

Self – Harm

Non-Suicidal Self Injury (NSSI)



Ngā Kura Hauora

Health and Wellbeing
for Learning



Suggestions for Teachers

- Teachers have many more responsibilities than they did years ago. They are now expected to handle tragedies like self harm and suicide.
- Nobody expects a teacher to be a mental health specialist, but it can be helpful to know some useful responses and to be aware of who to refer these tragic cases to.....

Do's

- Try to approach the student in a calm and caring way.
- Accept them even if you don't accept their behaviour.
- Let them know you care and believe in their potential.
- Understand that this is their way of coping with the pain they feel inside.
- Refer the student to the relevant party (the principal can show you the flowchart relevant to your school).
- Offer to introduce the student to the professional helper.
- Listen/ Be available. (if in doubt then talk about your involvement with the professional involved).
- Discover what the student's strengths are and encourage them to use those strengths.

Don't

- Say or do anything to cause the student to feel shame or guilt.
- Act shocked or appalled by their behaviour
- Talk about their self harm in front of the class. Self harm is contagious.
- Judge them even if you don't agree with them.
- Minimise or say it is "for attention" or "it's a fad". Self harm is a sign of serious difficulty in coping.
- Permit discussion of exactly how they self harm.
- Tell the student that you won't tell anybody what they are telling you.
- Use punishment or negative consequences if a student self harms.
- Make deals in an effort to get the student to stop their self harm.
- Make promises to the student that you can't keep.
- Do not assume that it is an indication of childhood abuse or psychiatric illness.

Any student can get help at any time by calling the 1737 help line.

NEED TO TALK?

1737

**free call or text
any time**

See also: Youth Wellbeing Trust <https://youthwellbeingstudy.wordpress.com/>

Every school should work to develop a plan for dealing with NSSI incidents – what to say, who to involve, where to turn for support, how to manage the practicalities.