

# SELF

[See all blog posts »](#)

It's Self-Injury Awareness Day: What You Need to Know

Tuesday, March 1, 2011 at 4:20 PM

| posted by [Jenny Everett](#)

Today is Self-Injury Awareness Day, a day meant to call attention to the disturbing number of people who deliberately harm their bodies in an attempt to numb emotional stress.

Self-injury (SI) can range from cutting, burning or hitting oneself to simply picking at skin, pulling hair or pinching. At its most extreme, SI can lead to bone-breaking and other more serious injuries.

While there isn't a lot of epidemiological data, one of the largest studies out of Cornell University suggests that 20 percent of college women have self-injured at least once, and approximately 75 percent of those have injured more than once.

"Self-injurers come from all walks of life. In general, they have a difficult time dealing with with intense emotional stress," says Wendy Lader, Ph.D., president of [S.A.F.E. Alternatives](#), a group dedicated to stopping self-abuse.

So why would people want to harm themselves?



One misconception is that they do it for attention.

"The most common reason people self-injure is for emotional regulation," says Lader. "That is, to feel better or to calm down when in an emotional storm."

It seems counter-intuitive, but for these individuals, physically harming themselves provides comfort in the following ways:

- \* It distracts from emotional pain and calms overwhelmingly intense feelings
- \* It gives a sense of control and distracts from painful memories or disturbing thoughts

\* It's a way to express things they can't put into words or can't sort out in their own mind

So, what should you do if you suspect someone is engaging in self-harm? First, realize that this is a serious situation. According to Lader, while most people who self-injure will not attempt suicide, self-injurers are nine times more likely than non-injurers to attempt suicide.

"You should not, nor can you be their therapist," says Lader. "But you can let your loved one or friend know that you care about them and want to see them get the professional help they need. You can also let them know that you recognize that they are in emotional pain and want to see them attain a sense of happiness."

Once you've expressed your concern, help them find a mental health professional who specializes in self-harm (this is key -- not every doc is qualified to deal with this particular behavior). [Click here for support and therapist referrals.](#)

Related Links:

[Find The Best Therapy For You](#)

[SELF's Get-Happier Guide](#)

[10 Health Symptoms You Shouldn't Ignore](#)

[6 Easy Natural Mood Lifters](#)

Keywords {

[health tips](#),  
[mental health](#)

Comments

| [Add your comments](#)

Categories:

[General Health](#)

Share:

[Digg](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Yahoo Buzz](#)

[More](#)

Previous Post: [Healthy Alternatives to McDonald's Oatmeal](#)

Next Post: [Aguilera, Sheen, Lohan: How to Stop a Meltdown Before It Happens](#)

Rating

Your Rating:

☆☆☆☆☆

[Favorite](#)

Comments

[Post A Comment](#)



SUBMIT

Are you sure you want to add this content to your Self.com's favorites?  
Yes No

