it's never going to be easy, especially if you are trying to break the cycle for the first time.

Doing something like squeezing ice won't cure the roots of your distress, but it may help you to use

a more productive coping mechanism and show you that you can cope with stress in a less harmful way. You will have to make a conscious effort to not hurt yourself, but the important thing is that if you do decide to try an alternative way to express your hurt, remember to be proud of yourself, as you made that choice for yourself.

If you cut to express pain and intense emotions:

- Paint, draw, or scribble on a big piece of paper with red ink or paint
- Express your feelings in a journal
- Compose a poem or song to say what you feel
- Write down any negative feelings and then rip the paper up
- Listen to music that expresses what you're feeling

If you cut to calm and soothe yourself:

- Take a bath or hot shower
- Pet or cuddle with a dog or cat
- Wrap yourself in a warm blanket
- Massage your neck, hands, and feet
- Listen to calming music

If you cut because you feel disconnected and numb:

- Call a friend (you don't have to talk about self-harm)
- Take a really cold shower
- Hold an ice cube in the crook of your arm or leg
- Chew something with a very strong taste, like chili peppers, peppermint, or a grapefruit peel
- Go online to a self-help website, chat room, or message board

If you cut to release tension or vent anger:

- Exercise vigorously—run, dance, jump rope or hit a punching bag
- Punch a cushion or mattress or scream into your pillow
- Squeeze a stress ball or squish Play-Doh or clay
- Rip something up (sheets of paper, a magazine)
- Make some noise (play an instrument, bang on pots and pans)

And remember to check out your handouts from teen FLASH for your coping strategies; you all came up with fabulous ideas! 😊



The A-Z of distractions

Often the best thing is to find out what has worked for other people who understand where you're coming from. TheSite.org asked young people from young people's mental health service 42nd Street to come up with some of the alternatives that help them.

Here is the list A-Z

A Alternative therapies: massage, reiki, meditation, acupuncture, aromatherapy

B Bake or cook something tasty

C Clean (and won't your folks/housemates be pleased!)

C Craftwork: make things, draw or paint

D Dance your socks off

E Eat sweets or chocolate for an instant sugar rush (but be careful of the dip in your mood once it's over)

E Exercise for a release of endorphins and that feel-good factor

F Forward planning - concentrate on something in the future, like a holiday

G Go for a walk

G Go online and look at websites that offer you advice and information

H Hang out with friends and family

H Have a bubble bath with lots of bath bombs fizzing around you

H Have a good cry

H Hug a soft toy

I Invite a friend round

J Join a gym or a club

K Knit (it's not just for old people you know)

L Listen to music

M Moisturise

M Music: singing, playing instruments, listening to (basically making as much noise as you can)

O Open up to a friend or family member about how you are feeling

P Pop bubble wrap

P Phone a helpline or a friend

P Play computer games

P Play with a stress ball or make one yourself

R Read a book

R Rip up a phone directory (does anyone actually use them these days?)

S Scream into an empty room

S Shop scanning - looking online

S Spend time with babies (when they're in a good mood)

T Tell or listen to jokes

U Use the internet

V Visit a zoo or a farm (animals do the best things)

V Volunteer for an organisation (will make you feel all warm inside)

W Watch TV or films - particularly comedies

W Write: diary, poems, a book

W Write negative feelings on paper, then rip them up

Y Yoga: meditation, mindfulness