



TIPS FOR PARENTS



INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM
ON SELF-INJURY IN
EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

The support of friends and family is important in breaking the vicious cycle of self-injury. When a youngster feels supported (not isolated), this can help him/her to gradually get over the self-injury addiction. Mental health professionals can help youngsters to cope differently with self-injury triggers (e.g., stressful situations) and learn healthier alternative behaviors to functionally regulate their feelings.

Self-injury is of course very scary for family members and friends, and difficult to understand. The initial reactions of parents are often anger, anxiety, disbelief, sadness, and other fierce emotions. These reactions can contribute to keeping the behavior hidden, heighten the severity of the behavior or maintaining the behavior.

We hope the information in this leaflet can help you to have a conversation with your son/daughter who self-injures in a constructive way.

A few tips regarding the conversation:

- Talk openly and honestly about self-injury. Do not ignore or minimize the behavior. Let him/her know you are worried.
- Do not make accusations and do not force him/her to stop. This often has a counterproductive effect.
- Do not focus too strongly on the wounds. Attention to the wounds can encourage more self-injurious behavior.
- Keep in touch and stimulate the step to professional help.
- Let him/her know you are always willing to talk and to seek solutions and professional help.
- Keep an eye on the health aspects of your son/daughter and keep stimulating him/her in his/her development. In other words, "remain a parent"



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