

Self-Injury



What is Self-Injury?

Self-Injury, also known as self-harm, self-mutilation, and self-abuse is behavior which involves deliberately harming or altering one's own body tissue while not intending to commit suicide. Several key points make up this definition:

- ↔ Self-injury is an intentional act done to the self,
- ↔ It includes some type of physical violence, and
- ↔ It is not undertaken with the intent to kill oneself.

Types of Self-Injury You May See

- ↔ carving
- ↔ burning / abrasion
- ↔ cutting
- ↔ scratching
- ↔ biting
- ↔ hitting
- ↔ branding
- ↔ head banging
- ↔ bruising
- ↔ marking
- ↔ Self-piercing or self-tattooing
- ↔ picking and pulling skin and hair

Teens who self-injure often try to keep this hidden, so they may wear clothes that cover their body even when inappropriate for the weather.


Why do adolescents injure themselves?

Adolescents who have difficulty talking about their feelings may show their emotional tension, physical discomfort, pain and low self-esteem with self-injurious behaviors. The effects of peer pressure can also influence adolescents to injure themselves.

Common Characteristics of Teens Who Self-Injure:

- ↔ depression
- ↔ sensitivity to rejection
- ↔ high levels of tension
- ↔ high levels of irritability
- ↔ poor impulse control
- ↔ increases aggression
- ↔ guilt and shame over harming behavior
- ↔ chronic anger

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TEEN SELF-HARM

How To Help

WHAT CAN PARENTS AND TEENAGERS DO ABOUT SELF-INJURY?

Parents:

- ↔ Educate yourselves.
- ↔ Talk with your children about respecting and valuing their body.
- ↔ Listen and talk openly about the self-injury behavior.
- ↔ Serve as a role model for your teenager by not engaging in acts of self-harm.
- ↔ Help your child develop such social skills as how to talk about their feelings and solve problems, so that they will be better able to handle the stresses that adolescence brings.
- ↔ Remember that ultimatums will not work.
- ↔ Assist them in getting the help they need from a trained professional.

Teenagers

- ↔ Identify feelings and talk them out rather than acting on them.
- ↔ Determine the urge behind the act of self-injury (e.g. to feel pain, to see blood, to see scars, to relieve depression or anger, etc...).
- ↔ Don't be afraid to discuss this with your parents
- ↔ Call and talk to a friend
- ↔ Distract yourself from feelings of self-harm (for example, count to ten, wait 15 minutes, practice breathing exercises, write in a journal, draw, or think about positive images).



For further information or help, call:

Focus Adolescent Services: 1-877-362-8727 (www.focusas.com)

Scottsdale Prevention Institute: 480-443-3100

Teen Lifeline: 602-248-TEEN or 1-800-248-TEEN