

Welcome! How to help teens that self-harm

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What makes this presentation different?

Behind the scenes look

- Images
- Music
- Art
- Poetry
- Journal entries
- Quotes



How do they see the world differently

- What some see as bizarre...we see as beautiful**
- What some see as painful...we see as pleasurable**
- What some see as crazy...we see as coping**
- What some see as suicidal...we see as survival**
- What some see as self destructive...we see as self expressive**
- What some see as scary...we see as story**
- What some see as pity...we see as power**
- What some see as deviant...we see as deserving**



What is self-harm?

Formal definition:

The intentional act of hurting oneself in order to relieve psychological, social, or emotional pain

Practical definition:

Self-harm is an outward expression of an inward emotion



Terminology

- Self-injury
- Self-harm
- Self-mutilation
- NSSI (non-suicidal self-injury)
- Cutting



What self-harm is NOT

Studies show that 90% of teens that self-harm are not doing so as a suicidal attempt.



A basic understanding is that a person who truly attempts suicide seeks to end all feelings, whereas a person who self-harms, seeks to feel better

Favazza (1998) p. 262.



Risk Assessment

Scaling questions

1. On a scale from 1-10 how suicidal do you feel?
2. On a scale from 1-10 what is the likelihood you would follow through with these feelings?
3. Do you have a specific plan?
4. Do you feel like you are safe between now and the next time we meet?



Signs of self-harm

- Wearing long sleeves, pants, or hoodies in warm weather
- Finding misc. tools and instruments like razors, broken glass, paper clips in unusual places
- Bracelets, arm bands, or arm socks used to cover scars



Signs of self-harm

- Frequently playing with sleeves or pulling down them
- Rubbing or scratching arms or legs
- Easily gets defensive when confronted on scars....Guess who usually gets blamed?



Two types of cutters:

Attention seeking
vs.
Non-attention seeking



Attention Seeking

"Please notice me"

More inclined to creating drama which involves others
Often will use cutting as manipulation to get their way
Much more verbal, social, and visible to others

Still dangerous if they don't get what they are seeking

"Why can't everyone see how much I am hurting?"



Attention Seeking

Treatment tip for Attention Seeking:

CBT approach exposing how current choices will most likely backfire on them



Non-Attention Seeking

“Please don’t notice me”

- Withdrawn and usually quiet
- Secretive or mysterious
- Wants to be left alone
- Methodical and premeditated in their cutting
- Scars well hidden
- Usually higher frequency and quantity of scars



Why



WHY TEENS SELF-HARM

- S**elf expression “I don’t know why I cut I just know it explains the pain I feel on the inside” (Alexithymia)
- C**ontrol “I cut because it’s the only thing I can control”
- A**ttention “Why can’t everyone see how much I am hurting”
- R**elief “It helps me to feel” or “It helps me to calm down”
- S**elf punishment “I’m a failure and deserve to be punished”



7 most common lies with self-harm

I’m unworthy

I’m just a burden to everyone

I’ll never measure up

I’m a failure

I’m unlovable

I’m better off alone

What do these lies look like??



Bottom line

Painful emotions are going to come out one way or another

It’s our job to help them find healthier ways of doing that



HOW TO HELP

What NOT to do

Be careful **NOT** to focus on the behavior...

more than the **PERSON**



What not to say

- "I know exactly how you feel"
- "You think your life is bad"
- "Sounds to me like you are doing this for attention"
- "You probably just need medication"
- "Can't you see what you are doing to me"
- "This is just a phase you'll get over it"
- "Can I see your scars"



Quick Tips

1. As time allows, show them you care
2. Communicate school policies
3. Discuss the need to communicate with parents
4. If you suspect their self-harm is severe, refer to school nurse
4. Give referral(s) resources to parents for continued counseling
5. Educate, equip, empower parents (see brochure)



Quick Tips

Dear Parent

Discovering self-harm in any form can be a shocking experience, and can cause a great deal of concern for you and your child. Please do not feel that you are alone in this experience. There are many people who have experienced self-harm, and you are not alone in this experience.

The goal of this brochure is to provide you with information about self-harm, and to help you understand what your child may be going through. It is important to remember that self-harm is a symptom of an underlying emotional issue, and it is not a sign of weakness or a lack of control.

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Helping parents know what say and do:

- I love you very much, and you getting better is the most important thing to me right now.
- Even though I may not fully understand what you are going through, I am committed to getting you the help you need until you are better... no matter what!
- Is there anything I can change or do to help?



Quick Tips

- Two key questions:**
 - WHAT" are they trying to say
 - WHO" are they trying to say it to?
- One overall objective:**
 - Help them put WORDS to emotions



What School Counselors Can Do:

Helping them put words to emotions

Music Images Writing a goodbye letter
Poetry "I wish...I feel"
Journal entries Art
Good questions



ASKING REALLY GOOD QUESTIONS

How does cutting help you?
If your scars could communicate, what would they say?
Can you name a time when you felt like cutting but didn't?
What was different and how can you do more of that?
If your parents could make one small change to help you overcome cutting, what would it be?



What lie has cutting caused you to believe about yourself?

Some people use cutting as a way to control...do you control cutting or is cutting controlling you and how do you know?

If you could give yourself one piece of advice regarding cutting what would it be?

What one person in your life have you struggled the most to forgive?

If you could make one small change to overcome cutting what would it be?

If you continue to cut will life improve, stay the same, or get worse?

If you could write a letter to your cutting as if it were a person, what would you say?
ex. "Dear Cutting"



GOOD NEWS!

The majority of teens who self-harm will most likely start cutting at the age around 14 and continue with increasing severity until late 20's

HOWEVER, when this individual grows up, they usually end up in the helping profession as either nurses, educators, or counselors!

"Cutting the pain away": - Carol C. Nadelson MD

MORE GOOD NEWS!

TEENS WHO SELF-HARM GET BETTER ALL THE TIME!



Services offered:

- *Individual counseling
- *Teen support groups
- *Parent support groups
- *In-office and virtual appointments available
- *Training for your organization or team



Areas of expertise

SELF-HARM
DEPRESSION
SUICIDAL IDEATION
ANXIETY
ASD
HIGH-RISK BEHAVIORS

