Therapy For Self-Harm Recovery

Self-harm is not a new phenomenon – it is recognised as having been a part of most cultures throughout history and is even identified in the Bible. There are many different reasons as to why people choose to self-injure and as such treatment will usually involve looking back over one’s past and working through the issues which are underlying the condition.

Treatment for Self-Harm

There are a number of treatment programs currently available for adolescents or adults affected by self-mutilation. The method of treatment will depend on several different factors such as finances, location, level of health insurance and the severity of the illness as well as whether additional health issues are present.

As many young women who self-harm are also recognised to have eating disorders, depression or personality disorders the majority may likely end up in treatment for other health conditions as opposed to dealing solely with the self-injury behaviours. Inpatient, daypatient and outpatient therapy or counselling may be provided both in groups and as an individual.

Benefits of Therapy for Self-Harmers

There are a variety of benefits related to using therapy to treat those affected by self-harm including providing a safe, secure environment for the client to be able to talk about the underlying issues associated with the condition. If the client has a trusting relationship with the therapist then she is likely to feel accepted, worthwhile, respected and valued all of which are key to a effective therapy. Particularly in the case of those who have been abused or rejected as children, the therapeutic environment may offer the opportunity to feel nurtured, as though another person cares and is willing to listen. The regular, weekly contact means that the client has time and space each week to talk through the issues that have come up and as a result will feel less alone and have the reassurance that painful emotions are normal and can be dealt with effectively without using destructive behaviours.

Further benefits of having therapy include the following: it is safe to reveal scars; confidentiality is assured; the patient has an opportunity to learn compassion and how to nurture oneself; the patient receives support for exploring painful issues, understanding why self-injury has been used, and most significantly, working out new, healthier alternatives to self-harming.

Limitations of Therapy for Self-Injury

Therapy is an effective form of treatment for self-injury. But regardless of the type of therapy that’s utilized, the client must get on with the therapist as the therapeutic relationships is a significant part
of treatment. It is also often the case that therapy can take a long time – particularly if one has been self-harming for many months or even years.

In terms of outpatient therapy, the client may feel very vulnerable and at risk of increased self-harm behaviours if painful issues have been opened up and are left hanging at the end of a session.

As with all forms of mental health conditions, if one does not feel confident, understood or able to talk to a therapist it may be wise to consider changing therapists. Sometimes, however, it may be a case of not wanting to confront the issues in which case it is better to persist and be as honest as possible about one’s feelings.

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