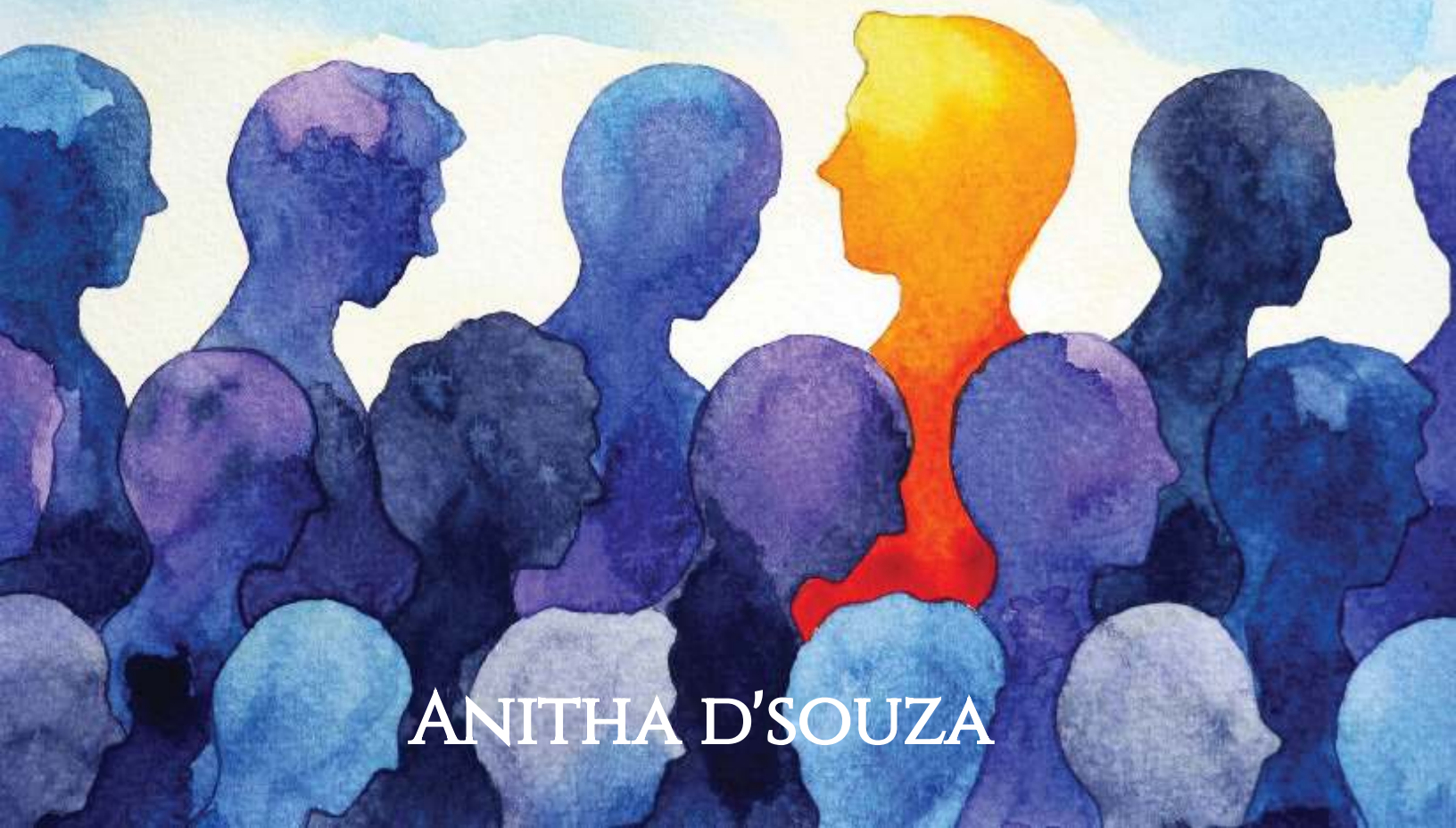
