

# What You Need to Know...



## Cutting:

About **two million people in the U.S. hurt themselves in some way**. Most are teenagers or young adults, and they're from all races and backgrounds.

Sometimes people feel ashamed or embarrassed about admitting they have a mental health issue. Why? Because our society has made it seem like a "bad" or negative thing. We see movies where the person who has a mental health problem is "dangerous" or "perverse". **One in four people are affected by a mental health issue so there is really no reason to be ashamed.**

### Why do people cut?

For most people, it's hard to understand why anyone would intentionally hurt himself or herself. But, for those who cut, there are a few possible reasons:

- Emotional pain that can't be put into words.
- A sense of control when other things in life are out of control, such as a break-up, a friend who's sick or a parents' divorce.
- To punish themselves for troubling thoughts or acts.
- Some find the act soothing, and it makes them feel alive.
- Some cut to get a reaction or attention from other people.

## Is cutting a suicide attempt?

Usually, people who cut aren't trying to kill themselves. At the same time, cutting can be life-threatening. In fact, sometimes, people can't control the injury and die accidentally.

**If you or someone you know is thinking about killing themselves, contact 1-800-SUICIDE (784-2433) immediately to talk to a crisis center in your area. Suicide is never the answer to your problems.**

## How can I help myself?

- **Talk to someone you trust.** Maybe it's a parent or a good friend or a school counselor. Tell them you're cutting yourself, and want to stop. Ask them to help you find help. Know that you may get some tough reactions like denial or sadness or anger, but that will pass. If you're not comfortable with that, [contact a local mental health group or a HOTLINE.](#)
- **Get help.** Cutting isn't something to deal with on your own. There are therapists and support groups who can help you work through what makes you cut. Even if you're nervous about getting help, take this step, because NOW is the best time to do it. If you wait, the problem will only get bigger and harder to hide. And remember, you can stop cutting.

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## How can I help a friend with this?

- **Ask about it.** Friends with cutting problems are often glad to be able to talk about it. If you bring it up and this person isn't self-injuring, it won't start just because you said something about it.
- **Offer options** but don't tell your friend what to do. If someone's using cutting or some other kind of self-injury as a way to feel in control, it won't help if you try to take control. Helping someone see ways to get help - like talking to a parent, teacher, school counselor or mental health professional- may be the best thing you can do.
- **Seek support.** Knowing a friend is going through this can be frightening and stressful. Consider telling a teacher or someone else you trust. And remember, even if you don't want to share your friend's secret, you can still talk to a mental health professional about how it is affecting you.

**REMEMBER YOU'RE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ENDING YOUR FRIEND'S SELF-ABUSE. YOU CAN'T FORCE SOMEONE TO STOP OR TO GET HELP FROM A PROFESSIONAL. WHAT YOU CAN DO, ALWAYS, IS KEEP BEING A GOOD FRIEND.**

## HELP at SCHOOL...

- School social worker:
- Guidance Counselor
- Trusted teacher or coach

## HELP in your community...

Church pastor or youth leader

Mental Health Center: Mental Health Center of Denver has offices all over Denver. Main phone number: 303.504.6500. Crisis number:

No matter the reason, cutting is a serious, dangerous behavior, and may be a sign of another problem.

Many people who cut themselves also have an eating disorder like anorexia or bulimia. Some may be experiencing depression. Others may have been sexually or physically abused.

### Other Resources

Girls and Boys Town USA

[www.girlsandboystown.org](http://www.girlsandboystown.org)

Hotline: 1-800-448-3000

Child Help USA

[www.childhelpusa.org](http://www.childhelpusa.org)

1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453)