

# SELF HARM

## What is Self Harm?

In North America self harm is defined as the deliberate act of physically harming yourself in a manner that is not life-threatening, and is not for the purpose of suicide (Laye-Gindhu & Schonert-Reichl, 2005).

### COMMON FORMS OF SELF HARM

- Cutting type behaviour (scratching, gouging, poking, or cutting)
- Hitting or biting
- Burning
- Head banging
- Hair pulling

## Average Age of Onset

- 12-14 years old (Nock, Teper & Hollander, 2007)

## Prevalence Rates

- Prevalence rates can vary due to questioning techniques of researchers, but range from 18% (Cullen et al., 2013) in a community sample of adolescents to 28.4% (Muehlenkamp et al., 2012)
- Large Western Canadian city studied found 15% of high school students reported they engaged in self harm
  - 42% reported self harm ideation
  - 10% reported preoccupation with self harm



## Warning Signs

•Self harm tends to be an exceptionally private behaviour.

Things to look out for include:

- unexplained frequent injury or scars
- wearing armbands, bracelets, or long sleeve shirts or pants

•secretive or elusive behaviour, avoiding PE class

•spending lengthy periods of time alone, particularly in the bedroom or bathroom

•an unexplained shift in mood



"[They] are often bright, talented, creative achievers — perfectionists who push themselves beyond all human bounds, people-pleasers who cover their pain with a happy face." ~Rachel Zoller, Focus on the Family



How will you know I'm hurting  
If you cannot see my pain?  
To wear it on my body  
Tells what words cannot explain.  
~C.Blount



Lavender Counselling  
Suite 265-8661-201 Street  
Langley, BC  
V2Y 0G9  
(604) 546-7544

# ABOUT ME



## Individual Risk Factors

- friends are doing it
- difficulty expressing feelings
- extreme emotional reactions (anger or sadness)
- stressful family events
- loss of a significant relationship or social status
- lack of coping skills
- negative body image or genetic predisposition

## COLLABORATE

One item that is key is the need for a clear set of boundaries that are shared with the child prior to their disclosure. Following this, it is beneficial to work collaboratively with the student e.g., to help him/her contact and self disclose to parents, or administrators, or school counsellors.

## REFER

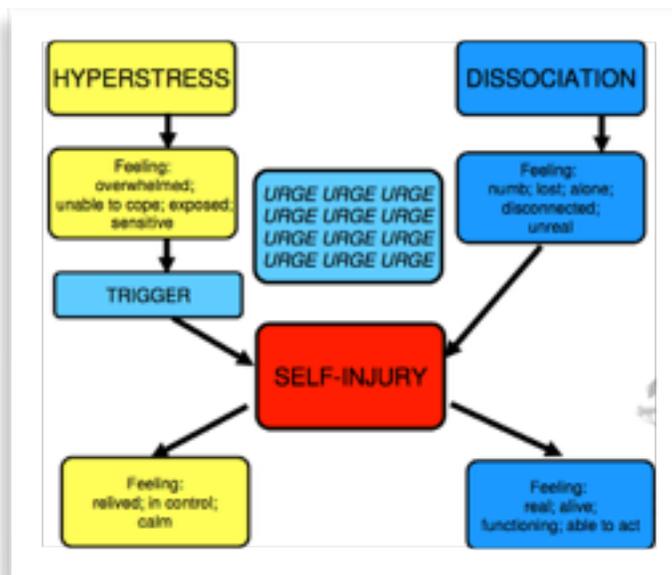
It is important to know when to seek outside support for issues that either require more time than you can provide or that are beyond your competency level.

# Understanding those who Self Harm



## HYPERSTRESS AND DISSOCIATION

Self harm tends to follow one of two pathways: hyper-stress or dissociation as pictured below. It is important to note that following the self harm, in both instances the child feels relief and an increased ability to function.



# HELPING

## In Schools

- Teach social emotional learning and create a safe environment for disclosure
- regard all emotions as information
- Have a school self harm policy
- Know less than 1/3 of children who require psychological intervention receive it (Conroy&Brown, 2004)

## As Individuals

- Know your school's competency
- Know and inform the student of the school's policy on confidentiality
- Be aware of your own reaction
- Embody & create an accepting atmosphere
  - listen empathically
  - remain calm
  - avoid being dismissive
  - assess risk