# Self-harm and Cutting



If you or someone you know is doing self-injury, it is important to get help.

Talk with a counselor, therapist or other health care provider.

#### What is self-harm?

- Self-harm is when people hurt their bodies on purpose as a way of dealing with painful feelings and emotions.
- It is also called self-injury.

#### Why do people hurt themselves?

- There are many reasons. Some people hurt themselves to relieve emotional pain or stress.
- Emotional pain can be caused by fights with parents or friends, physical or sexual abuse, eating disorders, work or school problems, and loneliness.

## Are people who self-harm trying to kill themselves?

- No, people who self-harm are trying to relieve emotional pain, not kill themselves.
- It is very important for people who self-harm to get help. The same feelings that lead to self-harm can cause people to become suicidal in the future.



#### What are the risks of self-harm?

- Self-harm may lead to infections or permanent scars. In some cases, people may accidentally kill themselves.
- Some people also become dependent on self-harm. They cannot stop even when they really want to.

#### Why do people keep self-harm a secret?

- A person may hide self-harm for many reasons. Some people feel guilty and ashamed about what they have done to their bodies.
   Others fear they will be labeled "crazy" or sent away for treatment.
- Most people who hurt themselves are just struggling with tough feelings and situations.
   Some people are also dealing with depression or anxiety. It is important for them to talk with a doctor or a therapist before things get worse.



## Different ways people harm themselves:

- > cutting, burning, scratching
- ➤ hitting themselves
- punching walls or other hard surfaces
- > preventing wounds from healing
- banging their heads
- > choking themselves

## How does someone stop hurting him or herself?

- The best way to stop is to tell someone and ask for help.
- You can get help from a professional such as a therapist. If you do not have a therapist, ask a parent, teacher, coach, counselor, doctor or nurse to help you find one.
- Talk to others when you are in pain. No one can handle all of life's problems on his or her own.
- Find other ways to deal with pain besides hurting yourself. Here are examples of things to do instead:
  - ➤ Call a friend and talk about your feelings.
  - Distract yourself by going for a walk.
  - ➤ Exercise to relieve stress.
  - Draw or write in a journal to express your strong emotions.
  - Listen to or play music that makes you happy. This can help change your mood.

# How can you help a friend who is hurting him or herself?

- Talk to your friend and let him or her know that you care. People who self-harm often feel guilty about what they are doing. Knowing that someone cares can make a difference.
- Make sure a family member, doctor or therapist is aware of what is going on. You may need to tell someone what your friend is doing.
- Offer to be a safe person to talk to when your friend is thinking about hurting himself or herself.

