

Helpful Readings

Books for parents:

Helping Teens Who Cut: Understanding and Ending Self-injury. (Guilford Press)

Author: Michael Hollander

Available at major bookstores and Amazon.com

Self-Injury: Simple Answers to Complex Questions. (Alexian Brothers Press)

Author: Jason Washburn & Alexian Brothers.

Available via Amazon.com

Books for Your Child:

Freedom from self-harm: Overcoming self-injury with skills from DBT and other treatments. (New Harbinger Press)

Authors: Kim L. Gratz & Alex Chapman.

Recommended Websites:

www.sioutreach.org

<http://www.selfinjury.bctr.cornell.edu/>

www.self-injury.com

Self-injury is not a Life-sentence. People **CAN** and **DO STOP** self-injuring.



It is important to remember that stopping a behavior that has become a frequently used coping strategy will take time and effort. Having support in doing this would be very helpful.

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Understanding Nonsuicidal Self-Injury



An informational brochure for
parents:
A guide to helping your child.

What is non-suicidal self-injury?

Non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) is the deliberate and direct destruction of one's body tissue, without suicidal intent.

- The most common methods include cutting, burning, severe scratching, and intentional bruising/self-battery.
- It does not include tattooing, body piercing, or indirect injury from eating disorders or substance abuse.

Prevalence

Self-injury may begin at any age, but the most common age is early adolescence.

Around 14 and 24% of adolescents report having engaged in NSSI at least once in their lifetime. A quarter (25%) of those will do it many times.

Why is my child self-injuring?

* The most common reason for self-injury is to reduce or escape from **overwhelming negative emotions** (like anger, anxiety, guilt) and **negative thoughts** (such as self-hate, thoughts of not being good enough).

* Sometimes people use self-injury as a way to tell, or show, others how much they are hurting inside.

* There are many other reasons and for some it is more than just one reason, or reasons may change over time. It can be very hard for someone to say exactly "why" they self-injure.

* Self-injury is NOT an attempt to die. Some use the self-injury to stop from acting on suicidal urges.

* As a parent it can feel impossible to understand how self-injury might "*help*." It is important to understand that people do feel relief after self-injury, which increases the desire to do it again.

Finding out your child is self-injuring can be difficult.

•Common reactions include:

- Shocked and horrified (e.g., 'how could they cut or burn themselves?')
- Anger that they could do this or thoughts they are doing it to get attention/manipulate others
- Confusion, Sadness, Guilt, or Worry

**These are all VERY normal reactions to have.*

How can I help my child?

1. DO NOT ignore the problem. Self-injury is often a sign of significant distress. Although it is tempting to see it as a "fad" or "stage" it is not in your child's best interests to do so.
2. Listen to what your child says and how they feel. Trying to problem-solve right away can feel like you're not listening. Just confirm what you hear.
3. If your child is thinking about suicide get them to help immediately. If not, talk to your child about getting help from a doctor or mental health provider.
4. Have patience. There are often setbacks along the road to recovery. This is completely normal. Treatment will take time.
5. Try to maintain a positive outlook and communicate with your child during their process to stop the self-injury. Learn what you can about self-injury to support your child.



Talking With Your child:

1. Choose a good time to speak with your child where you both can feel comfortable and stay calm.
2. Start by telling your child why you are concerned and be honest about your level of concern. However, if you are very angry & have trouble staying calm, it may not be a good time for the conversation.
3. Focus the conversation on your child's feelings and behavior. Do not lecture, accuse, or give ultimatums.
4. Ask open-ended questions using a supportive and calm tone. Work to understand what your child is going through and how the self-injury helps.
5. Problem-solve together ways to support your child. This may mean seeking professional help.

**If your child refuses to talk about it, that's okay. It can be difficult for them to talk about it at first. Repeat your concerns and tell your child that you will try to have the conversation again later. Let them know you're available to talk.*

**Getting professional help may be important. You can't treat self-injury yourself.*

Can they stop self- injuring? YES!

Many who self-injure do stop, and do so on their own. However, the longer someone self-injures the more difficult it can be to stop.

It is important to provide support and resources. Mental health professionals are trained to help people learn healthy ways to cope.

When people who self-injure start learning healthy ways to cope, they find stopping self-injury easier.