

Participant Information Sheet – Plain English

Self-harm in books, TV, and films.

Researcher name: Veronica Heney



Invitation and brief summary:

You are being invited to participate in a research project on stories about self-harm in TV, films, and books.

We don't often see or read about self-harm. This might impact how we talk about self-harm or what it's like to ask for help. This research is trying to find out what stories are already told about self-harm. It is also trying to find out what it might feel to watch or read those stories for a person who self-harms, or who has self-harmed.

The research will be interviews with people who have self-harmed.

Please read this, and talk about it with family or friend if you want to. You can ask the researcher any questions.

Below you can find out about:

- What the interview will be like
- Where the interview will be and how long it will last
- Whether people will know your name
- What the good things and bad things about being interviewed might be
- How you'll be paid for being interviewed
- How to leave the project
- How your interview will be kept safe

Purpose of the research:

The stories we tell about self-harm may impact how we talk about it. The way we talk about self-harm may make the lives of people who self-harm better or worse.

Charities have tried to reduce the stigma around self-harm; but people who self-harm often don't ask for help. When they do talk to someone about self-harm it might not be a doctor – it might be a friend or a family member. These discussions might be harder because there are so few stories about self-harm; so people might not know a lot about it, or might not understand it. This project is trying to find out whether or not stories about self-harm might impact how we tell people about our own self-harm. The results will be used to write a PhD thesis and may also be used in future research or public policy.

In the interview we will talk about what stories you've watched or read about self-harm – on TV, in films, or in books. We might talk about what you thought of those stories, or how they made you feel, and whether you think they could have been better. Hopefully between 20 and 30 people will be interviewed.

Veronica came up with the idea for this research because of her own self-harm. But she has also talked to other people who have self-harmed to make sure that they agreed that this topic was important, and that this was the right way to find out about it.

Why have I been approached?

You responded to an advert looking for people who have self-harmed. You might have seen it on Twitter, Facebook, in an email, or on the University of Exeter campus.

In this research we are describing self-harm as: “an act, normally a repeated, habitual act, which in some way causes direct harm to the body but one where the focus and purpose of the act is this harm itself and not some other goal.”¹

This means that self-harm includes lots of different ways of hurting yourself, but does not include a suicide attempt (although having attempted suicide would not mean you couldn't take part in this research). It is up to you whether you feel this includes your experience. In the interview you won't be asked direct questions about how you have self-harmed, and you won't be asked to 'prove' that you've self-harmed.

What does taking part involve?

If you take part, you will be interviewed about stories about self-harm. The interview will be a discussion with Veronica Heney, who came up with the idea for the research based on her own experience. The interview will last one or two hours.

The interview can take place wherever you want, such as a café, a library, an office, or in your home. If you want Veronica to arrange a room for the interview, then she will do that.

Veronica will come to you, to make it as easy as possible for you. If you would rather be interviewed by Skype or by telephone then that is fine. If you don't want to talk, but would like to write down some answers so that you can still be part of the research, then that is also fine.

The interview will be recorded, but just the sound, not video. What was said in the interview will then be written down. It would be used, along with what other people say, and what the researcher thinks, to work out how people feel about stories about self-harm.

You will also be asked to write down your race, gender, sexuality, and age. This information will be used to help understand what people say in the interviews.

What would happen after the interview?

If you want you can read the written version of what you say in the interview and you can

¹ Page 9, Steggals P. (2015) *Making Sense of Self-harm: The Cultural Meaning and Social Context of Nonsuicidal Self-injury*. 2015 New York; Palgrave Macmillan

decide if you want some bits to be deleted. You will be asked if you might do a follow-up interview, in case the first interview doesn't cover everything, but you don't have to do this.

You will be able to talk to the interviewer about what she thinks your interview means and what other people have said; you can tell her if you think she's wrong or right. You don't have to do this if you don't want to.

You can also join in follow-up activities such as focus groups about what the results of the project mean, and what should happen next.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

You might find it interesting to talk about stories about self-harm. It might feel good to take part in research that might help people who self-harm. However, there might be no benefits of being interviewed.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Taking part might feel bad because talking about self-harm can be uncomfortable or upsetting. Veronica will work hard to make sure that the conversation is kind and caring, and to make sure you know where to get help if you need it. You won't have to talk about your own self-harm if you don't want to – you'll only be asked about stories you've read or watched. If it's ok with you, Veronica will check in with you after the interview, to make sure that you're not too upset or in danger.

