4 Myths and facts about cutting and self-harm

Because cutting and other means of self-harm tend to be taboo subjects, the people around you—and possibly even you—may harbor serious misconceptions about your motivations and state of mind. Don’t let these myths get in the way of getting help or helping someone you care about.

Myth 1: People who cut and self-injure are trying to get attention.

Fact: The painful truth is that people who self-harm generally do so in secret. They aren’t trying to manipulate others or draw attention to themselves. In fact, shame and fear can make it very difficult to come forward and ask for help.

Myth 2: People who self-injure are crazy and/or dangerous.

Fact: It is true that many people who self-harm suffer from anxiety, depression, or a previous trauma—just like millions of others in the general population. Self-injury is how they cope. Slapping them with a “crazy” or “dangerous” label isn’t accurate or helpful.

Myth 3: People who self-injure want to die.

Fact: Self-injurers usually do not want to die. When they self-harm, they are not trying to kill themselves—they are trying to cope with their pain. In fact, self-injury may be a way of helping themselves go on living. However, in the long-term, people who self-injure have a much higher risk of suicide, which is why it’s so important to seek help.

Myth 4: If the wounds aren’t bad, it’s not that serious.

Fact: The severity of a person’s wounds has very little to do with how much he or she may be suffering. Don’t assume that because the wounds or injuries are minor, there’s nothing to worry about.