

Mental Health Professionals

DO

Encourage students to discuss concerns underlying NSSI (e.g., motivations for NSSI) with others, rather than the NSSI act itself

DON'T

Allow detailed and explicit discussion about NSSI

Explain the impact explicit discussion could have on other students and avoid focus on specific details such as method.

DO

Use Safety Plans/Support Plans

Safety plans focus on working collaboratively with the young person to identify supports in their environment, identifying triggering situations, rehearsing alternate coping strategies and providing the young person with emergency contacts if required.

DON'T

Use "No Self-Injury" contracts

These contracts can promote secrecy and result in a failure to confide future episodes of NSSI. Further, they can reduce rapport and interfere with the therapeutic relationship.

DO

Foster the development of alternative coping strategies

DON'T

Promote the use of "replacement behaviours" such as flicking a rubber band on the wrist initiatives

At this stage, there is no scientific evidence to support efficacy of replacement behaviours, and there is anecdotal evidence that such practices may be harmful for some youth.

DO

Recognize that if a student chooses not to cover old wounds and scars, this is their choice

DON'T

Force students to cover scars against their wishes

Review the potential negative consequences for the student (e.g. bullying) if a choice is made to show residual scarring, and other students (e.g. triggering), how these challenges can be addressed, and how the student can be supported.

Concealment of scars may be associated with the shame of having self-injured; for many students, displaying scars after recovery can be therapeutic and empowering.