



# STUYVESANT HIGH SCHOOL'S SPARK PROGRAM



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## UNDERSTANDING SELF-HARM & SELF-INJURY

### ☞ WHAT IS SELF-HARM?

- **Self-harm** is when an individual inflicts harm to his/her body purposely, for reasons not recognized or sanctioned socially & without the obvious intention of committing suicide. (Dr. Janis Whitlock, Cornell U.)
- It is also called **self-injury**.



### ☞ WHY DO PEOPLE HURT THEMSELVES?

- It can be hard to understand why people self-harm.



- Some people hurt themselves to **relieve emotional pain or stress**.
- **Self-harming** is a way some people try to cope with the pain of strong emotions, intense pressure, or upsetting relationship problems. They may be dealing with feelings that seem too difficult to bear, or bad situations they think can't change.

### ⊗ SOME WAYS PEOPLE HARM THEMSELVES

- ⊗ Banging their heads
- ⊗ Biting or hitting themselves
- ⊗ Burning, cutting, scratching
- ⊗ Choking themselves
- ⊗ Hair pulling or punching walls or other hard surfaces
- ⊗ Scraping & preventing wounds from healing

### ☞ ARE PEOPLE WHO SELF-HARM TRYING TO KILL THEMSELVES?

- **"Self-injury is not about suicide!"** Individuals who self-injure say that hurting themselves is about survival.
- Individuals who self-injure report that hurting themselves helps them drive out thoughts of suicide.
- However, individuals who self-injure have higher rates of suicide ideation & suicide gestures.

### ☞ WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF SELF-HARM?

- **Self-harm may lead to infections or permanent scars.** In some cases, people may accidentally kill themselves.
- Some people also become **dependent on self-harm.** They cannot stop even when they really want to.

### ☞ WHY DO PEOPLE KEEP SELF-HARM A SECRET?

- A person may **hide self-harm** for many reasons. Some people feel guilty and ashamed about what they have done to their bodies. Others fear they will be labeled "crazy" or sent away for treatment.
- Most people who hurt themselves are just struggling with tough feelings and social situations.
- Some people are also dealing with **depression or anxiety.** It is important for them to talk with a doctor or a therapist before things get worse.

### STUY PROJECT LOVE

**"LOVE IS THE MOVEMENT BECAUSE YOU MATTER TO US!"**



### ☞ HOW DOES SOMEONE STOP HURTING HIM or HERSELF?

- **The best way to stop is to tell someone & ask for help!**
- You can get help from a professional such as a therapist. If you do not have a therapist, ask a parent, teacher, counselor, family doctor or nurse to help you find one.
- Talk to others when you are in pain. **No one can handle all of life's problems on his or her own.**
- Find other ways to deal with pain besides hurting yourself.
  - ☞ Call a friend & talk about your feelings.
  - ☞ Go for a walk or run
  - ☞ Exercise to relieve stress
  - ☞ Draw or write in a book/journal
  - ☞ Listen to or play music that makes you happy. This can help change your mood.

### ☞ HOW CAN YOU HELP A FRIEND WHO IS HURTING HIM/HERSELF?

- **Talk to your friend & let him or her know that you care!**
- People who self-harm often feel guilty about what they are doing. **Knowing that someone cares can make a difference!**
- Make sure a family member, doctor or therapist is aware of what is going on. You may need to tell someone what your friend is doing.
- Offer to be a safe person to talk to when your friend is thinking about hurting him / herself.

### Helpful Resources & Referrals

- The Help Guide [www.helpguide.org](http://www.helpguide.org)
- Self Abuse Finally Ends (S.A.F.E.) [www.selfinjury.com](http://www.selfinjury.com)
- To Write Love On Her Arms [www.twloha.com](http://www.twloha.com)
- Understanding Self-injury [www.human.cornell.edu/hd/outreach](http://www.human.cornell.edu/hd/outreach)
- Web MD [www.wedmd.com/mentalhealth](http://www.wedmd.com/mentalhealth)