



Mental Health Comprehensive Services

Providing Family Stability and Developing Life Coping Skills

Teens and Self-Injury Behaviors

Self-injury is when a person deliberately hurts his or her own body. Some self-injuries can leave scars that won't go away, while others leave marks or bruises that eventually will go away. These are some forms of self-injury:

- cutting yourself (such as using a razor blade, knife or other sharp object to cut the skin)
- punching yourself or other objects
- burning yourself with cigarettes, matches or candles
- pulling out your hair
- poking objects through body openings
- breaking your bones or bruising yourself
- plucking hair for hours

Many people cut themselves because it gives them a sense of relief. Some people use cutting as a means to cope with any problem. Some teens say that when they hurt themselves, they are trying to stop feeling lonely, angry, or hopeless. Some teens who hurt themselves have low self-esteem, they may feel unloved by their family and friends, and they may have an eating disorder, an alcohol or drug problem, or may have been victims of abuse.

Teens who hurt themselves often keep their feelings "bottled up" inside and have a hard time letting their feelings show. Some teens who hurt themselves say that feeling the pain provides a sense of relief from intense feelings. Cutting can relieve the tension from bottled up sadness or anxiety. Others hurt themselves in order to "feel." Often people who hold back strong emotions can begin feeling numb, and cutting can be a way to cope with this because it causes them to feel something. Some teens also may hurt themselves because they want to fit in with others who do it.

If you suspect or see signs that your teen might be hurting themselves, seek help immediately and call the trained counselors at Mental Health Comprehensive Services.

For more information about this article on Hurting yourself go to <http://www.girlshealth.gov/mind/help.injury.htm>