How will I be taken care of during the interview?

You can stop the interview at any time. You can ask to skip any question for any reason, and you can ask to take a break at any time. It won't be a problem at all if you want to stop or take a break. You will have cards to use to stop the interview, in case you don't want to say something out loud. You can bring a comforting object, like a fidget spinner, if you have one. You will be asked if there's a special person who you can ask Veronica to call if you're upset and might need help.

You will tell us your GP or GP practice and if Veronica thinks your life might be in danger in the near future, she will contact your GP. If she feels your life is in danger immediately then she will contact the emergency services. You can read the interview questions before the interview if that would make you feel better. Your health and wellbeing is what's most important. We want to do whatever we can to make sure you're ok.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

You can leave the interview at any time without giving a reason. You can ask for the recording of your interview and the written version to be deleted and for your quotes not to be used. This can only happen before books and articles are finished or published.

Will I be anonymous, and what will happen to my contact details?

If you want to, you can be totally anonymous – no one will know your name, or what you said. When we quote something you say, then we will give it a fake name. If you want, you can choose what name we use. However, if you want people to know what you said, then we can put your real name with your quotes.

If you don't ever want to be involved with the research again, Veronica will delete your contact details as soon as the interview is finished. But if you want to join in other activities, such as reading your interview, or deciding what should happen next, then Veronica will keep your contact details until that has happened, and will keep a secret record connecting your contact details to your transcript. Your contact details will be deleted after 7 years. Your contact details will be kept safely on a laptop and then on a safe university server – you can ask for them to be deleted at any time.

How will my information and the record of my interview be kept confidential?

All information about you and the written record of your interview will be kept safely on a password-protected laptop and phone, and then on a safe university server. The laptop and phone will be in a locked office, or held by the researcher. The record of the interview and any other information about you will be deleted after 15 years.

Hopefully this sheet makes it clear what will happen to the things you say during the interview. If you have any questions you can ask the research team, or the University of Exeter's Data Protection Officer. You can do this by emailing dataprotection@exeter.ac.uk or at www.exeter.ac.uk/dataprotection

Who will see the record of the interview?

After the project is finished, the written record will be put in a safe place, in case it needs to be used again in the future by other researchers. No information other than the written record of the interview will be put in the safe place. But if you want you can choose for your written record not to be stored like this, or not to be used by other researchers.

Senior researchers and people with experience of self-harm who are helping with the project will read the record of your interview to check the research. Other people who are interviewed for the research might read the record of your interview, if you want them to. If you choose for no one to know your name, then no one will know it apart from Veronica, who interviews you. The written record of your interview will be backed up using software called OneDrive.

Will I receive any payment for taking part?

All participants will be paid for their time, because the part you play in the research is important. Because we believe that everyone is equally important and useful in doing research, you will be paid the same as Veronica. So you will be paid at a rate of £15.25 per hour. You will be paid in cash or by a voucher. You can choose which one is best for you, and you can change your mind at any time.

You will be paid back for any money you spend while doing the research. This includes money for your travel, money for someone to travel with you and money for childcare. We can pay for your travel in advance if this is helpful.

What will happen to the results of this study?

The results of this study will be used in Veronica's PhD. After this, they may be published and used in other places, including journal articles, books, talks, blogs, and other events. The results may lead to future research which looks at whether there are practical things that should be done to help people who self-harm.

Who is organising and funding this study?

The project is organised by Veronica Heney, a PhD student at the University of Exeter. The PhD is supervised by Prof Laura Salisbury and Prof Manuela Barreto.

The project is funded by the Wellcome Trust, through the University of Exeter Wellcome Centre for Cultures and Environments of Health.

Concerns and care

We tried to make this project easy and comfortable to take part in. If you have any questions, or are worried about anything please talk to Veronica. If there is anything else we can do to help or support you please also talk to Veronica. Her contact details are below.

Who has reviewed this study?

This project has been reviewed by the Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology, College of Life and Environmental Sciences at the University of Exeter.

Further information and contact details

If you would like to received further information about this project or have any queries at all, please don't hesitate to contact Veronica Heney:

Wellcome Centre for Cultures and Environments of Health
University of Exeter
Queens Drive
Exeter
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If you are not happy with any aspect of the project and would like to complain, please contact the following individuals:

Nick Moberly, Chair of Psychology Ethics Committee
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Thank you for your interest in this project