



THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY GROUP

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Self-Injury

Self-Injury IS:

- ☺ More common than people realise
- ☺ The only coping skill some people have when they feel emotionally overwhelmed
- ☺ Not intended to kill – it keeps people alive in the face of intolerable mental pain
- ☺ Frequently mistaken for a suicidal gesture or failed suicide attempt
- ☺ Time-out from stressful situations
- ☺ An emotional pain controller – serves as a method for converting emotional pain into physical pain that can be seen and managed
- ☺ A secretive and shameful activity for many people
- ☺ Often misdiagnosed and misunderstood
- ☺ Can affect people from all walks of life

Self-Injury IS NOT:

- ☹ A teenage fad
- ☹ An all female phenomenon
- ☹ Attention-seeking or manipulative behaviour
- ☹ Carried out with the purpose of hurting others
- ☹ Conclusively a sign of mental illness
- ☹ Easy to change
- ☹ Automatically an indicator of child abuse
- ☹ An act that people necessarily want to engage in - some people feel compelled to hurt themselves

Self-Injurers are RARELY:

- ☹ Freaks, weird, masochists
- ☹ A danger to other people
- ☹ Able to identify, communicate and/or release their emotions constructively

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Responses They NEED:

- ☺ To find alternative coping methods of their own accord and at their own pace
- ☺ Love, support, understanding
- ☺ Help to find healthy alternative coping skills
- ☺ Gentle encouragement to recognise and put into words their emotions
- ☺ Time, space, good listening
- ☺ People they can trust
- ☺ Care, concern, compassion and respect

Responses They DON'T Need:

- ☹ Stereotyping, judgemental attitudes
- ☹ Assumptions about what their behaviour means
- ☹ Chastising their behaviour
- ☹ Reacting with anger, revulsion, condemnation
- ☹ Threatening and issuing ultimatums

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