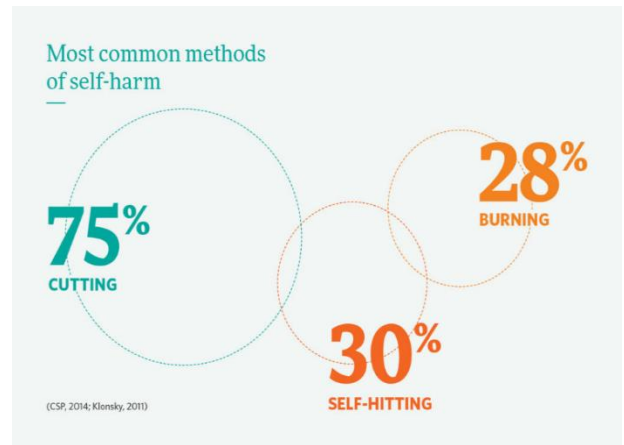


Mental Health Moment:

Understanding Self- Harm & Ways to Provide Support

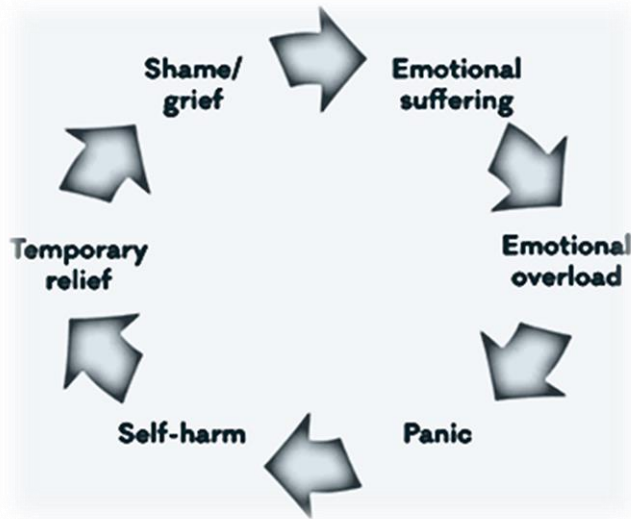
Self-harm is a very common mental health concern that is often stigmatized, overlooked, or even considered a suicide attempt. Self-harm can be exhibited in many different forms. The most commonly thought-of method is cutting; however, people harm themselves in various ways. Along with cutting is burning, scratching, pinching, hitting, head banging, and drinking lethal substances.



Risk Factors for Self-Harm:	Warning Signs of Self-Harm:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulties at home• Relationship issues• School/work stressors• Bullying• Depression, anxiety, PTSD, and other mental health disorders• Low self-esteem• Life transitions/changes• Alcohol and drug use• Loss of a loved one• Prior self-harm/suicide attempt	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unexplained frequent injuries including cuts or burns• Wearing clothes inappropriate for the weather such as long sleeves/pants• Withdrawn or isolated• Stop participating in their regular activities• Rapid mood changes• Poor functioning at school, work, and home• Significant traumatic event



Why?



People who self-injure commonly report they feel empty inside, unable to express their feelings, not understood by others, and fearful of intimate relationships and adult responsibilities. Self-harm is their way to cope with or relieve painful or hard-to-express feelings and is generally not a suicide attempt. But relief is temporary, and a self-destructive cycle often develops without proper treatment. Self-harm can also be a way to have control over your body when you can't control anything else.

How to Help!

1. **Avoid judgement** or assumptions, as this may cause them to shut down
2. **Seek understanding** in how this helps them, what purpose it serves and why they do it.
3. **Be supportive** and tell them you will be there for them.
4. **Don't dismiss** or ridicule their actions.
5. **Don't ask for promises.** This may make them feel like they have no control and add additional guilt if they harm themselves again and disappoint you.
6. **Try to be accepting and normalize** (you don't have to tell them they're right) how they feel as people cope differently, and gently encourage them to seek help.
7. **Evaluation by a mental health professional** to find out what their reasons for hurting themselves are and what emotional difficulties they're experiencing.
8. **Psychotherapy or talk therapy** to help address and manage underlying issues and learn healthy coping skills.
9. **Medication** can help treat an underlying mental illness, such as depression or anxiety.
10. **Inpatient or partial hospitalizations and intensive outpatient programs** are available if they need a safe environment or more intense treatment.

Need Help: Text HOME to 741741 to connect to a crisis counselor.

Resources:

<https://www.mhanational.org/conditions/self-injury-cutting-self-harm-or-self-mutilation>

<https://www.suicideinfo.ca/resource/self-harm-and-suicide/>

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/truth-about-self-harm>

<https://www.bannerhealth.com/healthcareblog/teach-me/how-to-help-a-friend-who-is-self-harming>