

# Points for Parents

## Youth & Self-Harm

### warning signs

- Unexplained frequent injuries, such as cuts and burns
- Wearing long pants and long sleeved shirts in warm weather
- Low self esteem
- Problems handling emotions
- Problems with relationships

### what is self-harm?

- Is the act of deliberately physically harming one-self without the intent of suicide.
- These behaviours are a way to cope with emotionally triggering experiences.

### what self-harm is not

- A failed suicide attempt
- A manipulative or attention-seeking behaviour

### Resources

CMHA - Youth & Self Injury:

[http://www.cmha.ca/bins/content\\_page.asp?cid=3-1036](http://www.cmha.ca/bins/content_page.asp?cid=3-1036)

COAST - Youth and Self Injury:

<http://coasthalton.ca/youth-cutting.php>

Self Injury Canada (INSYNC):

<http://www.insync-group.ca/>

### how not to help

- **Don't** react or panic
- **Don't** judge or criticize
- **Don't** assume. Do not assume that the self-abuse behaviour is a suicide attempt or that your loved one needs to be admitted to a hospital immediately. Also, do not assume that the issue is not serious. Even if the injuries are not visible, that does not mean that your loved one is not suffering. When in doubt, ask.
- **Don't** ask to see/touch any injury or ask about their method. Ask your loved one about the seriousness of the injury and trust their judgment.

### Reasons Youth Self-Harm

- To ease tension & anxiety
- To escape feelings of depression & emptiness
- To escape feelings of numbness
- To relieve anger & aggression
- To relieve intense emotional pain
- To regain control over one's body
- To maintain a sense of security or feeling of uniqueness
- As a continuation of previous abusive patterns
- To obtain a feeling of euphoria
- To express or cope with feelings of alienation
- As a response to self-hatred or guilt
- As a symptom of a more severe mental disorder

### how to help

- **Listen, Listen, Listen** to your loved one. Let them know you care.
- **Be available** to your loved one should they choose to confide in you or ask for help.
- **Get help** for yourself. It can be overwhelming when people attempt to "fix" the problem on their own.
- **Offer** help to your loved one. Help them to seek professional therapeutic help.
- **Be informed.** Educate yourself on self-abuse. Don't pretend you are informed if you aren't.
- **Be accepting** of your loved one. They are coping with painful experiences the only way they know how.
- **Recognize your limitations.**



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