

# Acute Training Solutions

## Self Harm - Practical Avoidance Techniques

Identifying triggers for self-harm can help in recognising when a person might feel the urge to harm themselves allowing the opportunity to take avoiding or distracting action. Many self-harmers have found the following helpful.

### Practical avoidance techniques

- Counting backwards can help bring the mind to attention and prevent a self-harm episode. Focusing on the immediate environment and thinking about something they can see, smell, hear, taste and touch is another way of redirecting the mind away from self-harming.
- Simple deep breathing techniques can also prove calming and distracting.
- Some people who have cut themselves in the past have reported that marking themselves with a red, water-soluble pen (rather than drawing blood) or rubbing ice (for a short while) in the place where they have the urge to cut can help them avoid self-harm. If the urge itself cannot be eradicated, the goal should be to minimise the harm done.
- Encourage known self-harmers to be wary of making bad decisions when in a frenzy of emotion. Pausing to think before taking action or succumbing to a knee-jerk response to events is sound advice for all people and doesn't single out self-harmers.
- Encourage at-risk people to write a list of all the people who can help them and other places they can turn to in times of desperation. These could be friends, family, carers (NH) teachers, support lines such as Child line or the Samaritans, or related websites.
- Make sure that they write relevant contact details for each item on their support list and that they either keep it with them all the time or keep copies in various accessible places.
- Get them to write down their emotions and feelings when they want to self harm.