

Self-Injury

Scars tell
the story
of where
you've been.

They don't dictate
where you're going.

Self-Injury is also known as:

Parasuicide
Deliberate Self Harm
Self-Abuse
Self-Mutilation
Self Inflicted Violence
Cutters

NSSI is the most recent term is Non Suicidal Self-Injury (NSSI). This term was coined in an effort to distinguish Suicidal Self-injury (e.g. self-harm designed to end one's life) from Non suicidal Self-Injury (e.g. self-harm designed as a coping strategy). This term is consistently utilized by researchers and will most likely become the predominant term for this class of behaviors.

Definition:

The definition of NSSI is the deliberate harming of one's body, resulting in tissue damage, without the intent of suicide, and is not culturally sanctioned by the society in which one lives.

Self-Injury can include but is not limited to the following behaviors:

- Scratching (Excoriation)
- Cutting
- Burning
- Hitting or Biting Oneself
- Ingesting or Embedding Toxic Substances or Foreign Objects
- Hair Pulling
- Interfering with the Healing of Wounds

It is not uncommon for self-injurers to engage in more than one form of self-injurious behavior

Some reasons

Why people engage in self-harm:

- To distract from emotional pain (Research supports that the number one reason most people self-injure is to regulate uncomfortable emotional states.
- To punish oneself
- To relieve tension
- To feel real by feeling pain or seeing evidence of injury
- To numb; to not feel anything
- To experience a sense of euphoria (associated with release of endorphins)
- To communicate pain, anger, or other emotions to oneself or others
- To nurture oneself through the caring for wounds.

Who Self-Injurers?

Males and females all ages, ethnic groups and religions self-injure. While there is evidence that males injure in almost equal numbers to females, they don't present in treatment nearly as frequently. It is unclear as to why this might be, except that males tend to have a much more difficult time asking for help. In addition it is much more common for self-injury to begin in adolescence or preadolescence and continue into early adulthood. There is a myth however, that self-injury is a "teen" problem. Older adults engage in self-injury as well, although it usually, but not necessarily begins in adolescence.

How common is this behavior?

It is difficult to know how common the behavior actually is since there has not been consistency in definition of the behavior among researchers. Research in the U.K. for example includes both suicidal and non suicidal self-injury people in their research samples. In the U.S. researches are beginning to make sure that their samples only include people who are non-suicidal self-injurers

(NSSI) in an effort to make comparisons between research studies more reliable.

It is estimated that 4% of the adult general population admits to at least occasional self-injury (Briere & Gil, 1998).

A recent research study of 2,875 college students showed a lifetime prevalence of 17% (Whitlock, 2006).



<http://www.selfinjuryfoundation.org/self-injury-awareness-day.html>

International Society for the Study of Self-Injury:
www.issweb.org

Susan Scheff: Parenting Resources:
www.susanschefftruth.net