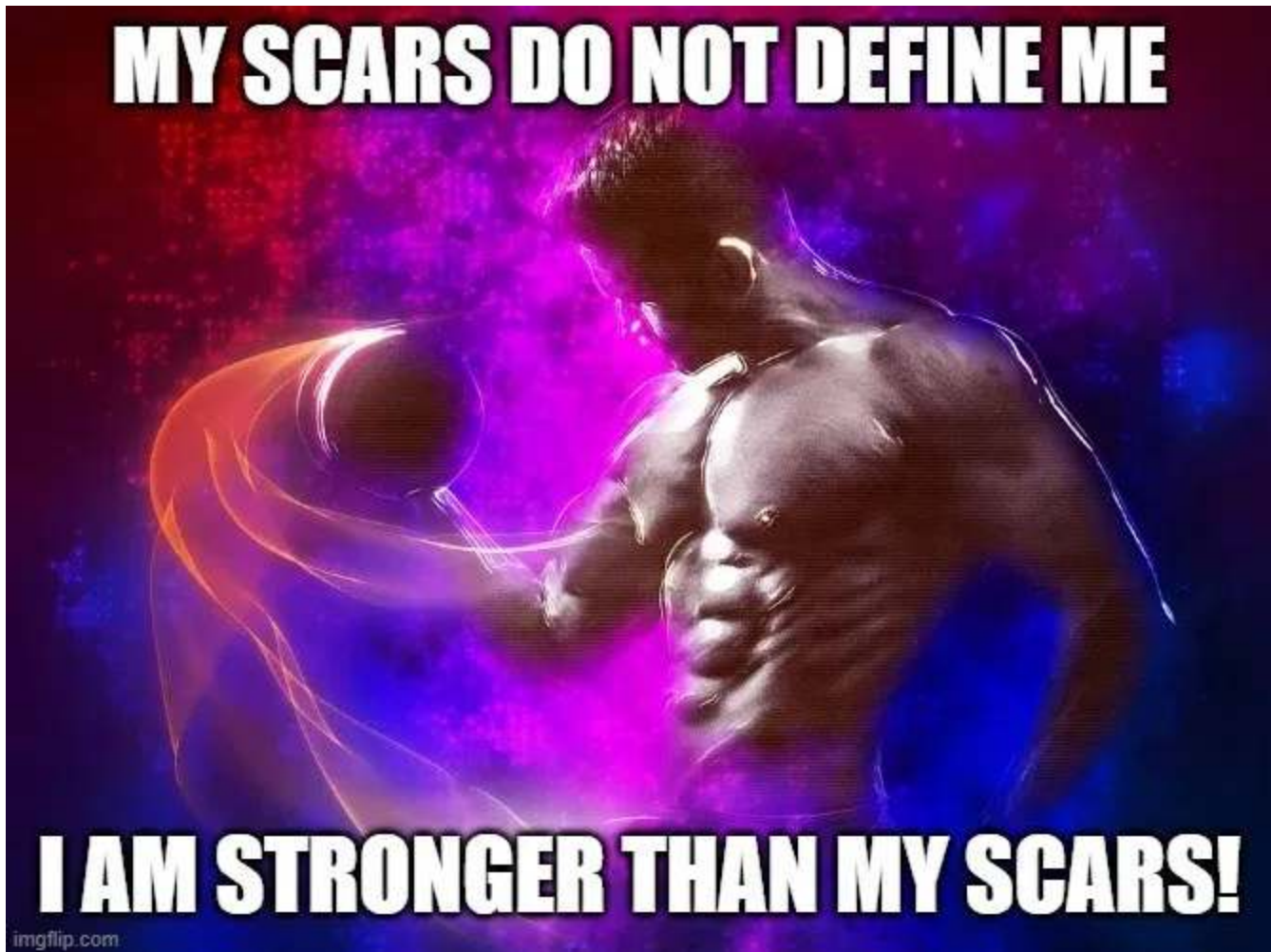


