

# SELF-INJURY

## WHAT IS IT?

Self-injury, or cutting, refers to deliberately causing physical harm to oneself without intending to commit suicide.

## WHY DO PEOPLE SELF-INJURE?

People often turn to self-injury as an unhealthy method of managing difficult feelings such as emotional distress, sadness, frustration, or overwhelming stress.

## CAUSES

There's no one single cause that leads someone to self-injury. In general, self-injury may result from poor coping skills and difficulty managing emotions.

## Self-injury may be an attempt to:

- Manage or reduce severe distress or anxiety.
- Provide a distraction from painful emotions.
- Feel a sense of control.
- Punish oneself.

## PREVENTION

There is no sure way to prevent someone's self-injuring behavior. But reducing the risk includes strategies that involve both individuals and communities.

- Identify someone at risk and offer help.
- Encourage supportive social networks.
- Raise awareness.
- Encourage friends to seek help.

## RISK FACTORS

Teenagers and young adults are most likely to self-injury, but those in other age groups do it, too. Certain factors may increase the risk of self-injury:

- Having friends who self-injury.
- Past abuse or trauma.
- Mental health issues.
- Alcohol or drug use.

## SYMPTOMS

Scars, often in patterns.

Wearing long sleeves or long pants to hide self-injury, even in hot weather.

Fresh cuts, scratches, bruises, bite marks or other wounds.

Frequent reports of accidental injury.

## GETTING HELP

Talk to someone you trust. They can help you take the first steps to successful treatment.

- Call your mental health provider if you have one.
- Call or text 988 to reach the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. For Spanish, call 1-888-628-9454.
- Reach out to your school nurse or counselor, teacher, or healthcare provider.
- Reach out to a close friend or family member.
- Contact a spiritual leader or someone else in your faith community.

**If you've injured yourself severely, call 9-1-1!**

HOPE