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. However, others 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 a student or someone you know is engaging in self-injurious behavior, take action and get help.

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 (therapy) can be effective when focused on reducing the negative thoughts and environmental factors that trigger self-injury.

Here’s What You Can Do:

LISTEN

- Assess for suicide risk.
- Listen without judgment.
- Ask open-ended questions, such as:
  - Tell me what happened?
  - How long have you been feeling this way?
  - Have you thought about suicide?

PROTECT

- Take action immediately and get help.
- Do not leave the student alone. Student should be supervised/monitored by a staff member, not a peer.
- Consider developing a safety/re-entry plan.
- Be cautious about giving punishments or negative consequences for the self-injurious behavior, as these may unintentionally encourage the behavior to continue.

CONNECT

- Connect the student with an administrator, crisis team member, or the Suicide Prevention Liaison(s) at your school to access and determine level of risk.
- Contact the Local District School Mental Health Coordinator or Mental Health Consultant for consultation and support.
- Contact the Department of Mental Health, law enforcement, or child protective services, as needed.

- Inform the parent/caregiver.
- Identify staff to monitor the student, as needed.

MODEL

- Remain calm and establish a safe environment to talk about self-injury.
- Be aware of your thoughts, feelings, and reactions about this behavior.
- Be aware of your tone. Displaying judgment, expressing anger or shock can cause the student to feel guilt or shame.

TEACH

- Provide information and education to parents/caregivers about suicide and self-injury.
- Teach students 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, exercise, or talking.
- Provide options for school and community resources, including referrals to professional mental health services.

Follow the protocols and guidelines in BUL 2637 Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention
**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)

**School Mental Health**
(213) 241-3841

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**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)
- Secretery 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

**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.

**What should I do if a student is engaging in self-injurious behavior?**

- Respond immediately
- Supervise the student
- Escort the student to a Crisis Team Member
- Contact the appropriate child protective agency when there is reasonable suspicion of abuse (see BUL-1347)

**EMERGENCY INFORMATION / After Hours Services**

If you need IMMEDIATE help, call 911.

Los Angeles School Police Department (213) 625-6631.

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

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**Resources for Parents/Caregivers & Children/Adolescents**

**Community Hotlines**
- Didi Hirsch Suicide Prevention Hotline
  - (877) 727-4747 (24-hour)
- 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)

**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](http://www.crisischat.org/chat)
- Teen Line - text “TEEN” to 839863 (6pm-10pm)

**Online Resources**
- [http://www.didihirsch.org/](http://www.didihirsch.org/)
- [http://www.thetrevorproject.org/](http://www.thetrevorproject.org/)
- [http://teenline.org/](http://teenline.org/)
- [http://www.afsp.org/understanding-suicide](http://www.afsp.org/understanding-suicide)

**Smartphone Apps**
- MY3
- Teen Line Youth Yellow Pages

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