

COURSE 1.4 PARENT TIP SHEET: FAQs on Self-Harming Behaviors

(Revised 2026)

What are Self-Harming Behaviors?

- Cutting, burning, and/or biting body parts and/or picking or poking at the skin to the point of injury.
- The marks may be subtle or are often covered up and flare around stressful periods.

Why does a person harm themselves physically?

- These behaviors are generally understood as a way to cope with pain, anger, numbing, and/or frustration. It is not particularly a sign of suicide, but is a sign the person needs additional coping skills.

What can adults do to support a child who is self-harming?

- The most meaningful things adults can do is maintain open conversations about the connection of feelings to such behaviors, rather than being overly focused on controlling the behavior itself.
- Talk with a mental health professional to see what types of treatment may be most helpful to the child.

Resources to learn more:

<https://www.nami.org/learn-more/mental-health-conditions/related-conditions/self-harm>

<https://www.crisistextline.org/selfharm>

Suicide hotline/website: <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-yourself/youth/>

<https://www.nami.org/learn-more/mental-health-conditions/related-conditions/self-harm>

<https://www.crisistextline.org/selfharm>

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