Alternatives to Cutting and Self-Harm

Some people cut or self-harm to try to cope with pain or strong emotions, intense pressure or upsetting problems. It may be a way for them to feel control in a situation they feel helpless in. It can be a way to express pain they can’t put into words. It can be a way to feel something (even if it’s pain) at a time they are having trouble being able to feel anything at all.

The relief that comes from self-harm does not last long. It can quickly be followed by feelings like guilt or shame. It can become addictive. It’s possible to hurt yourself badly.

Finding coping techniques or finding other outlets can help in times a person feels the need to cut. Below are ideas to focus on instead of self-harming

To express pain/intense emotions:
- Draw/Paint/Color
- Start a Journal/blog/vlog
- Write a story or poetry
- Compose music
- Play a musical instrument
- Scribble on paper
- Create something in clay
- Sing
- Talk to yourself
- Build/Craft something

To release tension or vent anger:
- Exercise
- Punch a cushion
- Throw socks
- Use a stress ball
- Make Noise/Scream as loud as you can
- Squeeze clay
- Stomp your boots
- Instead of cutting, cover yourself in band-aids
- Write the names of special people or thoughts on your arms
- Tear us an old newspaper
- Draw slash lines on paper

To calm or soothe yourself:
- Take a hot shower or warm bath
- Pet or cuddle a dog or cat
- Wrap yourself in a blanket
- Message your neck, hands or feet
- Listen to calming music
- Hug a pillow or stuffed animal
- Paint your nails
- Watch a favorite movie
- Re-read a favorite book
- Go for a nice walk or drive
- Sit in a cafe and people watch
- Count ceiling tiles or lights
- meditate

Because you feel disconnected/numb:
- Talk to friends
- Take COLD shower
- Hold Ice in the crook of your leg or arm
- Chew something strong like chili, lemon or peppermint
- Snap a rubber band on you wrist
- Focus deeply on a piece of chocolate as you eat
- Blow up a balloon and pop it
- Talk to a therapist or counselor
- Connect online with help forums
- Concentrate on things that have made you happy in the past

Things that inspire you and to focus on instead of self-harm:
- Listen to music
- Read a new book
- Watch a youtube personality that inspires you
- Cook/Bake
- Eat your favorite foods
- Perform 1 act of kindness
- Memorize a song
- Volunteer somewhere

LGBT National Help Center 2018
www.LGBThotline.org