

Self – Injury

What is it?

Self-Injury, also known as cutting, self-harm or self-mutilation, happens when a person intentionally and repeatedly harms herself/himself. The method used most often is cutting but other common methods include scratching, burning, punching and drinking something harmful like bleach or detergent.

Who does it?

It is estimated that about two million people in the U.S. injure themselves in some way. The majority are teenagers or young adults with young women outnumbering young men. They are of all races and backgrounds.

Why?

People often say they hurt themselves to express emotional pain or feelings that they describe with words.

- It can be a way for a person to have control over their body when they can't control anything else in their life. A lot of people who cut themselves also have an eating disorder
- Although they aren't trying to kill themselves, sometimes they are unable to control the injury and die accidentally.

How can I help a friend with this?

Ask about it. If your friend is hurting themselves, she/he may be glad to have you bring it up so she/he can talk about it. If she/he is not injuring themselves, she/he is not going to start just because you said something about it.

Offer options but don't tell her/him what she/he has to do or should do. If she/he is using self-injury as a way to have some control, it won't help if you try to take control of the situation. Helping your friend see ways to get help, like talking to a trusted adult (parent, teacher, school counselor or mental health professional), may be the best thing you can do for her/him.

Seek support. Knowing a friend is hurting themselves this way can be frightening and stressful. Consider talking with a trusted adult. This person could help your friend get the help they need. You may feel that you don't have the right to tell anyone else, but remember, you can still talk with a mental health professional about how the situation makes you feel.

What You Need to Know...



Remember you are not responsible for ending the self-injury. You can't make your friend stop hurting themselves or get help from a professional. The only thing you can do is keep being a good friend.

How can I help myself?

Know that help is available. Treatment is available for people who injure themselves. To learn about it, try talking to a professional person around you, like your school counselor. If you are not comfortable with that, think about talking with another trusted adult in your life you will be able to help you find the help that you need.

Know that you are not alone. Because so many self-injure, it is likely that there are people around who can understand and can help.

Know you can get better. This is a difficult time in your life. However, with help, you get to then point where you don't hurt yourself anymore.

Get help. Now is the best time to get help with this problem. If you wait, the problem will only get bigger, but if you find a way to meet it head on today, you'll be free of it and free to get on with your life.

Where can I learn more?

- Your school's counseling center
- Visit Mental Health America of Wisconsin's web site (www.mhawisconsin.org)
- S.A.F.E. Alternatives (Self-Abuse Finally Ends – www.selfinjury.com)
Information Line: 1-800-DONT-CUT (800-366-8288)

For more information, contact Mental Health America of Wisconsin at 414.276.3122, or via Email: info@mhawisconsin.org.

Mental Health America is a United Way of Greater Milwaukee Agency.



www.mhawisconsin.org