

Recommended Resources **Nonsuicidal Self-Injury (NSSI)**

Books for Professionals

- Self-injury: Simple answers to complex questions (Alexian Brothers, 2014)*
- Treating self-injury (second edition): A practical guide (Walsh, 2012)
- Nonsuicidal self-injury: Advances in psychotherapy, evidence-based practice (Klonsky et al., 2011)
- Identifying, assessing, and treating self-injury at school (Miller & Brock, 2010)
- Self-injury in youth: The essential guide to assessment and intervention (Nixon & Heath, 2009)
- Understanding nonsuicidal self-injury: Origins, assessment, and treatment (Nock, 2009)

Books for Parents/Youth

- Healing self-injury: A compassionate guide for parents and other loved ones (Whitlock & Lloyd-Richardson, 2019)
- Bodily harm: The breakthrough healing program for self-injurers (Conterio & Lader, 1998)*
- Freedom from self-harm: Overcoming self-injury with skills from DBT and other treatments (Gratz & Chapman, 2009)*
- Helping teens who cut: Understanding and ending self-injury (Hollander, 2008)
- Skin game: A memoir (Kettlewell, 1999)
- Cutting: Understanding and overcoming self-mutilation (Levenkron, 1998)
- A bright red scream: Self-mutilation and the language of pain (Strong, 1998)
- The scarred soul: Understanding & ending self-inflicted violence (Alderman, 1997)
- Inside a cutter's mind: Understanding and helping those who self-injure (Clark & Henslin, 2007)

*Excellent resource for both professionals and families

Websites

- <https://itriples.org>
- <http://sioutreach.org>
- www.selfinjury.com
- www.selfinjury.bctr.cornell.edu
- www.selfinjuryfoundation.org

Programs

- S.A.F.E. Alternatives (Self Abuse Finally Ends) – St. Louis, MO
 - 1-800-DONT-CUT (1-800-366-8288)
 - www.selfinjury.com
- Alexian Brothers Center for Self-Injury Recovery Services – Hoffman Estates, IL
 - 1-800-432-5005 or 855-383-2224
 - www.alexianbrothershealth.org/abbhh/ourservices/self-injury

24-hr National Crisis Lines

- 800-273-TALK (1-800-8255) www.nmha.org
- 800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)
- 800-334-HELP (1-800-334-4357)
- 800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233) Domestic Violence Hotline
- 866-4-U-Trevor - for LGBTQ youth (www.thetrevorproject.org)
- 877-332-7333 Teen Hotline
- 800-799-4889 Hearing Impaired Hotline

Recognizing Adolescents who Engage in NSSI

- Exhibits frequent or unexplained bruises, scars, cuts, or burns. When asked about these marks, the adolescent may give excuses such as “My cat scratched me” or “I fell on some glass.”
- Consistently and inappropriately uses clothing designed to conceal wounds that often appear on the arms, thighs, or abdomen.
 - Wears long sleeves and pants despite hot weather.
 - Wears wrist bands, multiple bracelets, or arm warmers.
 - Is resistant to participate in gym class and physical activities that reveal skin.
- Completes writing assignments or creative work with themes of self-injury (e.g., in poetry, songs, papers, journals, or in art class).
- Peer flagging occurs: the adolescent who self-injures tells a peer who then tells an adult.
- Displays general signs of depression, social isolation, withdrawal, and disconnectedness.
- Engages in secretive behaviors, such as spending unusual amounts of time in the bathroom or isolated areas at school or home.
- Displays evidence of an eating disorder or substance use, which often co-occur.
- Possesses sharp objects such as razors, thumb tacks, or shards of glass.

Responding to Adolescents who Engage in NSSI: Do’s & Don’ts

Do:

1. Use a low key, dispassionate demeanor and a respectful curiosity
2. Approach them in a calm and caring way.
3. Listen! Allow them to talk to you. Be available, while supporting a therapy referral.
4. Understand that this is their way of coping with the pain they feel inside.
5. Help them identify healthy coping strategies. Addition is better than subtraction.
6. Discover what their personal strengths are and encourage them to use those strengths.
7. Offer to accompany or introduce the adolescent to a therapist (if the setting allows).
8. Involve parents if possible and when necessary.

Do Not:

1. Do not act shocked or appalled by their behavior.
2. Do not say anything to cause the adolescent to feel guilt or shame (e.g., “What did you do to yourself?”).
3. Do not judge the adolescent, even if you do not agree with them.
4. Do not tell the adolescent that you will not tell anyone if they share information about self-injuring behaviors with you.
5. Do not use punishment or negative consequences if an adolescent does self-injure.
6. Do not make deals in an effort to get the adolescent to stop.
7. Do not make promises to the adolescent that you cannot keep.