The Intersection of Suicide and Self-Injury: Addressing Nonsuicidal Self-Injury in School Settings

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Preface/Warnings

- I talk really fast – it’s not because I’m nervous, it’s just the way I talk

- I have a macabre sense of humor – I apologize for any unintentional crassness

- Please ask questions along the way – I want this presentation to meet your needs
In what ways do you engage in self-harming behaviors?

What adaptive coping mechanism serves the same function as your self-destructive habit?
What is nonsuicidal self-injury?

- Deliberate or intentional destruction of body tissue *without suicidal intent*

- Other common labels include deliberate self-harm, parasuicidal behavior, self-mutilation, and self-directed violence (CDC)
  - A note about use of the term “cutter”

- Self-harm as an umbrella term

- I use “self-injury” for the sake of brevity and concision
Four Primary Functions of NSSI

- Emotion regulation
- Anti-numbness
- Anti-suicide
- Self-punishment
- *Interpersonal Influence
NSSI and Suicidal Ideation

- Suicidal ideation has four “parts” or “levels”
  - Thoughts of wanting to die
  - Non-specific thoughts of killing self
  - Suicide plans
  - Intent to die

- Somewhat reductive, but helpful for conceptualization and communicating with adolescents
Functional Perspective of NSSI

Functions

- **Intrapersonal Functions**
  - Reinforced through negative reinforcement
    - Emotion Regulation
    - Self-punishment

- **Interpersonal Functions**
  - Reinforced through positive reinforcement
    - Peer bonding
    - Interpersonal Influence
Traditional Cognitive Model

- Situation
  - Thoughts
    - Emotions
    - Behaviors
Experiential Cognitive Model

- Situation
- Behaviors
- Feelings
- Thoughts
Interrelationships Between E-T-P-B

- Emotions
- Thoughts
- Behaviors
- Physiology
Levels of Thoughts

Automatic thoughts

Intermediate beliefs

Core beliefs
Don’t freak out – respond with emotional neutrality

Find the function

Reflect, validate, and then problem-solve

Addressing guilt vs. shame

- Guilt can be **constructive** because it motivates us to change our behavior
- Shame is always **destructive** because it contributes to feelings of worthlessness
Parent Psychoeducation (cont.)

- Why individuals engage in self-injurious and suicidal behaviors
- How parents and family members can help
  - Creating environments of emotional safety
  - Setting boundaries for physical safety
  - Effective consequences for self-injurious behaviors
- What happens during therapy and how it works
Questions?
Comments? Concerns? Sarcastic remarks?
Shameless Self-Promotion

- Utah Center for Evidence Based Treatment (SLC)
  - Email: michael.riquino@ucebt.com

- University of Utah College of Social Work
  - Email: michael.riquino@socwk.utah.edu
  - Parent study email: selfinjurystudy@gmail.com
Online Self-Injury Resources

- Cornell Research Program [www.selfinjury.bctr.cornell.edu](http://www.selfinjury.bctr.cornell.edu)
- To Write Love On Her Arms [www.twloha.com](http://www.twloha.com)
- S.A.F.E. Alternatives [www.selfinjury.com](http://www.selfinjury.com)
- Secret Shame [www.selfharm.net](http://www.selfharm.net)
- The Trevor Project [www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org)
- Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)
Self-Injury Book Resources

- The Oxford Handbook of Suicide and Self-Injury
- Treating Self-Injury by Barent Walsh
- Bodily Harm by Karen Conterio and Wendy Lader
- A Bright Red Scream by Marilee Strong
- Helping Teens Who Cut by Michael Hollander
- Cutting by Steven Levenkron
- Bodies Under Siege by Aramondo Favazza
Suicide Prevention Resources

- Hope4Utah [www.hope4utah.org](http://www.hope4utah.org)
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center [www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org)
- Prevention Lifeline [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)
- National Alliance on Mental Illness [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [www.samhsa.org](http://www.samhsa.org)