



Los Angeles Unified School District  
**Student Health and Human Services**  
 School Mental Health

333 S. Beaudry Avenue, 29<sup>th</sup> Floor  
 (213) 241-3841  
 smh.lausd.net | ccis.lausd.net



# Self-Injury Awareness for Parents/Caregivers

**Self-injury** is a complex behavior, separate and distinct from suicide that some individuals engage in for various reasons such as: to take risks, rebel, reject their parents' values, state their individuality, or merely to be accepted. Others, however, may injure themselves out of desperation or anger to seek attention, to show their feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness, or because they have suicidal thoughts. Such individuals may suffer from serious mental health disorders such as depression or Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Some young children may resort to self-injurious acts from time to time but often grow out of it. Children with an intellectual disability or autism, as well as children who have been abused or abandoned may also show these behaviors.

If you become aware that your child or someone you know is engaging in self-injurious behavior, take action and get help.

## What should I do if my child is engaging in self-injurious behavior?

If you become aware that your child is engaging in self-injurious behaviors, remain calm and nonjudgmental. If the injury appears to pose potential medical risks (e.g., excessive bleeding, need for stitches), call 911 immediately. If the injury does not appear to pose immediate medical risks, there are other actions you may take:

- Seek support from a mental health professional (e.g., therapist, psychologist, psychiatrist)
- Provide moral and nurturing support
- Participate in your child's recovery (e.g., family therapy)
- Support your child in an open and understanding way

### EMERGENCY INFORMATION / After Hours Services

If you need **IMMEDIATE** help, call **911**.

For a psychiatric emergency, contact the Department of Mental Health 24-hour ACCESS Center at (800) 854-7771.

## Here's What You Can Do:

### LISTEN

- Address the behavior as soon as possible by asking open-ended questions. For example:
  - *Tell me what happened.*
  - *How long have you been feeling this way?*
  - *Have you thought about suicide?*
- Talk to your child with respect, compassion, calm and caring.
- Understand that this is his/her way of coping.

### PROTECT

- Take action immediately and get help.
- Foster a protective home environment by talking openly, listening, and modeling appropriate behaviors to your child.
- Set limits and provide supervision and consistency to encourage successful outcomes.
- Provide firm guidance, supervise, and set limits around technology usage.
- Be cautious about giving out punishments or negative consequences as a result of the self injurious behavior, as these may unintentionally encourage the behavior to continue.

### CONNECT

- Check in with your child on a regular basis.
- Become familiar with support available at home, school, and community. Contact appropriate person(s) at the school, for example, the school social worker, school psychologist, school counselor, or school nurse.

### MODEL

- Model healthy and safe ways of managing stress and engage your child in these activities, such as taking walks, deep breathing, journal writing, or listening to music.
- Be aware of your thoughts, feelings, and reactions about this behavior.
- Be aware of your tone. Expressing anger or shock can cause your child to feel guilt or shame.

### TEACH

- Learn the warning signs and risk factors and provide information and education about suicide and self-injury.
- Teach your child how to ask for help and identify adults they can trust at home and at school.
- Teach healthy ways to cope with stress, including deep breathing, writing/drawing, exercising, or talking.

# Mental Health (MH) and Wellness Centers



## North

### Valley MH Center

6651A Balboa Blvd., Van Nuys 91406  
Tel: 818-758-2300

## West

### Crenshaw MH and Wellness Center

3206 W. 50th St., Los Angeles 90043  
Tel: 323-290-7737

### Washington MH and Wellness Center

1555 West 110th St., Los Angeles 90043  
Tel: 323-241-1909

## South

### 97th Street MH Center

Barrett Elementary School  
439 W. 97th St., Los Angeles 90003  
Tel: 323-754-2856

### San Pedro MH Center

704 West 8th St., San Pedro 90731  
Tel: 310-832-7545

### Locke MH and Wellness Center

316 111th St., Los Angeles 90061  
Tel: 323-418-1055

### Carson MH and Wellness Center

270 East 223rd St., Carson 90745  
Tel: 310-847-7216

## East

### Bell/Cudahy MH Center

Ellen Ochoa Learning Center  
7326 S. Wilcox, Cudahy 90201  
Tel: 323-869-1352

### Ramona MH Center

231 S. Alma Ave., Los Angeles 90063  
Tel: 323-266-7615

### Gage MH and Wellness Center

2880 E. Gage Ave., Huntington Park 90255  
Tel: 323-826-1520

### Elizabeth LC MH and Wellness Center

4811 Elizabeth St., Cudahy 90201  
Tel: 323-271-3650

## Central

### Belmont MH and Wellness Center

180 Union Place, Los Angeles 90026  
Tel: 213-241-4451

### Roybal MH Center

1200 West Colton St., Los Angeles 90026  
Tel: 213-580-6415

For clinic referrals visit:  
[smh.lausd.net](http://smh.lausd.net)

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## General Information

- Self-injury provides a way to manage overwhelming feelings and can be a way to bond with peers (rite of togetherness).
- Self-injury is defined as intentional tissue damage that can include cutting, severe scratching, pinching, stabbing, puncturing, burning, and ripping or pulling skin or hair.
- Tattoos and body piercings are not usually considered self-injurious behaviors unless they are done with the intention to hurt the body.
- Individual mental health services can be effective when focused on reducing the negative thoughts and environmental factors that trigger self-injury.

## Non-Suicidal Self-Injury

There is a difference between self-injury and suicidal acts, thoughts, and intentions.

With suicide, there is an intent to die; whereas, with non-suicidal self-injury the reasons may include to:

- Feel emotionally better
- Express desperation or anger
- Manage painful feelings of current or past trauma
- Punish oneself
- Feel pain or relief
- Have control of one's body

A professional clinical assessment may be necessary to determine risk.



## Signs and Symptoms of Self-Injury

- Frequent or unexplained bruises, scars, cuts, or burns
- Frequent inappropriate use of clothing designed to conceal wounds (often found on the arms, thighs, or abdomen)
- Unwillingness to participate in activities that require less body coverage (swimming, physical education class)
- Secretive behaviors, spending unusual amounts of time in the bedroom, bathroom, or isolated areas
- Bruises on the neck, headaches, red eyes, ropes/clothing/belts tied in knots (signs of the "choking game")
- General signs of depression, social-emotional isolation, and disconnectedness
- Possession of sharp objects (razor blades, shards of glass, thumb tacks)
- Evidence of self-injury in drawings, journals, pictures, texts, and social networking sites
- Statements of helplessness, hopelessness, or worthlessness

## Resources for Parents/Caregivers & Children/Adolescents

### Community Hotlines

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

(800) 273-TALK (8255) (24-hour)

Trevor Lifeline (866) 488-7386 (24-hour)

Teen Line (800) 852-8336 (6pm-10pm daily)

### Online Resources

<http://www.didihirsch.org/>

<http://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

<http://teenline.org/>

<http://www.afsp.org/understanding-suicide>

### Text and Chat Resources

Crisis Text Line – Free, 24/7, confidential

Text LA to 741741

Crisis Chat (11am-11pm, daily)

<http://www.crisischat.org/chat>

Teen Line - text "TEEN" to 839863 (6pm-10pm)

### Smartphone Apps

MY3

Teen Line Youth Yellow Pages

