

WHY SELF-HARM?

SELF-PUNISHMENT

CONTROL

ATTENTION

RELIEF

SEXPRESSION

THERE IS
HELP THERE
IS HOPE

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HELP FOR
SELF-HARM



PARENT'S GUIDE



— Christian Hill, LPC —



DEAR PARENT

Discovering your child is self-harming can be terrifying, alarming, and can make a parent feel hopeless as you try to understand “why” and how to help.

The good news is that 90% of teens who self-harm do so in an effort to cope and survive as opposed to trying to do something more permanent. Yes, some do it just for attention, but many do it as a way to deal with overwhelming psychological or emotional pain. Self-harm is often a cry for help and usually symptomatic of something deeper going on.

In order for someone to get better from self-harm it usually takes a trained professional to help a teen navigate what they are feeling and why. One of the greatest challenges for school counselors and other mental health professionals is helping parents realize the level of seriousness of self-harm even if someone has only done it one time.

WHAT NOT TO DO

Don't-Focus on the cutting more than the person.

Don't- Humiliate them by exploiting their scars or self harm to others

Don't- Yell and lecture them. This will create more feelings of shame and guilt, and will usually lead to more self harm.

Don't-Make threats or ultimatums. They don't need any other reasons to feel like they can't measure up.

WHAT TO DO

Do - try to show loving support for them. You can love them without approving of the behavior.

Do-Assure them you will provide whatever help and support they need to overcome this.
Do-Seek out professional help from someone skilled and experienced with teens that self-harm.

Do-Be a good listener. Ask open ended questions to help them explain what they are thinking and feeling. Try to understand what they are feeling and why.

Do-Practice patience. Recovering from self-harm is more of a journey than an event. Pressuring them to get better quickly is usually counterproductive.

QUOTES FROM TEENS

“I feel like a failure and deserve to be punished” ,“It gives me a release”, “I don't feel like I can measure up” , “I can't express what I'm feeling on the inside”, “It gives me something I can control”, “It helps distract me from all the pain in my life” “To show others how much I am hurting”



GETTING HELP

A professional trained therapist in teens as well as self-harm can help you and your family navigate a recovery process that offers help and hope for even the most complicated situations. If self-harm if not treated early on it can lead to severe depression, anxiety, behavioral issues, social issues, academic issues, isolation, and even suicidal thoughts. One of the best things you can do for your self-harming child is to communicate your love, support, and commitment to helping them get the help they need.