

Top 15 Misconceptions of Self-Injury

1 Only females self-injure

30-40%

of people who self-injure are males

2 Self-injury is a suicide attempt or failed suicide attempt

IMPORTANT POINT!

Self-injury is often undertaken as a means of avoiding suicide



3 Only teenagers self-injure

The majority who self-injure do so during their adolescence
BUT
Cases of self-injury have been documented in children aged seven years or younger and a number of adults engage in self-injury

4 Anyone who self-injures is crazy and should be locked up

People who self-injure are no more psychotic than people who drown their sorrows in alcohol

5 Self-injury is just attention seeking

Majority of people who engage in self-injury go to great extremes to hide their cuts, scars, or burns

6 Self-injury is untreatable

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy | Dialectical Behavioral Therapy | Group/Family Therapy

7 People who self-injure are manipulative

Self-injury is more about relieving tension and distress than it is about manipulating others

8 All people who self-injure have borderline personality disorder

People who engage in repetitive self-injury have reported being diagnosed with depression, bipolar disorder, anorexia, bulimia, OCD, PTSD and/or anxiety and panic disorders

BUT

Many who self-injure may not have any diagnosable disorder at all

9 People who self-injure only cut themselves

Burning

Hair pulling

Scratching skin

10 Anyone who self-injures is part of the "Gothic" or "Emotion" subgroup

Self-injury excludes no one

People who injure come from all types of groups, ethnicities, and economic backgrounds

11 People who self-injure enjoy the pain or they can't feel it

Self-injury most often hurts. Sometimes feeling the pain is the whole point

12 There's nothing I can do to help

Listen

Be supportive

Don't judge

13 All people who self-injure have been abused

Some people who self-injure have been abused but not all. Reasons for self-injuring are varied and unique to the individual

14 Someone who self-injures can stop if they really want to

Self-injury can be an addiction

15 Someone who self-injures is a danger to others

Self-injury is often a private activity

Most turn their anger and frustration inward rather than outward



For More Resources

Cornell Research Program on Self-Injury and Recovery
<http://www.selfinjury.bctr.cornell.edu>

Youth Risk and Opportunity Lab
<https://www.yro.cornell.com>

Calcedo, S., & Whitlock, J. Top 15 misconceptions of self-injury. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY