

20 what you can do instead of hurting yourself

you need to know

Many teenagers find that they can resist the impulse to hurt themselves if they do some other activity. Psychologists call these "replacement activities." You can find a replacement activity that makes you think less about hurting yourself and do that activity until your impulse to self-injure goes away.

The best way to reduce your SI is to plan on doing another activity at the time and place that you prefer to hurt yourself. You should try to do these replacement activities several times a week, even when you don't have the urge to self-injure. Then, when you get the impulse to self-injure, immediately start on a replacement activity.

These are some of the activities that teens say can help keep them from hurting themselves:

- **Journal Writing:** Writing about your feelings will also help by allowing you to see your problems more clearly.
- **Relaxation Techniques:** There are many ways to relax, such as yoga or listening to quiet music. Try going for a walk around your neighborhood or meditating. Focus on your breathing and think of calming, pleasant things.
- **Music and Dance:** Listening to your favorite music, singing, or dancing can be relaxing as well as giving you an outlet for pent-up emotion.
- **Art:** Painting, drawing, or working with clay can be very therapeutic.
- **Reading:** Reading a good book can be a great way to distract yourself from self-injury.
- **Exercise:** Exercise of any sort can help distract you from self-injury, and it is healthy in its own right. Exercise can be as simple as taking a walk.

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- **Gardening:** Gardening can be very relaxing for some people. Even in the winter, you can cultivate an indoor garden.
- **Aromatherapy:** Many people find aromatherapy an effective technique to ease stress and reduce anxiety. There are kits available that let you design your own aromatic candles and perfumes.
- **Cleaning your closet or organizing your desk.**
- **E-mail and Instant Messaging:** Many teens love to communicate with other teens they know, and even those they don't know, through e-mail, instant messaging, and blogs. For this activity to serve as a replacement, you should avoid conversations about your SI or sites about SI. Always be aware that there are people using the Internet who wish to harm teens; you should never give out your name, phone, address, or any personal information to a stranger.

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how successful is your replacement activity?

In the chart below, keep track of your mood as you do a replacement activity. Rate each activity on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 = "not successful" and 5 = "very successful."

Replacement Activity	Success Rating

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thinking about yourself

Are there any activities that you used to enjoy but have stopped doing? Can you take these up again?

Most activities are more enjoyable when they are shared. List three people you might ask to do different replacement activities with you.

What replacement activity are you most likely to use? What could prevent you from using this activity to avoid hurting yourself?

Some teens use replacement activities that mimic their SI habits. For example, they might draw on their bodies with red markers instead of cutting themselves. Other teens say that these kinds of activities just make them think about their SI and don't really help. What do you think?