# COPING STRATEGIES FOR SELF-HARM

<https://nursingwithanitha.com>



ANITHA D'SOUZA



*“SELF-HARM – THE WORLD WILL COME AT YOU WITH KNIVES ANYWAY. YOU DO NOT NEED TO BEAT THEM TO IT.”*

*— CAITLIN MORAN*

Stressors may come in different forms. While a younger child may yell and throw a fit at the sight of a needle at the ER, an adult may go into a full blown panic attack at having to attend a panel interview. Learning of different ways to cope with these feelings in a healthy way can help the urge to self-harm in a mighty way.

‘IT’S NOT THE STRESS THAT KILLS US; BUT OUR REACTION TO IT’ – HANS SELYE

Unfortunately, if resorting to self-harm has been your go-to strategy for dealing with difficult situations or emotions; you may need to stop and start learning new ways of dealing with life's tragedies.

Ask yourself:

What is it that makes you to harm yourself?

\*Is it because you feel over whelmed and unable to manage strong emotions like anger or sadness?

\*Is it underlying guilt?

\*Are you trying to communicate or make others aware of how you are feeling, or perhaps send across a message?

\*Is it your way to gain control or to punish yourself?

“How will you know I am hurting, if you cannot see my pain? To wear it on my body tells what words cannot explain.” ~C. Blount

Now answer this as honestly as you possibly can:

I self-harm because it makes me feel \_\_\_\_\_ for a while.

When the \_\_\_\_\_ feeling wears off I feel \_\_\_\_\_

Continue listing the pros and cons of self-harm, how it helps you and why you don't want to do it anymore

### ***Why you need to stop Self-Harm/rip it in the bud?***

Firstly, because self-harm is a serious problem! Never to be underestimated.

The relief that comes from cutting or self-harming does not last long; will further prompt you to try it again, over and over; until one day it gets fatal.

Depending on the methods of self-harm, it could prove dangerous, causing permanent damage and scars. You could end up with infected deep wounds; drug overdose, or suffocate, cutting your blood supply to the brain.

It keeps you from trying to learn healthier methods of coping

It could increase your feelings of shame, guilt and worthlessness. The secrecy around self-harm can further affect your relationships thus adding to your distress.

It could hide and hinder you from seeking treatment for underlying depression, anxiety or compulsive behavior's.

Finally, if you do not control it now; it is likely to control you.

### ***Make a crisis plan today:***

My crisis plan for today is-----



### Seek Company:

No matter how hard it may seem, push yourself to seek help/company. Keep a diary with the names and numbers of people who would be able to help you. When you begin to feel overwhelmed, and wanting to self-harm-do not be alone. Push yourself to call someone, or just go out for a stroll.



