



# Breaking Through the Myths: Cutting Behaviors

Insights

By Gateway 2 Counseling

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By: Gateway2 Counseling  
Gateway2Counseling.com

## THANK YOU SO MUCH!

We hope this post helps you in whatever stage of life you are in. Know that we are here for you.

If you desire help on your journey, we are always just a screen away here at Gateway 2 Counseling. We are your objective friend. You might be suffering from depression or just feeling overwhelmed with the daily struggles of life. It doesn't matter. We are here for one session or many. You decide.

You can reach us at [www.gateway2counseling.com](http://www.gateway2counseling.com)

Once again, thank you for joining us on this journey to a brighter tomorrow.

Thank you again!

Most of us perform daily habits that keep us safe and healthy. We take our vitamins, we put on our seatbelts, we eat healthy. This is often why the idea of self-injuring oneself can feel so foreign to some of us. We make conscious decisions every day to heal ourselves and become better, not the other way around.

This is why “this is a behavior that’s very hard for people to get inside and empathize with. But it isn’t something that a person can just stop; it’s something that needs to be understood” (Steingard). As we dig deeper into the reasons behind cutting, how we can understand and how we can help those that self-harm become more clear.

Cutting behaviors are often known as self-injury where the person purposely harms the surface of their body. This behavior usually combines a level of dissociation along with a release of endorphins. Instead of pain, they feel a “high”.

This feeling “is the physiological reaction to the release of endorphins – the masking of pain by a substance that mimics morphine”. This is what allows the person to escape from a moment and not feel the pain associated with hurting themselves. (Alderman)

Self-harming happens in both men and women and can be seen on arms, legs, or even their face. If a person is a cutter, it can be hard to reach them, which is why it is very important to understand the meaning behind this action. The reasons for cutting often go much deeper than the surface injury and are often in relation to larger, more complicated issues that need to be resolved.

## **Why would someone choose to self-injure themselves?**

The bottom line is that a person who self harms is often feeling an intense amount of depression and anger. They may even have a specific person that is causing them to feel this way. However, because they do not want to harm that person, they turn their anger upon themselves.

There can be multiple reasons behind self-harm including:

- Trauma
- Depression
- Sexual abuse
- Bullying
- Hard Home Life
- Low Self-Esteem
- Lack of Coping Skills
- Sexual confusion
- Loneliness
- Rejection

The person may be self-harming in order to:

- Indirectly ask for help
- Escape
- Express their anger and frustration
- Punish themselves
- Feel control
- Reduce anxiety
- Relieve guilt

## What are some symptoms?

Signs of self-injury may include:

Scars

Repetitive injuries in the same place

Injuries that don't seem to heal

New lacerations, bruises, burns, or cuts on the skin

Wearing long sleeves or pants despite the weather

Emotional instability and impulsivity

Isolation

Avoiding social activities

Difficulties maintaining close relationships

Negative self-talk

Keeping sharp objects nearby

Refusing to change clothes

Frequent "accidents"

Blood stains

Irritability

Forms of self-injury:

Persistent picking at the skin

Scratching

Cutting

Burning

Piercing

Punching

Pulling out hair

## **When to see a professional**

If you or a loved one are injuring themselves, even in a small way, get help. Even if you haven't yet self-harmed but are thinking about it, it is time to reach out for help.

Most often a person harms themselves because they don't know how to reach out to others. It is a way for them to try to connect with someone to get help without asking for it.

If you are self-injuring, find someone that you trust that can help you take the first steps to recovery. Find someone that you know will be supportive, caring, and provide nonjudgmental help. This can be a friend, a parent, your doctor, a spiritual leader, or a teacher.

## **Treatment**

Ideally, professional assistance is required in order to learn better coping skills, increasing their self-esteem, and learning to love themselves. In addition, treatments can include family therapy, psychotherapy, medication, and psychiatric hospitalization.

## **When does family therapy help?**

When one or more of the following are occurring with the family or at home:

Frequent fighting

Job loss

Loss of a loved one

Extreme emotional reactions

Low communication

Threat of violence

## **What coping skills can be done at home?**

Passive coping skills:

Reading

Drawing

Writing

Listening to music

Active coping skills:

Meditation

Yoga

Hitting a pillow

Making loud noises

## **How does psychotherapy help?**

Psychotherapy can come in the form of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy, Psychodynamic Psychotherapy, and Mindfulness-based Therapies.

Psychotherapy can help by teaching skills to:

Manage self-harming triggers

Manage stress

Boost self-esteem

Increase positive thinking

Effectively problem-solve

## **What about medications?**

Although there is no specific medication for self-harm, there are a myriad of medications that can help with the underlying issues that are causing the self-harm, such as anxiety and depression.



## **When is hospitalization necessary?**

If self-harm becomes a habit or is done severely, it may be recommended that hospitalization take place. Hospitalization provides you or your loved one with a safe, non-threatening place to receive the care that they need.

Even though someone who self-injures may not mean to cause a life-threatening injury, it is possible for them to do so when committing these acts and increase the risk factor for suicide.

Due to the high risks involved with self-injury, it is important that we all become more educated on the issue so that we can better see the signs and better help those who are in need.

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