

SELF-INJURY

Self-injury is defined by SAFE Alternatives (the nation's first structured in-patient program to treat self-mutilative behavior) as deliberate, repetitive, impulsive, non-lethal harming of one's body.

Self injury or "cutting" includes:

- cutting
- scratching
- picking scabs or interfering with wound healing
- burning
- punching self or objects
- infecting oneself
- inserting objects in body openings
- bruising or breaking bones
- some forms of hair pulling
- other various forms of bodily harm

Normally, those who self-injure are not attempting suicide, but are looking for a temporary relief from emotional distress. Sometimes it is easier for individuals to deal with the external, tangible physical pain of self-injury rather than the intangible emotional pain they are experiencing. For others who feel empty or dead inside, self-injury becomes a way of feeling alive. Cutting can sometimes be part of another disorder such as depression, an eating disorder, substance abuse, etc.

There are many warning signs that one may be cutting including:

- Secrecy, emotionally absent, distant
- Unable to express feelings or emotions
- Has unexplained injuries (cuts, burns, bruises) and makes excuses for wounds
- Wears long sleeves or pants in warm weather
- Uses bracelets or makeup to cover up wounds
- Social withdrawal, sensitive to rejection
- Self-loathing, feelings of being overwhelmed
- Limited trust of others
- Feelings of isolation
- Low self-esteem

Related Scriptures:

TRUSTING GOD AS YOUR ROCK, PROTECTION & HEALER: Psalms 71, 91, 121 & Jeremiah 17:14, 17

CLOTHING YOURSELF IN CHRIST: Romans 13:12-14

REMINDING YOURSELF OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY OVER YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES: Romans 8:28-39

Additional Resources for information about Self-Injury

BOOKS

- *Bodily Harm: The Breakthrough Healing Program for Self-Injurers* - Karen Conterio/Wendy Lader
- *Cutting: Understanding and Overcoming Self-Mutilation* - Steven Levenkron.

WEBSITES

- www.self-injury.org (Lysamena Project on Self-Injury) - Christian website on Self-Injury offering information from a Christian perspective and helpful links.
- www.selfinjury.com (SAFE Website)

Self-Injury on College Campuses

By Susan Fee - (Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Susan_Fee)

Self injury is intentionally causing self-inflicted physical pain in order to cope with overwhelming feelings, traumatic events, or severe emotional pain. The person is not "crazy," but rather just never learned appropriate ways to express intense feelings. Some of the most common ways to self-injure include cutting, burning, hitting, scratching, and pulling hair. A person who self-injures usually does so in private. She does not typically flaunt or brag about injuries. Although some men self-injure, the behavior is more prevalent amongst women. The reasons vary. Some who self-mutilate say it helps to release pain, while others say it offers distraction from traumatic memories. For some, self-injury gives a sense of control. Others are numb to emotion, and self-injury gives them a way to feel something.

The biggest misconception is that self-injury is an attempt to commit suicide. The person in question may feel so bad that he has had suicidal thoughts, but generally the two are unrelated. In most cases, the act of self-injury is an attempt to cope with those intense feelings, not die.

Here are the warning signs of self-injury:

- Compulsive need to injure oneself by cutting, burning, hitting, scratching, pulling hair
- Re-injuring old wounds so they don't heal
- Scarring, usually on arms, wrists, legs, abdomen, head, or chest
- Attempts to hide arms or other body parts where injury occurred
- Hoarding of sharp objects like razors
- Person experiences a high from doing it
- Consuming thoughts of self-injury, or the behavior interrupts normal daily functioning
- In most cases, there is no intention of killing oneself, only to cope with or release intense feelings of pain
- Usually self-injures when alone

If you experience any of these symptoms, you know that the behavior can feel all-consuming. There are people who want to support you in finding healthier ways of coping.

If you have a friend or roommate who is a self-injurer, it can be frightening and disturbing to be around this behavior. As difficult as it may be, do not attempt to stop or control someone's self-injury. You are not responsible for her behavior, and by interfering with her way of coping, you could do more harm than good. Trying to hide or take away self-injury tools, giving ultimatums, or "guilt tripping" your roommate into stopping only encourages more self-hatred and more self-injury. Instead, support your roommate by helping her express feelings and offering to listen without judgment.

Whether you are a self-injurer or know one, seeing a campus counselor can help you find ways to better deal with the behavior. You can learn more about the myths and facts of self injury from the American Self Harm Information Clearing House at www.selfinjury.org. You can also call the SAFE Alternatives Program at 1-800-DON'T-CUT (1-800-366-8288).

Susan Fee is a licensed counselor and author of college survival guides. She offers more college survival tips on her site, <http://www.myroommateisdrivingmecrazy.com>.