# Coping strategies for self-harm – Nursing with Anitha

## Communicate:

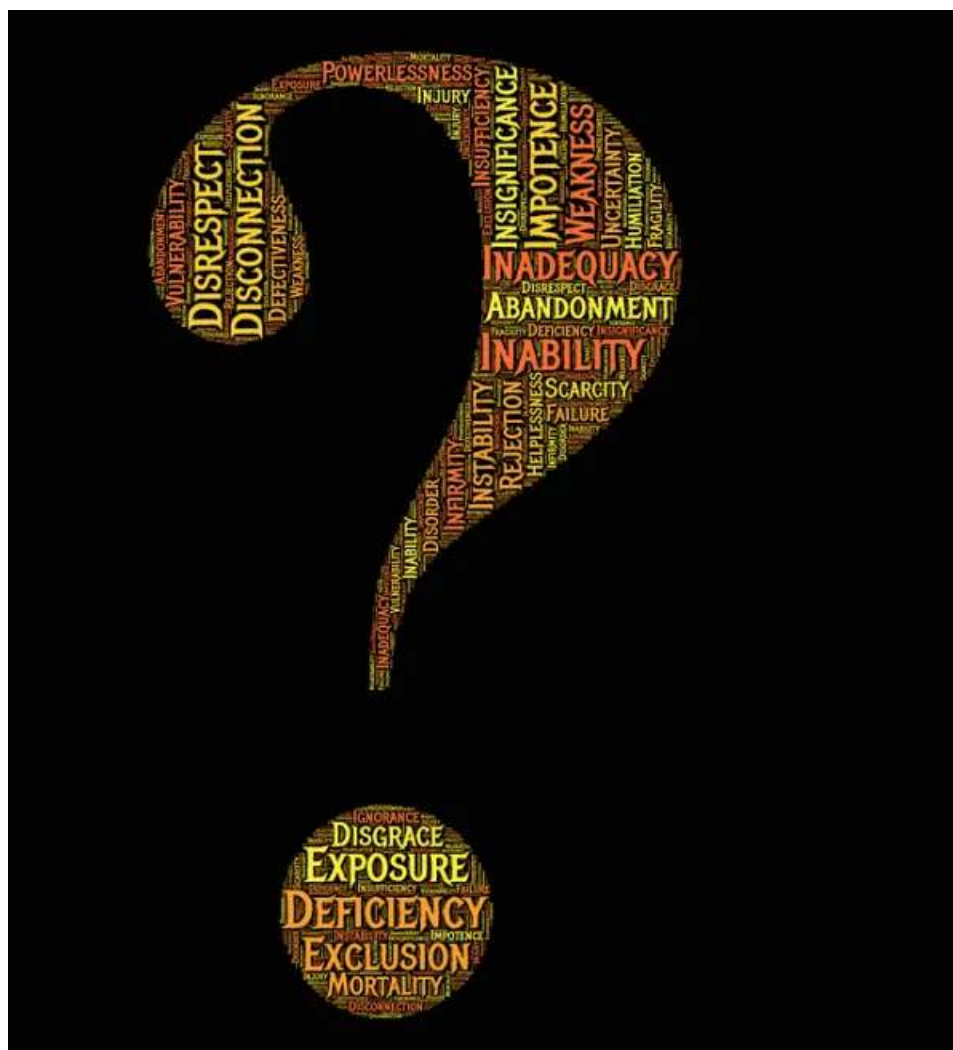
Find a person, whom you can trust with your little secret. It could be a parent, a trusted family member, a close friend, or a clergy. Be prepared for their initial reactions of shock, disbelief and grief; even anger to an extent. Know that these reactions could occur from a person who is concerned about you and cares about your safety. Focus on your feelings. What is it that you feel that leads you to such an extreme measure? Letting someone in on your secret could be stressful and can get uncomfortable at times; at least until the other person is able to process the information. But, be rest assured, the relief will flow in.

Find a support group who will help you through the crisis. Someone who will lend you a listening ear, without judgement. If that doesn't work, call your therapist and seek help.



## *Identify your triggers:*

Identify that unmet need or the overwhelming emotion that causes you to harm yourself. The best way to going about this is by maintaining a diary or a web log or a bullet journal: What is it that triggers you the most? The guilt? The feelings of overwhelming shame, loneliness, sadness, self-loathing, guilt, rage or hurt? At what times of the day/night does the overwhelming feeling to self-harm affect you the most? What time of the year? Anniversaries, holidays, festivals?



Find alternatives to self-harm:

1. *If you self-harm to express pain and over whelming emotions, you could:*

## *Unleash your creative side*

No matter how odd it may sound; but research and personal experiences of many of those who have been in your shoes have found that creativity can help provide adequate distraction who feel the urge to self-harm.

Do something you enjoy; without being afraid to venture outside your comfort zone, if necessary.





## Coping strategies for self-harm – Nursing with Anitha

### *Drawing/Painting/Sketching:*

Try to express your emotion or feeling through an expression of art. I have often seen my patients draw tearful eyes, sketch a picture of their brain and everything that is going inside it, I know a couple who have resorted to tie-dyeing to distract their intense emotions...and so on.

