

Know Resources

- ♦ www.psychologytoday.com to find a therapist in your area
- ♦ S.A.F.E Alternatives
<http://www.selfinjury.com/>
- ♦ 1.800.DONTCUT
- ♦ Cutting and Self-Harm: Warning Signs and Treatment Parents should watch for symptoms and encourage kids to get help. WebMD Feature Archive by Jeanie Lerche Davis Reviewed by Michael W. Smith, MD
- ♦ <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
- ♦ National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Crisis Self-Harm: 1.800.273.8255
- ♦ Raising Kids Who Can: Use Good Judgment Assume Responsibility Communicate Effectively Respect Self & Others Cooperate Develop Self Esteem & Enjoy Life; by, Betty Lou Bettner
- ♦ A Parent's Guide to Understanding and Motivating Children (Raising Kids Who Can Series); by, Betty Lou Bettner
- ♦ Hollander, M (2008) Helping Teens Who Cut: Understanding and Ending Self-Injury. N.Y.: Guilford Press.
- ♦ Niderman, T. (1998) The Scarred Soul: Understanding & Ending Self-inflicted Violence, CA, New Harbinger

This handout was found online, all credit is given to Cary Scott author of this handout.

Lexington Middle School is dedicated to supporting all of our students and helping them make healthy choices. If someone is in need of help please contact Lexington Middle School Counselor, Candice Weiser 979-773-2254 X 255 for assistance with community counseling.

Parents Need to Know

The Self Injury Epidemic

by Cary Scott, M.A., CSC, LPC



Know the Facts About Self Injury

- It is a behavioral response that attempts to cope with overwhelming emotions by deliberately injuring the body.
- It is not an attempt of suicide but can be very dangerous and lead to accidental death.
- Usually people who self injure want to live not die. They just don't know how to cope.
- It is not a phase in childhood that will pass.
- There are many reasons for injury and all of the reasons should be taken seriously and with interventions.
- Self Injury is non-discriminatory and starts as early as 5 years old.
- Self Injury is not an indication that a person has a severe mental illness.
- There are many ways to injure and cutting is only one way. Some may burn, scratch, pull out hair, pick their wounds, bite themselves, or hit themselves.

Know the Warning Signs

- Unexplained sores, wounds, or bruises that consistently appear on the body
- Sudden clumsiness or excuses or falling, bumping, or rough housing
- Extended periods of time in the bathroom, bedroom or alone areas
- Bloody tissue lying around in the bathroom or bedroom
- Wearing unseasonal clothing to keep injuries covered
- Emotional instability
- Having blades, pieces of glass or lighters in their possession without need.
- Need for perfection

NOTE: having just one of these behaviors doesn't mean that they are or are not injuring. You are the parent trust your intuition and check it out!

Know How to Respond if it is Your Child

- Don't cry or get angry. Stay calm.
- Show concern, express compassion & love.
- Listen patiently to what they have to say.
- Validate their feelings.
- Don't make assumptions.
- Don't judge them.
- Show encouragement toward finding other things to do in coping with stress.
- Don't expect them to stop immediately it takes time to learn new ways to cope.
- Use and teach basic first aid to treat injuries
- Go to ER if wounds are severe.
- Suggest short term interventions to help distract them in the moment (listen to music, take a walk, call someone, come to you).

Know What to Do

- Find a counselor your child is comfortable with and that knows about self injury.
- Reflect on parenting and communication patterns and consider areas of improvement
- Be consistent with your child and provide natural and logical consequences.
- Spend more one to one time with your child without electronics
- Limit his/her use of social media and the number of accounts he/she has. Only 1 or 2 recommended.
- Have access to all electronic accounts. You have the right and responsibility to supervise and protect your child especially when there is potential danger.
- Stay positive and encouraging, your child needs your support and guidance.

Know Prevention Strategies

- Show an interest in your child's interests
- Attend school functions and events
- Engage them in activities outside of school.
- Have regular family time.
- Remind them that it is natural to have feelings of fear, sadness, anger and that it is okay to talk about it.
- Have electronic devices used in community areas of the home.
- Have guidelines for using the internet and social media.
- Privacy is important but unlimited privacy can be too much and isolating.
- Limit the amount of time electronics and video games are used.
- Be aware of the ratings on games, they are relevant.
- Know about what your child is wanting to watch, play or engage in before letting them do it.
- Be familiar with their social group and know their friends' parents. If you feel uncomfortable with them, it is okay to limit the access your child has with the friend.
- Discuss family values and why they are important.
- Remind your child daily of the little things they do well. Show them appreciation.
- Teach them that mistakes are for learning not for shaming. We all make them and it is ok.
- Consequences need to be related to the behavior, making a decision out of anger will only breed more anger in your child.
- Hug your child every day no matter how old they are.