

WHAT DO I SAY . . . to my friend if I think he or she is self-injuring?

There is help available for youth who are self-injuring. We can all play a part to support a friend to get them the help that they need.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- **Be aware.** Learn the warning signs.
- **Get involved.** Be available and show support.
- **Ask directly** if they are self-injuring.
- **Talk openly** about self-injury and try not to act shocked or surprised.
- **Be willing to listen.** This may be difficult because self-injurers often struggle to express their feelings.
- **Try to understand** their feelings and reflect this understanding back to them. They are in pain, we need to find out why, not focus on the self-injurious behaviour.
- **Help your friend explore the things that they are proud of** or that make them happy. You can't solve their problems for them but you can but you can be a support person and help them find the help they need.
- **Take action. GET HELP.** Help them talk to someone that they trust, other than you. You can't promise that you will keep it a secret.
- Remember—it's not your job to fix their life, but you can get them in contact with appropriate resources that can help them.
- Anyone who is self-injuring needs the help of a counsellor or mental health professional. This provides them with the opportunity to learn new life strategies to cope with their stresses and pain.

www.suicidehelp.ca



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FRIEND

WHAT IS SELF-INJURY

When an individual deliberately injures or causes physical harm to their own body. This can include:

- Cutting themselves
- Hitting themselves
- Burning themselves
- Pulling their own hair
- Picking at their skin
- Strangling themselves (not to the point of suicide)
- Overdosing, poisoning themselves, but not to the point of suicide—not with the intent of dying

WHY SELF-INJURE?

There are many reasons why someone may self-injure. Some of these include:

- Self-punishment
- Attempt at communication (cry for help)
- To feel something (prove they're alive and can feel)
- To deal with strong emotions (physical pain instead of emotional pain)

The bottom line is that there is something that they are struggling to deal with. Self-injury is not the problem; the deep-rooted issue is what needs to be addressed.

WHY SELF-INJURE?

A counsellor can help them discover why and when they self-injure, as well as new ideas that they can use instead of hurting themselves.

RESOURCES

24 Hour Help Lines:

Alberta Help Line	1-877-303-2642
Kid's Help Phone	1-800-668-6868
Native Youth Crisis Line	1-877-209-1266
Emergency	9-1-1

- School (counsellor, teacher, coach)
- Crisis Line
- Hospital
- Parent
- Community Agency
- Church Leader
- RCMP
- ANY TRUSTED PERSON!

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