

LifeSIGNS Factsheet Male Self-Injury

Silent Guys

How people cope with things emotionally varies from person to person, but even in today's modern world, many men find it difficult to talk about their feelings.

This may be because of the way they have been brought up, cultural expectations, or simply because they feel they have to live up to the 'stiff upper lipped' male stereotype that they believe much of society still expects. But everyone gets stressed at times don't they?

Men of all ages bottle up their feelings. They don't talk about how they feel emotionally, preferring to cope alone and in silence, refusing to ask for help and forcing themselves to 'just deal' with everything.

Self-Injury in Men

Although the media sometimes still leads us to believe that self-injury is a teenage girl thing, at LifeSIGNS we know that to be wholly untrue. Self-injury affects people from all walks of life, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity or personal strength.

The only reason male self-injury is less commonly known about is because many men are unable or unwilling to talk about the subject, or admit that they self-injure in order to cope with their emotional distress. At LifeSIGNS we believe that there are probably as many men who self-injure as women; they just find it more difficult to come forward and ask for help.

Self-injury is a coping mechanism, a way of dealing with emotional distress, and it's a behaviour that many men rely on. The physical pain of self-injury can be easier to deal with than the distress that lies behind it, but it's nonetheless an indication of emotional pain and shouldn't be ignored or dismissed by anyone.

It's Not All About Cutting

Yes, lots of guys cut themselves, but people always find their own personal way of hurting themselves, so you shouldn't feel 'less worthy' of support if you don't happen to cut.

You might have your own way of causing yourself damage and pain, it's still self-injury, and you're not alone.

Self-injury comes under the umbrella term of *self-harm* which includes drug and alcohol misuse, and risk taking behaviour (like reckless driving or risky sex).

Can you talk to a mate about self-injury?



How to help yourself

Consider the following points:

- remember that self-injury is a symptom of underlying emotional distress and a coping mechanism;
- severity or type of self-injury is not an indication of the level of emotional distress being suffered. You may feel that punching a wall for example is not self-injury, but if you rely on it on a regular basis to vent your emotions, then it is self-injurious behaviour;
- you are not alone; there are many men using self-injury as a way to cope. LifeSIGNS was created and has been run by a guy since 2002;
- self-injury has nothing to do with personal strength, and admitting that you need help is a sign of courage, not weakness;
- at LifeSIGNS we encourage all people to make positive changes in their lives, empowering themselves to move away from self-injury and find healthier coping mechanisms;
- get more help and info about self-injury from www.lifesigns.org.uk
- join our message board and gain support alongside other guys.

Punching a wall in frustration is a form of self-injury - but it's only a major concern if you're frequently hitting things.

Guys don't always feel comfortable talking about their emotions, or their SI, but you can break the cycle and get control of your life by talking to someone and learning more about stress management.