

# 24 Identifying self-harming behaviours



If you are working through *The Warrior Within*, these two exercises and further useful information to help you in your recovery can be found on pages 94-95. These two exercises assumes you have completed exercise sheet 1 **Starting an activity journal**.

## Identifying self-harming behaviours

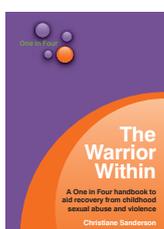
In your journal make a list of the ways in which you could be harming yourself. Be sure to include passive as well as active self-harm such as lack of self-care, inability to express your needs, poor diet, or lack of balance between work, rest and play. Also include any addictive behaviour such as excessive use of alcohol or drugs, gambling, shopping or sex. Include any behaviour that puts you at risk, as well as acts of deliberate self-injury. To keep track of self-harming behaviour you could monitor these by including any triggers to self-injury, how often this occurs and the consequences of self-harm.

## Identifying the purpose of self-harm in your life

Identifying the function of self-harm and self-injury in your life is the first step in learning to manage these behaviours. Look at the list you made in the previous exercise and reflect on what purpose self-harm has in your life and how it regulates your feelings and mood.

## Breaking the cycle of self-injury

In your journal make a list of the triggers that lead to either emotional overload or dissociation. These can be either internal or external, and can include trauma associated signals, as well as critical messages from others. Self-injury can also be triggered by a sense of rejection or abandonment. Making a list of your triggers will alert you to the stimuli that make you vulnerable to self-harm. With this awareness you can pre-empt when self-injury might occur and try to find alternative ways of managing emotional overload or dissociation (see **Managing flashbacks, nightmares, panic attacks and dissociation** on page 70 of *The Warrior Within*).



The content of this exercise sheet is based on *The Warrior Within: A One in Four handbook to aid recovery from childhood sexual abuse and violence* by Christiane Sanderson

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