

Adolescent Self-Injury Factsheet:

ADOLESCENT SELF-INJURY FOUNDATION (ASIF, Inc.)

www.adolescentselfinjuryfoundation.com

What Is It?

- Self-injury, also known as cutting occurs when someone intentionally and repeatedly harms herself/himself. The method most often used is cutting but other common behaviors include burning, punching, hair pulling, scab picking, or drinking something harmful.

Who Does It?

- It is estimated that about two million people in the U.S. injure themselves in some way. The majority are teenagers or young adults with young women outnumbering young men. They are of all races and backgrounds.

How Can S.I. HELP?

- Usually teens who self injure are **expressing their “emotional pain,” anger, or frustration that cannot be put into words.**
- It is teen’s way to "**take control**" when they are feeling "**out of control**" over situations they are facing in their life.
- Usually self injury is an **attempt to live and get through a painful emotional state of mind** rather than being an attempt of suicide. Death can then result accidentally, not intentionally.
- Yet, it is not uncommon to learn that, at *other* times, self injuring adolescents flirt with the idea of suicide.
- Nevertheless, you should *never assume* that the act of self injury is *NOT* an attempt of suicide. This can lead to lethal results. You must *ALWAYS* assess for suicidality.
- Many adolescents who self injure will explain how "**physical pain is easier than emotional pain.**"
- Like popping a balloon, self injury can provide a "**release**," bringing his/her mood back to a state of homeostasis.
- Self injury can be a form of **punishment** that is deserved, while the scars offer a lifetime reminder of a painful situation.
- S.I. can be a way to **escape** difficult feelings
- It can be a form of **dissociation** or "trance -like" state resulting in cutting their body too many times to remember.
- The opposite can be true when self injury becomes a **way to "snap out of it"** and bring the teen's state of consciousness back to awareness.
- Self injury can be a **way to externalize the pain.**
- S.I. provides **concrete evidence** to the self injurer and the rest of the world that his/her **pain is real** because the teen does not trust their emotions.
- S.I. becomes a form of **self-medication.**

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