When trying to stop engaging in non-suicidal self-injury, it can take time to find new ways to cope.

While you are waiting for professional help, or when times are tough, it’s good to have a few alternatives to self-injury. The best option is one you come up with yourself; but if you’re feeling overwhelmed it can be hard to think of anything.

This list below might help you find healthier alternatives.

**TALK TO SOMEONE**

- You could tell a friend or family member how you feel, and why you are upset.
- Or, you could talk to a friend or family member about other things, and see if focusing on something different helps you to cope with the urge to injure.
- If you don’t think you can talk to someone you know, try calling a helpline.
  
  Kids Helpline (for people aged 5-25 years): 1800 55 1800

**DELAY - The urge to injure doesn’t last forever**

- Wait five minutes. Congratulate yourself on that achievement, and then wait five minutes more, or maybe ten. Your level of distress will come down, but it will take time.
- Are you in a place right now where you often injure yourself? It might be your bedroom or bathroom. Get out of there. Change your environment. Go for a walk.
- Are you alone? You’re less likely to injure yourself if there is someone present. Can a friend come and spend time with you? Is there a family member you can talk to?

**DISTRACT YOURSELF - Do something engrossing**

- Watch a film, something that might make you laugh or feel good.
- Do some exercise. Exercise boosts brain chemicals such as endorphins and can help you feel better.
- Do something creative. Maybe you can find others ways to express negative emotions such as art, creative writing, making music or dancing.

**DO SOMETHING ELSE - Can you figure out what has brought on the urge to injure yourself? Think about what injuring yourself will help you with, and try to fulfil it in a different way, one that isn’t harmful.**

- Needing to feel something can be fulfilled by holding ice or touching textures.
- Needing to see blood can be fulfilled by drawing on skin with red ink or paint.
- If you feel the need to punish yourself, try looking for a way to forgive yourself, and do yourself a kindness instead.
- Feeling overwhelmed by negative emotions, and needing to lash out, can be helped by expressing anger against a pillow or a punching bag.

**AVOID ACTIVITIES THAT ARE HARMFUL OR CAUSE PAIN, so that your brain stops associating physical pain or harm with relief or feeling good**

(This document accompanies the Mental Health First Aid Guidelines for Non-suicidal Self-injury: bit.ly/mhfanssi)