

March is **Self-Harm Awareness Month**. Self-harm can occur across all age groups and demographics. Self-harm occurs most often around adolescence. Around 4-5% of adults in the United States will self-harm at some point throughout their life. There are effective treatment options for self-harm that can allow a person to regain control of their lives.

Hurting yourself or thinking about hurting yourself is a sign of emotional distress and it is imperative to seek professional help as soon as possible.



Causes

- Overwhelming external stressors
- A loss of self-esteem
- Developing feelings of helplessness
- An inability to express powerful emotions in a healthy way
- Loneliness, or a growing fear of never being understood
- A lack of healthy coping mechanisms

Look for the Symptoms

- Scars, often in patterns
- Fresh cuts, scratches, bruises, bite marks or other wounds
- Excessive rubbing of an area to create a burn
- Keeping sharp objects on hand
- Wearing long sleeves or long pants, even in hot weather
- Frequent reports of accidental injury
- Difficulties in interpersonal relationships
- Behavioral and emotional instability, impulsivity, and unpredictability
- Statements of helplessness, hopelessness, or worthlessness



Treatment and Coping

Community members, friends, and relatives of those suffering with this condition can help reduce the risk of self-injury by:

- Identifying someone at risk and offering help
- Encouraging those at risk to seek professional help, including several kinds of therapy:
 - **Psychodynamic therapy** - focusing on past experiences and emotions
 - **Cognitive behavioral therapy** - recognizing and correcting distorted thought patterns
 - **Dialectical behavioral therapy** - learning positive coping methods
- Helping someone form connections to people who don't self-injure
- Raising awareness, learning about the warning signs of self-injury, and educating yourself about what to do when you suspect it



Reach out to the following resources if you, or someone you know, is suffering with this condition:

S.A.F.E. Alternatives (Self-Abuse Finally Ends)
Information Line: 1-800-DONT-CUT or 1-800-366-8288
www.selfinjury.com

24/7 Crisis Text Line:
<https://www.crisistextline.org/topics/self-harm/#what-is-self-harm-1>

**For Keck Medicine of USC patients and Trojan family members,
please contact us if you or someone you know needs help
(800) USC-CARE (800-872-2273)**