

Distraction Techniques

Distractions To Help With Self-Harm

DISPLACEMENT
REINFORCING
PHYSICAL
CREATIVE
COMFORTING
CONSTRUCTIVE
FUN
DISTRACTIONS WITH
OTHERS



Distraction can be a way to help yourself when you are experiencing the urge to self-harm. Delaying the urge for several minutes can help the urge to pass.

Different distractions work for different people, and different distractions may work for you at different times. It can be useful to create a list of different distractions that you can use.

We have some suggestions for strategies that you can use. You may also find you can come up with some strategies of your own.

DISPLACEMENT

- Draw on your skin with a red pen.
- Snap an elastic band on your wrist.
- Put on a fake tattoo and peel it off.
- Put skin coloured plasticine or clay on your skin and carefully cut the plasticine.
- Draw yourself on a piece of paper. Draw the harm you are imagining and then destroy the picture.
- Put a plaster or bandage where you want to self-harm.
- Bite into a chilli.
- Chew a sensory object.
- Take a photo of yourself when you have strong feelings. Write your feelings on the photo and then destroy it.
- Make ice cubes from water and food colouring. Rub them where you want to self-harm.
- Squeeze ice cubes.
- Draw over old scars to provide a repetitive action to relieve urges.
- Mix water and food colouring or paint and put it on your skin.
- Take a hot shower and scrub. You could also use an exfoliating body wash or glove.

REINFORCING

- Think about not wanting to have scars in the summer.
- Set yourself a target. When you feel the urge, promise yourself you won't self-harm for 10 minutes. When you reach this target, set a new target to not self-harm for 15 minutes. Continue to increase the time.
- Think about not wanting to go into hospital.
- When you feel the urge to self-harm, snap a glowstick. Promise yourself you won't harm while the glowstick is still glowing. The glowstick should keep glowing for a few hours, by which time the urge should have passed.

PHYSICAL

- Do some exercise.
- Punch a punching bag.
- Rip up paper into little pieces.
- Pop balloons.
- Squeeze a stress ball.
- Dance.
- Wear boots or heavy shoes and stamp your feet.
- Hit a pillow against the wall or floor.
- Shout, scream and yell.
- Pop bubble wrap.
- Throw soft toys or socks against the wall.
- Go for a walk, run or bike ride.

CREATIVE

- Write in a journal.
- Doodle or scribble.
- Sing.
- Draw or paint.
- Make a playlist of your favourite music.
- Write a story, poetry or lyrics.
- Play an instrument.
- Knit.
- Origami.
- Colouring.

COMFORTING

- Cuddle a soft toy or pillow.
- Allow yourself to cry.
- Have a bath or shower.
- Put on pyjamas and watch a movie or TV show.
- Play or cuddle with a pet.
- Take a nap.
- Drink a warm drink you enjoy.
- Origami.

CONSTRUCTIVE

- Do homework or paperwork.
- Untangle jewellery, string or wool.
- Clean.
- Cook or bake.
- Write a list of things you are grateful for.
- Paint your nails.
- Gardening.
- Write a to-do list.
- Organise your room or wardrobe.
- Read a book.
- Call a helpline.
- Write a list of positive things in your life.
- Do make up.
- Stamp on cans to recycle.

FUN

- Find new music to listen to.
- Dress up.
- Look for your perfect house online.
- Play video games.
- Build something out of Lego, destroy it and rebuild.
- Do puzzles, crosswords or Sudoku.
- Try a craft.
- Make an online shopping wish list.
- Write down your name (or another word) and see how many words you can make from it.
- Use a fiddle toy.
- Go shopping and treat yourself.

DISTRACTION WITH OTHERS

- Spend time with family.
- Offer to help someone.
- Visit friends.
- Talk to someone you feel comfortable with and close to.
- Call or text a friend.
- Go to a public place.
- Hug someone.