



# Self-Injury: Parent & Guardians

## What to do if your child is Self Injuring themselves

### **DO:**

1. Accept your child although you do not accept his/her behavior.
2. Let your child know how much you love him/her, not only when he/she self-injures, but also at other times.
3. Understand that this is his/her way of coping with the intense pain that he/she feels inside.
4. Encourage healthier methods of coping by allowing him/her to brainstorm other ways other than hurting him/herself.
5. Listen!! Keep communication open by talking about things that would interest him/her even if it doesn't interest you.
6. Ask open questions (what or how) to encourage him/her to open up. Allow conversations to revolve around what he/she wants to talk about no matter how silly or crazy it may seem to you.
7. Allow him/her to share what they're feeling deep inside either with words (journaling) or in art (drawing, painting, creating, or any other way he/she can communicate their feelings).
8. Make your home a "Safe Place" by removing anything that could be used as a tool for self-injury.
9. Have fun together!! Try to do some fun things together. (Let him/her choose a fun activity that is interactive, not just going to the movies.) Although he/she may complain at first, your child really does want to spend time with you.
10. Discover what his/her personal strengths are and encourage him/her to use those strengths during difficult times.

11. Help your child to get involved in some area of interest, after-school activity, a good cause, or other good will effort.

12. Encourage some kind of outreach in the community, e.g., volunteering at a local animal shelter or wildlife sanctuary, helping an older person at a nursing home, tutoring a young child after school, or mentoring a troubled younger child.

### **DON'T**

1. Say or do anything to cause guilt or shame. (e.g., "Why would you do such a thing?" or "How could you?")
2. Act shocked or appalled by his/her behavior.
3. Talk about his/her self-injury in front of friends or with other relatives.
4. Try to teach them what you think they should do.
5. Use punishment or negative consequences when he/she self-injures. (The reason he/she feels they need to self-injure is because he/she is hurting emotionally about someone or something.)
6. Overprotect by monitoring every move he/she makes, but do notice what's going on.
7. Deny that your child is self-injuring as a way of coping.
8. Keep your child from seeing friends, but do monitor who he/she sees.
9. Blame yourself for your child's behavior.