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Humanities - ½

3 June 2014

**Self Harm**

“One in twelve students self harm”(Kelland). The definition of self harm is to injure oneself. The most common way to self harm is cutting, but people will also burn, hit, and pull their hair, but there are also many other options. Because of bullying and depression, self injury is becoming more and more prominent in teens, causing them to harm themselves.

Depression and control is one of the leading causes of teenage self harm. For instance, “The families of self-injurers commonly suppress unpleasant emotions. Children grow up not know how to express and deal with anger and sadness, instead turning emotional pain on themselves. Depression, for example, is often described as anger turned inward” (Brody). It is very hard for teens to cope with these emotions because of school, social life, relationship and many other reasons. Self harm has, unfortunately, become a way to relive some of the pain that has been building up inside. However, depression is not the only reason teens turn to self harm. For example, “It can also be a way of gaining control, especially when young people feel other parts of their life are out of control - for example due to family problems, relationship issues or school pressures” (“Why Young People”). When teens do not have any control in their life, they tend to suffer emotionally and mentally. Harming themselves can be a way for teens to have some control over their pain; instead of feeling emotional pain they use controlled, self inflicted pain, to take their minds off their emotional pain. Two of the leading causes of self injury is depression and control over their pain.

Self harming behavior has many negative effects on teens such as contributing to mental illness and sometimes causing accidental suicide. An example of self-harm inducing mental illness is, “Because self-injury is often done impulsively, it can be considered an impulse-control behavior problem. Self-injury may be linked to a variety of mental disorders, such as depression, eating disorders and borderline personality disorder” (Mayo Clinic Staff). The impulsivity that self harm can cause can be linked to many mental disorders. It is a very dangerous link, because if a teen is unable to control the impulse to harm themselves it can get in the way of their everyday life, causing eating and personality disorders. However, mental illness is not the only effect that self harm can have on teens. An example of behavior causing accidental suicide is, “While self-injury may bring a momentary sense of calm and a release of tension, it’s usually followed by guilt and shame and the return of painful emotions. And with self-injury comes the possibility of more serious and even fatal self-aggressive actions” (Mayo Clinic Staff). Teens will take it too far without realizing it. They will only realize that they have gone too far once it’s too late or nearly too late. Contribution to mental illness and sometimes accidental suicide are two of the negative effects self injury causes teens.

There are just as many solutions to self harm as there are causes. Two of the best ways are to focus on their feelings and to manage their bad emotions. An example of focusing on their feelings is, “Instead of sharing the sensational details of your self-harm behavior - what you specifically doing to hurt yourself - focus on the feelings or situations that lead to it. This can help the person you’re confiding in to better understand where you’re coming from. It also helps to let the person know why you’re telling them. Do you want help or advice from them? Do you simply want another person to know so you can let go of one secret?” (Smith). For teens it is very hard to tell anyone anything, especially now when everyone is so judgemental. Being able to tell a friend about self injury secrets is a very hard thing to do. However, there are other ways to help alleviate the emotional pain of self harm. Another way to help get rid of your emotional pain is, “Understanding why you cut or self-harm is a vital first step toward your recovery. If you can figure out what function your self-injury serves, you can learn other ways to get those needs met - which in turn can reduce your desire to hurt yourself” (Smith). For a teen to be able to learn what causes them to harm themselves is a very big step in the right direction. If a teen can stop what leads to their self harm they can start to alleviate the harming all together. Focusing on how teens feel and forgetting their bad emotions are two of the many ways to manage the emotional pain of self injury.

Bullying and depression are two of the leading causes of self injury, making self injury more and more prominent in teens. If people can help stop bullying and listen to their friends when they are trying to talk about their self injury, then it can take a big step into helping end it. By helping teens when they are asking for advice or trying to talk about it.

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