



NONSUICIDAL SELF-INJURY

WHAT IS IT, WHY DOES IT SURFACE IN TEENS AND HOW CAN WE HELP?



HOW DO PEOPLE SELF INJURE?

- Cutting, Burning, Punching solid objects, Picking fights
- Cutting on arms and legs
 - Ranging from “cat scratches” to stitches
- Cutting/burning that is less obvious
 - Bottoms of feet
 - Between toes
 - Insides of thighs (often indicates sexual abuse)
 - Abdomen
 - Various other places



WHY DO PEOPLE SELF INJURE?

- Abuse
- To escape unbearable anguish
- To change the behavior of others
- To escape a situation
- To show desperation to others
- To “get back at” other people
- To gain relief from tension
- To seek help

○ Source: Mental Health First Aid



SELF INJURY IS NOT RELATED TO SUICIDE

- Self injury is not a suicide attempt
 - Rather, it is a maladaptive way of coping
- If you think the person is going to kill themselves, has cut too deeply, or is an immediate threat, call 911 immediately.



PROBLEMS CAUSED BY SELF INJURY

- Infection
- Scars
- Broken bones that do not heal correctly
- Stigma as a result of judgment from others
- Substantial loss of blood causing death (in rare situations)



People Who Self Injure Often Seek Help When

- Somatic problems
- Relationship problems
- Mood disorders
- Parents discover behavior

- Teens rarely ask for help because they self injure



ASSESSMENT

- Assess for mood disorders
- Assess for problems at school
- Assess family functioning
- Assess for substance abuse
- Assess for abuse



MEDICATION OR THERAPY?

- Therapy helps to
 - Change thinking patterns (CBT)
 - Teach coping skills (DBT)
 - Develop insight into maladaptive behavior



MEDICATION

- Meds can treat co-occurring mood disorders
 - Antidepressants
 - Anti-anxiety
 - Benzodiazepines have potential for addiction and should be used only for the short term.
- * (Carol Ott Clinical Assistant Professor of Pharmacy Practice at Purdue University)
- If client only takes medication and does not change thoughts, behaviors or lifestyle, results will be limited



BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER?

- **A teen with self injurious behavior may not have a mental health diagnosis**
- Many clinicians think of Borderline Personality Disorder when there are signs of self injury
- No one under age 18 cannot be diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder
- Self injury is a maladaptive way of coping and does not necessarily mean the person has Borderline Personality Disorder



BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER CRITERIA

- Frantic efforts to avoid real or imagined abandonment.
- A pattern of unstable and intense interpersonal relationships characterized by alternating between extremes of idealization and devaluation.
- Identity disturbance: markedly and persistently unstable self-image or sense of self.
- Recurrent suicidal behavior, gestures, or threats, or self-mutilating behavior

○ Source: DSM



Co-MORBIDITY

- PTSD
- Depression
- Bipolar
 - Mania
- Substance Abuse
 - Self medicating



REBT

- What is the worst that could happen?

- ABCD Model
 - Activating Situation
 - Belief
 - Consequence
 - Dispute

Source: Albert Ellis



DBT- DIALECTICAL BEHAVIOR THERAPY

- Dialectical- discussion and reasoning by dialogue as a method of intellectual investigation
- DBT is the therapy of choice for Borderline Personality
 - I do not know of a DBT program in Lafayette
 - Many therapists in Lafayette use techniques from DBT
- Marsha Linehan
 - www.linehaninstitute.org
- Helpful handouts
 - www.dbtselfhelp.com



DBT- TECHNIQUES

- Squeeze ice until it melts in your hand
- Hold your finger in ice cream
- Listen to your heart with a stethoscope

- Engage all five senses
 - Look at something beautiful, especially in nature
 - Listen to music and nature sounds
 - Smell things that are enjoyable, such as aromatherapy
 - Taste great food that is also healthy
 - Touch something soft, such as a pet



CBT

- Positive self talk
- Monitoring feelings
- Change environment when appropriate
- ...as simple as exposing yourself to sunlight
- CBT achieves reported panic-free status in 70-90% of clients

Choy Y (February 1, 2008). ["Treatment Planning for Panic Disorder"](#). *Psychiatric Times* **25** (2)



PARENTING

- Parents need to be involved with their teens and develop a relationship with them.
- Parents are often the clients and not the teen
- Hold the teen accountable for their actions
- Encourage the teen in positive ways
- Engage the teen in community activities, sports, etc.



"I EXPECT YOU TO FUNCTION WELL"

- Use solution language
- Don't make it medical



STRESS REDUCERS

- Change your lifestyle and improve your mood
 - Exercise
 - Eat quality food (try to avoid processed and fast food)
 - Hobbies
 - Learning communication skills
 - Journaling
 - Relaxation techniques



IS IT A PHASE?

Just because a teen self harms, it does not mean they have a diagnosis.

- Attention seeking
- Following the crowd
- Lack of coping skills



CONSIDER THERAPY WHEN...

- Impaired functioning, including problems at school
- Suspicion of mood disorder
- Self injurious behavior is observed



BECOME CERTIFIED IN MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

- An 8-hour interactive training course for adults.
- Presents an overview of mental illness and substance use disorders
- Introduces the risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems
- Builds understanding of the impact of mental illnesses
- Teaches a five-step action plan to help an individual in crisis
- Participants who successfully complete the 8-hour program will become a certified "Mental Health First Aider."

○ Sign Up at mhalafayette.org

Provided by Mental
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