



Self-Injury: School Counselors

How to assist a student who is Self Injuring themselves

DO:

1. Allow the child/adolescent unconditional acceptance.
2. Accept him/her as a person regardless of the behavior.
3. Make understanding the underlying causes for the behavior or goal.
4. Encourage a commitment to try positive alternative behaviors for coping.
5. Suggest a list of coping techniques to be used rather than self-injury.
6. Understand that this list is flexible and can always change.
7. Encourage open communication no matter what the behavior.
8. Acknowledge his/her efforts to cope with very difficult emotions.
9. Show that you care about the injuries.
10. Communicate that it is okay to talk about self-injury.
11. Help him/her discover their personal strengths.
12. Remember that you are not responsible for the child/adolescent's behavior.

DON'T

1. Be afraid to ask the question, "Do you self-injure?"
2. Make eliminating the behavior the primary goal.
3. Tell the child/adolescent to stop the self-injury behavior.
4. Use contracting as a reward or punishment system.
5. Make a safety contract. This may create a need to please you and further the feelings of inadequacy for the child/adolescent.
6. Make him/her feel ashamed or guilty about his/her behavior.
7. Feel responsible for the child/adolescent's decision to self-injure.
8. Be the only source of support for the child/adolescent.
9. Leave the family out of the healing process.

