

9th GRADE: SELF-HARM & SUICIDE

LESSON 2 OVERVIEW



Self-Harm



Lesson Time:

30 Minutes

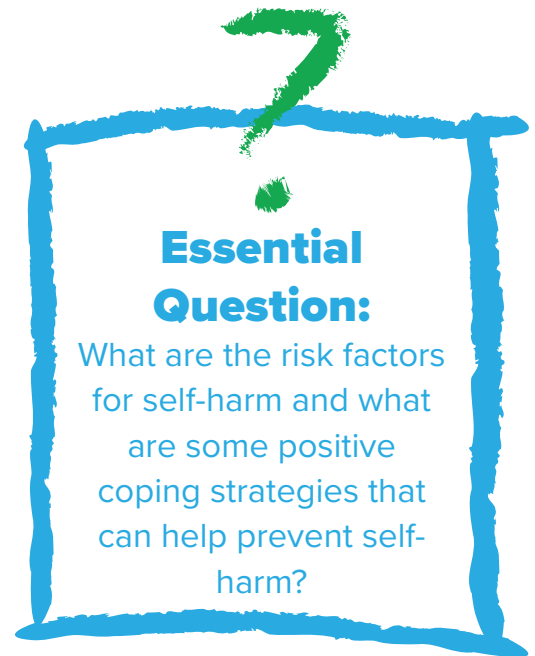
Materials Provided:

- Handout: "Graphic Organizer for Self-Harm Notes" (printed one per student)

Objectives:

Students will be able to...

1. Define the term self-harm.
2. Understand various methods of self-harm.
3. Explain some risk factors influencing self-harm.
4. Recognize the signs of self-harm.
5. Share alternative coping mechanisms to self-harming behaviors.



Self-Harm



Lesson Introduction: (1 minute)

In this lesson, we will define self-harm, list varying types of self-harm, examine risk factors and motivators around self-harming behaviors. We will also explore the effects of our communication and interactions with others.

Core Lesson: (2 minutes)

We talked in our previous lesson about mental health, stress, anxiety and depression. Understanding and supporting those in need is a major step toward recovery or prevention. Self-care is also crucial to long lasting wellness, so we want you to make healthy choices as well as promote the message of self-care to people in your life. Today we are exploring one serious type of risky behavior and that is Self-Harm. I want you to think for a moment about the meaning of this term and the preconceived ideas you have about those who self-harm. It's possible you think they just want attention, but it has little to do with desiring attention which we will discuss later in this lesson.

What does Self-Harm mean? (5 minutes)

The definition of self-harm is “non-suicidal self-injury, deliberately harming the surface of one’s own body.”

- A “non-suicidal self-injury” means the individual is not harming with the intent to die.
- “Deliberately harming the surface” means they are not deliberately harming the inside of their body.

Self-harm can take many forms even though most people only are familiar with one or two. Some of the ways in which people self-harm include... *(Descriptions are listed below if questions arise)*

1. Scratching or pinching
2. Impact with objects
3. Cutting
4. Impact with oneself
5. Ripped skin
6. Carving
7. Interfering with healing
8. Burning
9. Rubbing objects into the skin
10. Hair-pulling

(Use details below to elaborate on types of self-harm if needed for further discussion.)

- 1. Scratching or pinching** – severely scratching or pinching with fingernails or objects to the point that bleeding occurs or marks remain on the skin
- 2. Impact with objects** – includes banging or punching objects, causing bruising or bleeding
- 3. Cutting** – While cutting is often considered synonymous with self-harm, this only occurred in just over 1-in-3 students who reported self-harming and is more common among females.
- 4. Impact with oneself** – includes banging or punching oneself, causing bruising or bleeding
- 5. Ripped skin** – includes ripping or tearing skin
- 6. Carving** – includes carving words or symbols into the skin - separate from cutting
- 7. Interfering with healing** – A person purposefully hampers the healing of wounds. This way of self-mutilation is often in combination with other types of self-harm.
- 8. Burning** – Burning skin is a form of self-mutilation.
- 9. Rubbing objects into the skin** – the rubbing of sharp objects, such as glass, into the skin.
- 10. Hair-pulling** – medically known as trichotillomania. In trichotillomania, a person feels compelled to pull out their own hair and in some cases even ingest that hair.

*REFERENCE: <https://www.healthyplace.com/abuse/self-injury/10-ways-people-self-harm-self-injure>

Core Lesson (cont)

Understanding the Motivators: (4 minutes)

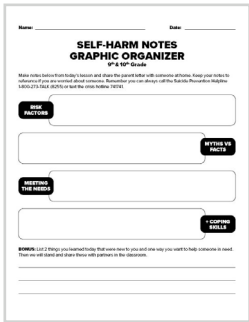
There are many misconceptions about the motivators behind self-harm. Many people mistakenly think that it means a person is suicidal, and the two are not synonymous. Just because someone is willing to inflict pain on himself does not necessarily mean he or she is suicidal; although, we must certainly be carefully aware of a person’s willingness to self-harm. Others think people are just doing it for attention, but there are many facts we need to learn to more accurately understand it. Think about this: if someone just wanted attention, why would they hide it? So the “why” is not that simple. Young people who self-injure may do so as a way to cope with stress– hurting themselves is often seen as a way to control their upsetting feelings or to separate from their problems or to distract themselves from emotional pain. *Research suggests that self-injury can activate different chemicals in the brain which relieve emotional turmoil for a short period of time. Other reported motivations for why teens may self-injure include...

