

SELF-INJURY

Self-injury is a fairly common, yet confusing psychological symptom. Self-injury typically refers to a variety of behaviors in which an individual intentionally inflicts harm to his or her body for purposes not socially recognized or sanctioned. Most of the time, there is no suicidal intent. According to research studies, 12% to 24% of secondary school and young adult populations have self-injured, and that 6-8% of adolescents and young adults report chronic self-injury. The common forms of self-injury include intentional cutting, scratching, burning or self bruising.

There are a number of reasons given for why individuals self-injure. Some describe it as a distraction from the emotional pain they are experiencing. Others say they do it in order to feel in control of their mind or body. In some cases, the individuals may be reenacting a trauma in an attempt to resolve it. To the outside observer it might be difficult to comprehend how hurting yourself can provide a sense of relief, however cutting and other types of self-mutilation can cause the body to release natural painkillers called endorphins, that help heal the wound. The endorphins can help a person feel better physically and emotionally on a temporary basis.

If you or someone you know is engaging in self-injurious behaviors, seek immediate help. These behaviors can be dangerous and possibly lead to infection, scars, disfigurement or death. Persons who self-injure can learn healthy alternatives to regulate emotions and communicate needs more effectively.

The licensed therapists at the Walter Young Center can help you or someone you know take the first step towards getting help for this very treatable problem. Call (262)524-7335 to schedule an appointment.

SOURCES:

International Society for the Study of Self-Injury. Retrieved January 14, 2011, from the ISSS website:

<http://www.issweb.org/>

DBT workbook

HELPFUL WEBSITE:

www.selfinjury.com