



IF YOUR CHILD IS SELF-INJURING...

**GUIDELINES DEVELOPED BY THE
INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM ON SELF-INJURY
IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS (ICES)**



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EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

HELPFUL STRATEGIES

UNHELPFUL STRATEGIES

Find support for yourself (ideally through informal networks and professional support)

Blaming them for their self-injury

Be clear about your expectations for your child about participating in family life and other activities

Blaming yourself for your child's self-injury

Be collaborative and include your child in choices wherever possible (e.g. therapist, house rules, technology use, etc.)

Getting caught up in their intense emotions and moods

Acknowledge/Validate your son/daughter's pain/upset but remain calm throughout

Taking sides with different family members about what is "right to do"

Choose times and places for hard conversations to maximize comfort and minimize distraction

Engaging in unnecessary power struggles (limit unilateral decisions and work for shared agreements wherever possible)

Keep lines of communication as open as possible

Imposing a set of new "lock down" controls (e.g. monitoring whereabouts, requiring constant connection, limiting mobility)

Know that as much as you feel your son/daughter's upset/pain it is more helpful to your child to separate yourself from his/her feelings in order to stay calm in the face of their intensity

Unnecessary punishments and ultimatums

Learn about self-injury and emotion/emotion regulation

Forcing conversation or requiring constant check ins about selfinjury or emotions

HELPFUL STRATEGIES	UNHELPFUL STRATEGIES
Ask your child open, honest questions -- questions without an agenda asked in a sincere and respectful way	Tiptoeing around the situation or setting reasonable expectations out of fear that you'll cause self-injury to happen.
Model healthy coping strategies	Taking doors off hinges and removing all possible self-injury implements from your home
Understand and respect your child's readiness to change	Insisting that your child cover old scars
Help your child identify and reinforce successes	Removing reasonable family expectations (e.g., washing the dishes) as a way to 'smoothing out' your child's emotional life
Respect your child's wishes concerning sharing his or her selfinjury with extended family, friends or school	Regularly jumping in to "fix" situations you think may trigger your child
Seek therapeutic support for you and for your family. Self-injury can cause family division; it helps for everyone to feel heard and understood	
Recognize that self-injury serves a purpose; knowing about how it helps and what to expect in recovery can be helpful	

