



## **Old Patterns – Understanding the Problem**

### ***Taking Care***

Difficult moments might come up when you are working on this kit or learning in class - bad feelings get in the way of learning for lots of people. When you are uncomfortable, hurt, or scared, do you often respond in the same way over and over? Old patterns like ending really bad days with drinking, or not eating whenever sadness comes... you're late again, so you sit at the back of the class again, trying to disappear...

Because you do it over and over, maybe you feel like a broken record, and beat yourself up in frustration. That nasty self talk is not going to help. Instead, try just to notice what's happening. Recognize that you do whatever it is when you are uncomfortable, and let yourself off the hook. Some of that energy we use being angry at ourselves could go into understanding how to take better care of ourselves instead. Here are some ways to try to do that (not only when you are learning but any time) and from there, maybe start new patterns in our lives.

Now is the only place anyone ever starts from.

### ***Hurting Ourselves***

Listening to music and watching film or video are ways to help - or let - ourselves feel what we are feeling. And seeing art that reflects our experience helps us to feel more like a part of the world: even if the things we struggle with seem so dark and ugly that it feels like they are big secrets, we can be sure that lots of other people are going through similar things.



One survival strategy is addiction - many of us wouldn't still be here without the substances that gave us relief from pain.

More and more people accept that addiction is neither a moral failing nor a purely physical compulsion, and this short video makes the case in a clear and fresh way. One thing it might miss, though, is how complicated and difficult it can be to truly connect with others in the aftermath of violence.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ao8L-0nSYzg>

## **Cutting**

Cutting is one kind of self-harm where you hurt your own body on purpose. A sharp object is used to cut the skin, usually in very careful, controlled ways (for example making sure the cuts can be hidden under a t-shirt). It is not a suicidal action (when someone actually wants to kill themselves).

When other people know about the cutting, they might say the person just 'wants attention.' (Is there anything wrong with that, anyway?) But what is happening is usually more complicated. Someone may be cutting themselves to stop themselves from doing worse, more harmful things. We may be feeling so bad on the inside that it feels sort of better to make the outside hurt as badly so that inside and outside fit together. Many people really want to stop cutting or hurting themselves in other ways, but find it very hard to stop.

## **Addiction**

Using different substances may have helped us through hard times in the past, and maybe it still does now. Using can also get in the way of learning new things and changing our lives. Our habits can harm not only our physical health, but can also harm our ability to think, learn and remember.

If you have decided that your use of substances is a problem, for your learning or for any other reason, there are many interesting and surprising ways of thinking about how to reduce your use, or stop completely.

If you click here <http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/skills/managing-problem-substance-use> you will find a practical workbook for people who feel that their substance use might be a problem. When that page opens, look at the 'PDF' - print it out to write in it. You can use all of it or part of it, alone, in a group, or with a teacher or tutor - it's up to you.