- To reduce anxiety/tension
- To reduce sadness and loneliness
- To alleviate angry feelings
- To punish oneself due to self-hatred
- To get help from or show distress to others
- To escape feelings of numbness (e.g. to feel something)

*REFERENCE: <http://teenmentalhealth.org/understanding-self-injury-self-harm/>

There are healthier coping strategies that appease these motivators that we will discuss and write down later in this lesson.

Slide/Handout



Lesson Script/Talking Points

Handout: Self-Harm Notes/Graphic Organizer (13 minutes)

For the rest of our lesson, let’s take notes on a graphic organizer so that you will have information to take away at the end of the lesson. (*Distribute the handout.*) Let’s begin by discussing some risk factors regarding self-harm.

What may put people at risk?

Risk factors are events or experiences that put a person at a greater risk. It does not mean they are causes of self-harm, but the more of these that exist, the more aware we should be of increasing needs and difficulties people are experiencing. I’m sharing some of the risk factors to make you aware of the circumstances a person who self-harms might be experiencing. Knowing these may also help you gain a greater understanding and think carefully about how you treat the people around you.

- ✓ Being bullied
- ✓ Performance anxiety
- ✓ Parental divorce or discord
- ✓ Bereavement
- ✓ Low self-esteem
- ✓ Feeling alone/isolated

Core Lesson (cont)

- ✓ Social/familiar rejection
- ✓ Psychological/physical abuse
- ✓ Unwanted pregnancy
- ✓ Self-harm or suicide of friends or family

Remember at the beginning of the lesson, I asked you to think to yourself about some of your preconceived ideas about self-harm. I think many people misunderstand it, so I would like for you to also list some myths about Self-Harm on your graphic organizer.

MYTHS: What people may believe about self-harm...

- Attention-seeking
- Group activity
- Closely linked to suicide
- Easy to treat
- You outgrow it
- It's synonymous with suicide

FACTS: What people should know about self-harm...

- Done in private over long periods of time
- Kept secret
- Directed on parts of body not visible to others
- Rarely a group activity
- Results in guilt and shame
- Very difficult to ask for help
- Hardly ever leads to seeking professional attention

Meeting the Needs:

There are many ways you can help meet their needs, but the first thing you need to do is reach out to a trusted adult. This is a matter of safety, and it gives the person in need an opportunity for proper care. In addition to referring them, what are other ways you can address the needs of a person who self-harms? *(Allow time for discussion – some may even have experience and be willing to share.)*

Add these to your notes:

- Increase support system by seeking safe-adult help.
- Be non-judgmental and understanding.
- Express genuine concern.
- Encourage them to express underlying feelings.
- Listen during their self-paced discussion.
- Help them build more effective coping skills.
- Develop higher self-esteem -this will take a conscious effort on their part.

Positive Coping Skills:

Finally, we need to address some positive coping skills to help people replace their self-destructive tendencies when trying to cope. List these under “Positive Coping Skills” in your notes graphic organizer.

Earlier I mentioned the motivations for those who self-harm, all of which can be managed through healthy, safe coping strategies.

Consider these options:

- Take care of your body: Eat and sleep well.
- Exercise to increase endorphins (natural highs).
- Talk to someone with similar problems; allow yourself to voice your emotions
- Identify trusted adults and ask for help whenever needed.
- Call a hotline if you don't feel comfortable talking face to face with someone you know.
- Concentrate on your gifts
- Reduce anger by working toward forgiveness – even forgiving yourself.
- Be kind to yourself by using positive self-talk.
- Set reasonable expectations for yourself.
- Create positive feelings (avoid numbness) by listening to music, getting sunlight, etc.

Core Lesson (cont)

Closing: Essential Question (5 minutes)

What are the risk factors for self-harm and what are some positive coping strategies that can help prevent self-harm? *(Allow for responses.)*

Today we discussed self-harm, and how healthy coping strategies can lead to self-worth. We all have struggles, and we all have value. Hopefully today you gained a few ideas on how to better cope with self-harm motivators and what to look for in others who might be struggling. If you know someone may be self-harming, try to be patient and be a voice of compassion for that person. Be a messenger of self-worth because life is not easy for anyone. It is also important to share that concern with a trusted adult.

I want you to think about all of the people you know; friends, family, classmates and acquaintances. Chances are you know someone who deals with one of the risk factors we discussed in this lesson. On the bottom of your graphic organizer, I want you to write two things you learned today that were new to you and one way you want to help someone in need.

[Click Here to Provide Feedback on this Lesson](#)

Name: _____ Date: _____

SELF-HARM NOTES GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

Make notes below from today's lesson and share the parent letter with someone at home. Keep your notes to reference in case you are worried about someone. Remember you can always call the Suicide Prevention Helpline 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or text the crisis hotline 741741.

RISK FACTORS

MYTHS VS FACTS

MEETING THE NEEDS

+ COPING SKILLS

BONUS: List 2 things you learned today that were new to you and one way you want to help someone in need. Then we will stand and share these with partners in the classroom.
