

When you feel like self-harming or you are experiencing suicidal thoughts, take a moment and ask yourself why. Understanding the emotions behind your urges, can help you match how you act to how you are feeling right now. For example when feeling angry, physical activity could give you relief. When feeling numb, it might help to do something that comforts you and gives you a pleasant sensation.

This guide is intended as a starting point to explore different types of distraction you can use when facing difficult situations. Even though distractions are a great tool during crisis, please remember to allow yourself to feel your emotions so that you can understand and process them.

When feeling sad...

- Cuddle a pet
- Wrap a blanket around yourself
- Listen to soothing music
- Walk in nature
- Allow yourself to cry
- Talk to someone
- Take a relaxing bath
- Go to a place where you feel safe
- Switch off your technology
- Eat your comfort food
- Drink a hot drink
- Watch your favourite movie
- Cuddle a toy/pillow
- Give yourself a present
- Make a tray of special treats
- Light your favourite incense
- Make a list of things that make you happy

When feeling angry...

- Practice deep breathing
- Count objects around you
- Hit cushions
- Exercise
- Scream and shout
- Play loud music and dance it out
- Go for a run
- Throw balled up socks against your wall
- Squeeze a stress ball
- Tear up paperwork or fabrics
- Pop bubble wrap
- Stamp your feet
- Squeeze ice
- Bang pots and pans
- Throw ice into the bathtub to shatter it
- Eat a lemon

When feeling numb / disconnected...

- List the different uses of a random object
- Interact with other people
- Put a finger into frozen food
- Squeeze ice
- Bite into a hot pepper, a lemon or some ginger
- Take a cold shower
- Focus on your breathing
- Flick elastic bands
- Smell a strong odour

When feeling out of control...

- Tidy up
- Write a to do list
- Try mindfulness exercises
- Do some gardening
- Clench and relax your muscles
- Rearrange your clothes
- Clear out your unwanted stuff
- Write a letter
- Write in a diary or journal
- Untangle necklaces, string, wool

When feeling guilty...

- Practice positive affirmations
- Read old letters from friends /family
- Tell yourself that it's okay to make mistakes
- Remember times you've done something good
- List as many positive things about yourself as you can
- Read something good that someone has written about you
- Do something nice for someone else
- Talk to someone that cares about you

Be creative...

- Origami
- Sew or knit
- Colour in
- Write a blog
- Make a playlist of your favourite songs
- Write a poem, song, letter about how you feel
- Write down your full name, then make as many words out of it as possible
- Draw or paint
- Doodle or scribble
- Do crosswords, sudoku etc.
- Sing to music or play an instrument

Reach out to others...

- Use online support groups
- Go outside and be around other people
- Call a helpline or the emergency services
- Call a friend or family member and talk about how you feel

Do something mindful...

- Count down really slowly from 100 to 0
- Eat a raisin or chocolate really slowly focusing on its taste and texture
- Breathe slowly, in through the nose and out through mouth
- Meditate, do yoga, learn relaxation exercises
- Find things around you that you can see, hear, smell, taste and touch

IF YOU STILL FEEL THE NEED TO INJURE, TRY THESE SELF-HARM DISPLACEMENT TECHNIQUES:

- Putting stickers on the parts of your body you want to injure
- Drawing on yourself in red marker
- Snapping an elastic band on your wrist
- Drawing slashing lines on paper
- Putting plasters or bandages on where you want to self-harm
- Mix warm water and food colouring and put it on your skin
- Squeeze ice-cubes
- Draw yourself and draw the harm you are imagining then tear up the picture
- Bite into a chili, lemon, piece of ginger
- Cut into fruit such as a grapefruit or banana
- Use a pillow to hit a wall
- Clap your hands together until they sting
- Splash your face with freezing cold water

ADD YOUR OWN:

Distractions I have found helpful in the past:

Distractions I want to try next: