

Beneath the Sweatshirt

Approximately one out of every eight teens engage in self-harm (DeRuyck). Statistics show that self-harm is a major issue in the United States. This is a severe problem because most teens who self-harm keep it to themselves and struggle with recognizing the expansive negative possibilities that can come from cutting. Self-harm is not only affecting the teenager physically and emotionally but it is also harmful to their parents and the teens peers who interact with them. Because self-harm is a personal problem teens tend to keep to themselves, society does not see it as the serious problem it has become. Therefore, society must do more to educate teens on the negative physical and mental effects of self-harm in order to offer healthier means of coping and to prevent this issue from becoming even more common.

Teens self-harm for many different reasons, including a way to deal with strong emotions, bad situations or upsetting relationship problems. For instance, "Teens may be dealing with feelings that seem too difficult to bear or bad situations they think can't change. Some people cut because they feel desperate for relief from bad feelings" ("Cutting Kids Health"). This quote shows how easy it is for teens to turn to self-harm, because all teens experience bad situations yet not all teens are taught healthy ways to cope with feelings of rejection, sadness, or loneliness. Teens come to believe the solution to their emotional pain is to self-injure themselves because physical pain will take their minds off their emotional pain. However, this is not the only reason to explain why teens begin to self-harm. For example, "Cutting might seem like the only way to find relief or express personal pain over relationship or rejection" ("Cutting Kids Health"). This quote further proves that teens express their emotional pain by hurting themselves. When a teen has no other way to escape depression on personal problems, they

may begin to injure themselves to feel physical pain instead of emotional pain. Strong emotions, bad situations, or upsetting relationship problems are a few of many reasons why teens harm themselves.

Teens self-injuring themselves is seriously dangerous. It not only affects the teenager negatively but it also does on society. For instance, "It's possible to misjudge the depth of a cut, making it so deep that it requires stitches (or in extreme cases, hospitalization)" ("Teens, Self-Injury"). This proves that teens who cut can get hurt, or even die from their self inflicted wounds. Teens who injure themselves do not usually pay attention to the effects or the depth of the cut or the wound, which increases the risk of hemorrhaging or developing an infection. Unfortunately, this is not the only consequence of self-harm. For example, "Cutting can be a habit forming. It can become a compulsive behavior, meaning that the more a person does it, the more he or she feels the need to do it" ("What Can Happen"). This quote shows that when a teenager harms themselves, it often becomes a habit. If teens feel cutting helps them to forget their emotional pain, they will feel obligated to do it again in order to feel the relief of forgetting about the effects of self-harm. Teens self-harming is effective in negative ways towards teens and society, and can be very serious.

There are many potential solutions to reduce teens from harming themselves. One solution is educating them about how to cope with their feelings in healthy ways. For instance, "Healthy ways of lessening bad feelings are called coping mechanism. If teens learn to handle their feelings they won't feel the need to take it out on themselves and cut" (Benaroch). This shows that teens who learn how to cope with their feelings in a healthy way are less likely to injure themselves. Therefore, encouraging teens to

cope with feelings instead of injuring themselves is one of the main solutions for alleviating self-harm rates in the United States. Fortunately, that is not the only solution towards self-harm. For example, "Seeing a counselor or joining a support group will likely help to ease the frequency of self-injury or can help eliminate it all together. More communication with a parent can be very effective" (Benaroch). This shows that teens who have strong relationships with their parents and feel comfortable talking to them are more likely to practice handling their feelings healthy. Since parent communication has a huge effect on most teens' decisions about self-harm, this is an important solution in helping to reduce the high self-harming rates in the United States. There are simple ways to prevent teens from harming themselves including encouragement towards teens on how to cope with feelings and parent communication.

The need to address teens self-injuring themselves needs to be taken serious in order to prevent this issue from becoming more common. Self-harm can result from experiencing strong emotions, bad situations or upsetting relationship problems. The negative effects self-harm has on teens are numerous, yet, most importantly it can lead to severe wounds, and bad habits including, cutting deeper and more often. Experiencing friends and family lost to self-harm may keep individuals away from it, but society needs to do more to educate teens about the health risks that come along with committing to self-harm. Society needs to begin visualizing self-harm as a conflict, and not have it be left alone to the extent it is be bystanders.