

Non-Suicidal Self-Injurious Behavior (NSSIB): A Guide for Mobile Crisis Teams

Rates of NSSIB among youth and young adults are both troubling and increasing. One study found that between 12% and 24% of young people have engaged in some form of NSSIB and estimated that 6%-8% of adolescents and young adults engage in chronic NSSIB.ⁱ A metaanalysis of data on more than half a million people from 41 countries found that about 17% of people engaged in NSSIB during their lifetime, with average onset at age 13.ⁱⁱ Rates of NSSIB have likely increased since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.ⁱⁱⁱ These prevalence rates make understanding the etiology and appropriate intervention for NSSIB vital for mobile crisis teams.

NSSIB is defined as a repetitive, low-lethality act that can cause harm or damage to the body tissue, with a central characteristic being the preoccupation with intentionally hurting oneself without explicit suicidal intent. Despite its prevalence, many mental health professionals lack knowledge on how to effectively assist those who engage in NSSIB. This resource offers a concise exploration of NSSIB, dispelling misconceptions, unraveling its complex dynamics, and emphasizing its impact on emotions. By understanding NSSIB, mobile crisis teams can reduce harm and contribute to ongoing destigmatization, fostering a more compassionate and effective approach to supporting individuals navigating mental health challenges.

The resources below come from [Cornell University's Program on Self-Injury and Recovery](#). They provide a starting point for mobile crisis professionals to learn about NSSIB, understand the dynamics of the behavior, and introduces basic interventions.

About NSSIB

- [What is self-injury?](#)
 - This document is for anyone interested in learning more about non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI). It provides a short explanation of what self-injury is, reasons why it can occur, demographic factors, and additional resources for more information.
- [15 Misconceptions / English / French / Spanish](#)
 - Explore a compilation of 15 misconceptions surrounding NSSIB, providing insights into the misleading nature of these beliefs and their potential harm to NSSIB management.

Understanding the dynamics of NSSI

- [The relationship between non-suicidal self-injury and suicide](#)

- This document covers the relationship between NSSIB and suicide, unraveling the intricate relationship between the two, and identifying and comprehending associated risk factors. Ideal for those seeking comprehensive insights into the complex dynamics between NSSI and suicide.
- [**What role do emotions play in non-suicidal self-injury?**](#)
 - Delve into the influential role of emotions in self-injury, comprehend patterns of emotional avoidance and rumination, understand how NSSIB functions as a coping mechanism, learn effective strategies to interrupt these patterns, and gain valuable tips for assisting individuals in managing emotions in healthier ways. An essential resource for mobile crisis teams seeking insights into supporting those grappling with self-injurious tendencies.
- [**Understanding the neurobiology of non-suicidal self-injury**](#)
 - Discover key information about the brain, including its structures and the latest research findings. Understand how these neurological differences contribute to psychological distinctions in people who self-injure. This resource offers important insights for mobile crisis teams, helping to explain the neurobiology of NSSIB to enhance support and understanding.
- [**How does self-injury change feelings?**](#)
 - Explore how self-injury influences feelings, learn why it helps improve emotional well-being, and discover the connection between physical and emotional pain. This resource gives a clear and complete understanding of the complex aspects of NSSIB and its effects on emotions.

NSSIB and intervention

- [**Bringing up self-injury with your clients**](#)
 - Designed for clinicians and other professionals engaging with clients exhibiting potential signs of NSSIB, this resource offers strategies for identifying and addressing NSSIB.
- [**Self-injury, interrupted: Mobile technology as therapeutic accessory**](#)
 - This resource provides a concise and practical overview of mobile technology for therapeutic support in the context of NSSIB. Ideal for both those seeking assistance and professionals engaged in providing support.

References

Cornell University, Research Program on Self-Injury and Recovery. (2024). About self-injury. Cornell University, BCTR. <https://www.selfinjury.bctr.cornell.edu/about-self-injury.html>

Kameg, K.M., Spencer Woods, A., Szpak, J.L. and McCormick, M. (2013), Identifying and managing nonsuicidal self-injurious behavior in the primary care setting. *Journal of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners*, 25: 167-172. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-7599.12006>

ⁱ Cornell Research Program on Self-Injury and Recovery. What is Self-Injury?

<https://www.selfinjury.bctr.cornell.edu/perch/resources/what-is-self-injury-9.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Gillies D, Christou MA, Dixon AC, Featherston OJ, Rapti I, Garcia-Angueta A, Villasis-Keever M, Reebye P, Christou E, Al Kabir N, Christou PA. Prevalence and Characteristics of Self-Harm in Adolescents: Meta-Analyses of Community-Based Studies 1990-2015. *J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry*. 2018 Oct;57(10):733-741. doi: 10.1016/j.jaac.2018.06.018. Epub 2018 Aug 21. PMID: 30274648.

ⁱⁱⁱ Du, Na, Ooyang, Yingje, Xiao, Yu, and Li, Younge. Psychosocial Factors Associated With Increased Adolescent Non-suicidal Self-Injury During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Front. Psychiatry*, 10 December 2021 Sec. Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Volume 12 - 2021 | <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2021.743526>