The Crisis Intervention & Prevention Team addresses mental health concerns, prevents suicide and self-harm, and promotes a positive school environment for all students. You can submit a referral to our team by clicking HERE.

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As a mental health team we believe that education on various mental health conditions can empower an individual to seek the help they need or provide someone they know their support. So, what is self-injury? Self-injury is a deliberate, non-suicidal behavior that inflicts physical harm on one’s body to relieve emotional distress. Self-injury has a paradoxical effect in that the pain self-inflicted actually sets off an endorphin rush, relieving the self-harmer from deep distress. It’s important to note that self-injury does not involve a conscious intent to die by suicide.

WHY DO PEOPLE SELF-INJURE?

Let’s start with this: everyone needs a way to cope with their emotions. People who self-harm have turned to hurting themselves as their coping mechanism to manage their emotions.

- Process their negative feelings
- Distract themselves from their negative feelings
- Feel something physical, particularly if they are feeling numb
- Develop a sense of control over their lives
- Punish themselves for things they think they’ve done wrong
- Express emotions that they are otherwise embarrassed to show
- Communication of depression
- Manage or reduce severe distress

Self-harm can manifest differently for everyone. And, the ways people may self-harm extend far beyond the usual references to cutting in media. Simply, self-harm is anything and everything someone can do to purposely hurt their body. Here are some of the most common types of self-injury:

- Cutting
- Scratching
- Burning
- Carving words or symbols into the skin
- Hitting or punching oneself (including banging one’s head or other body parts against another surface)
- Piercing the skin with sharp objects such as hairpins
- Pulling out hair
- Picking at existing wounds
SYMPTOM OF SELF-INJURY

Stigma creates shame and embarrassment, making it hard for people who self-harm to get help. So, look out for yourself and for your pals. If you suspect that someone in your life is self-harming, here are some warning signs to keep top of mind:

- Scars
- Fresh cuts, burns, scratches, or bruises
- Rubbing an area excessively to create a burn
- Having sharp objects on hand
- Wearing long sleeves or long pants, even in hot weather
- Difficulties with interpersonal relationships
- Persistent questions about personal identity
- Behavioral and emotional instability, impulsiveness, or unpredictability
- Saying that they feel helpless, hopeless, or worthless

RESPECTFUL CURIOSITY

Addressing mental health concerns can feel intimidating for support persons and especially parents. We encourage you to keep a line of communication at all times to make these tougher conversations more manageable. If you feel like there’s improvement to be made in this area it is not too late! Respectful curiosity about your children’s mental health and/or self-injury can be a great tool. Respectful curiosity is best described as a state of awareness characterized by a genuine curiosity and willingness to know and understand in combination with attention to assuring that one’s curiosity is satisfied in a kind and respectful way.

1. Preface questions with your intentions of wanting to help in a respectful manner to support them.
2. Be ready to honor the person’s disclosures and responses.
3. Recognize that it is hard for them to be so vulnerable.
4. Please know that you can calmly share your emotions with them using “I” statements.
5. Thank your child for their willingness to talk about such a challenging topic. Speaking strong emotions can be a great coping skill & alternative.

Sample questions to ask:

- “How does self-injury make you feel?”
- “How do you feel before you self-injure?”
- “How do you feel after?”
- “What are some reasons you might want to stop self-injuring?”

Sample “I” Statement: This scares me because I don’t know what to do or how to help you.

For additional information and more sample questions and statements click [HERE](https://example.com).