

Where Do Families Turn?

- ▶ Look for a mental health professional that has experience working with self-injurious behavior. If you don't like the first practitioner you try, find another. Ask about medication and therapy options.
- Continue to share your observations with your child's care team. Encourage your child to work with treatment plans and stick with them.
- Help your child to have structured activities to keep them busy, have a safety plan and a support system.
- Make sure you and your child, together, communicate with all of the adults in your child's life about their behavior and treatment. School staff can help with support during the school day. Provide safe places for your child to be while outside of school too.

Some Online Resources:

SAFE: www.selfinjury.com

AACAP: www.aacap.org



Help your child be involved with positive activities and role models.

Footnotes:

1. Ikeda, R., Mahendra, R., Saltzman, L., Crosby, A., Willis, L., Mercy, J., et al. (2002, May 24). Nonfatal self-inflicted injuries treated in hospital emergency departments—United States, 2000. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 51(20), 436-8.
2. Johnston, M. (2002). Patients who self-injure: they're not as dangerous to themselves as you might think. *American Journal of Nursing*, 102(12), 11.

If you know someone who is suicidal call:

1-800-273-TALK

Washington County Mental Health

24/7 Crisis Line 651-777-4455

Mental Health Resources in Washington County:

FamilyMeans-Stillwater, Woodbury/Oakdale, Hudson 651-439-4840

Children's Home Society & Family Services-St Paul 651-635-0477

Forest Lake Youth Service Bureau 651-464-3685

HSI (Human Services Inc.)-several county locations 651-777-5222, TDD 651-770-6834

White Bear Area Community Counseling Center 651-429-8544

Youth Service Bureau, Inc- Stillwater, Woodbury, Cottage Grove 651-439-8800

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Equal Opportunity/ Affirmative Action



**Yellow Ribbon
Suicide
Prevention
Program
in MN**

360 Pierce Plaza, Suite 209
North Mankato, MN 56003
507-387-5020 FAX 507-387-5181
www.yellowribbonmn.org

Understanding Self Harm



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▶ Does someone you know need help?

**Information & Tips
for
Families,
Caregivers &
Professionals
Working with High
Risk Populations**

What is Self-Harm?

Self Harm, also called Self-Injurious Behavior (SIB) is the deliberate, direct destruction or alteration of body tissue, without conscious suicidal intent, that falls outside cultural norms. This includes:

- scratching
- cutting
- burning
- biting
- interfering with wound healing
- needle sticking
- head banging or hitting self
- some forms of hair pulling
- breaking bones
- Ingesting/inhaling poison
- amputation of any body part
- disfigurement

SIB is typically considered a negative coping skill used to deal with difficult emotions, situations, or stressors. If left untreated, there is a possibility of future suicidal intent, infection, scarring, or other medical complications. SIB may inadvertently lead to death if taken too far. Therefore, those who engage in SIB should be evaluated and treated by a mental health provider.



Teens and young adults are at highest risk from ages 15-24 and the highest rate is among adolescent females ages 15-19.

Why Self-Injure?

Several mental health disorders are *ASSOCIATED* with self-injury, however SIB is NOT an indicator of any specific illness. There are many different reasons people give for why they self-injure, but some of the most common are:

- Escape from emptiness/numbness/depression and feelings of unreality.
- Relief from intense feelings/suicidal urges. (Biological release of endorphins—same “feel-good” hormones released during exercise).
- Obtaining or maintaining influence over the behavior of others.
- Expressing emotional pain/communicating pain/need for help.
- Punishing self for “being bad.”
- Continuing abuse—many who self-injure have been abused.
- Exerting a sense of control over one’s body.

SIB Statistics

- In 2000, over 264,100 people were treated in emergency rooms for SIB.¹
- 90% were the result of poisoning or cutting.¹
- The causes of SIB were similar for males and females; however, females used the method of poisoning more often than males.¹
- Also in 2000, CNN reported that 1% of the U.S. population regularly harm themselves.²



White, non-Hispanic males and females have the highest rates by race/ethnicity.

What Treatment is Available?

- Psychiatric/Mental Health Medication
- Dialectical & Cognitive Behavioral Therapies
- Therapy: Individual or Group
- Relaxation Techniques
- Developing New Coping Skills



Brainstorm and role-model healthy coping skills. Encourage them to express themselves through art, journaling, music, etc.

How Can I Help?

- Accept them even though you do not approve of their behavior.
- Say “I love/care about you” often.
- Listen! Find out what interests them.
- Ask open-ended questions. Allow conversations to revolve around what is important to them even if it seems silly.
- Remove dangerous objects.
- Have fun together! Interact.
- Encourage their strengths.
- Help them help others.
- Help them start a hobby.
- Always acknowledge teen’s efforts to cope with difficult emotions.
- Know you are NOT responsible for the teen’s behavior.

DONT...

- ...say or do things to cause guilt or shame (“Why would you do that?” “How could you?”).
- ...act shocked or appalled.
- ...talk about their behavior behind their back.
- ...use punishment or negative consequences for SIB.
- ...keep them from seeing friends, but do be aware.
- ...make eliminating the behavior your only goal.