

Self Injury

Visualization:

- What are your feelings when you hear the words self-injury, cutting on oneself?
- Who do you generally think about doing these behaviors?
- How do you feel about those people?
- How might these feelings trigger you or get in the way of you working with a student you engages in self-injury?

Socially deviant self-injury - in response to psychological crises and demonstrates a sense of disconnection and alienation from others

Socially sanctioned self-injury - (e.g. tattooing and body piercing - cultural dependent)

1. Arms & wrists
2. Legs
3. Abdomen
4. Head
5. Chest
6. Genitals

* Biological component -

Some predisposed to endorphin rushes when self-injuring

* Psychological component -

- To regulate strong emotional responses
- In college age students, self-injury often occurs in students who have undiagnosed and untreated depression and anxiety and are more likely to engage in self-harming behaviors as a way to self-soothe and self-medicate.
- They simply do not have the required coping skills to manage their emotional responses to distress on their own.

Self reported reasons include:

- Relieve psychological pain
- Keep traumatic memories from recurring
- To express emotions
- Release anger, depression and anxiety
- Means of reducing emotional numbness
- Promotes a sense of being real
- To gain a sense of control over lives and emotional experiences

How do you find out about a student who is engaging in this behavior -

- Most commonly you will hear about it from someone else
- You may suspect because of marks
- You may discover it dramatically - e.g. blood all over the bathroom

Responding to someone who engages in self-injury

1. Ask if this is something they have done for a while or new behavior
2. Show the person that you care about them beyond the self-injury
3. Communicate respect for the person's attempt to cope with their emotions
4. Assess the need for medical attention
5. Refer to CAPS

Medical Attention

- Ask the student if she has cleaned the wound appropriately or if it needs medical attention.
- Sometimes a wound will not close because the slice was too deep or on a part of the body where there is pressure to stretch
- Infections due to untreated wounds or using rusty razors or interference with wound healing
- Accidental death is a risk