### *Try journaling your thoughts or diary writing:*

If you are more creative, you could attempt writing poems, songs or short stories. People have also taken to writing online journaling and blogging as an attempt to vent while also providing support and encouragement to others who suffer from similar issues. I once had a patient who loved creating different endings to the legendary 'Romeo and Juliet'.



## *Create some craftwork*

Try some pottery or beaded jewelry, knitting or sewing. YouTube is full of free videos and tutorials about whatever that catches your imagination. You may also try candle making, flower making, different flower arrangements; trinket's, or other decorative items for your house.

## ***If you need to release some excess energy or overcome an intense emotion:***

Try some vigorous exercise; like skip roping, running, strength training, weight lifting, boxing or some intense training

Use a punching bag as a means to vent out the frustration

Scream into your pillow if you need to

Write down your feelings and rip the paper into tiny bits



*If you find your pulse racing and need to calm down:*

Listen to some music of your choice. One of the clients I cared for; loved rapping incessantly when he needed to calm down.

Go for a massage or get a facial done

Get a pet. A dog or a cat can help soothe you when you do not have too many friends to lean on.

Light a scented candle





## *Positive affirmations:*

When you are in a good and positive mood, make a recording of a few positive affirmations, which would encourage you when you feel suicidal. Some of the encouraging affirmations could be:



# Coping strategies for self-harm – Nursing with Anitha

- I've gone through this before and I have survived. I will survive today too
- I shall overcome this
- Today, I choose me, my life and my joy
- I am worthy of joy, peace and love
- I am precious
- I am strong. I will overcome
- When the going gets tough; the tough will get going. I am tough.
- I choose to live, to love, to feel happy
- I choose to forgive
- Today I choose to live a happy and content life

## *Practice Mindfulness*

Take a deep breath. Focus your attention on your breathing. As you concentrate on your breathing, you may notice your mind wandering to thoughts, feelings, or sensations that may feel uncomfortable or upsetting to you. Does not matter if your mind wanders. The fact that you're noticing your mind wander means that you are being mindful of what is happening for you in the here and now. Acknowledge the feeling without judgement. Slowly try to bring your focus back to your breathing.



## Coping strategies for self-harm – Nursing with Anitha

Mindfulness takes time to master. In the initial stages, one may even find it easier to just distract themselves than to resort to mindfulness. Do what works best for you.

*When you feel numb and disconnected; when the urge to self-harm is too powerful:*



Try to crush a few ice cubes with your hand

Draw with a red pen or ink on the area that you want to self-harm with. Alternatively, using red food coloring would also create an impression of blood to curb your feelings of self-harm.

Take a cold shower; the difference in the temperature will temporarily curb your urge to self-harm.

Tie a rubber band or an elastic band around your wrist and ping it to cause a slightly painful sensation

Try waxing your legs or arms



In conclusion,

Although some people who self-harm are at a high risk of suicide, many people who self-harm don't want to end their lives. I will never forget the incidence in my high school, of a boy who consumed rat poison because he wanted to send a message across to his mother. But his plans didn't pan out as intended and the results were fatal.

In fact, the self-harm may seem like a coping mechanism when you do not know how to deal with stress, but there are healthier ways to cope.

What are some of the ways that help you cope. Please share your own coping strategies in the comments. Together, we shall make a difference !!!

# VIVAMUS VESTIBULUM NTULLA NEC ANTE.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit involuptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur. Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non proident, sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt mollit anim id est laborum.

Sed egestas, ante et vulputate volutpat, eros pede semper est, vitae luctus metus libero eu augue. Morbi purus libero, faucibus adipiscing, commodo quis, gravida id, est. Sed lectus. Praesent elementum hendrerit tortor. Sed semper lorem at felis. Vestibulum volutpat, lacus a ultrices sagittis, mi neque euismod dui, eu pulvinar nunc sapien ornare nisl. Phasellus pede arcu, dapibus eu, fermentum et, dapibus sed, urna.