

## Self-Injuring

# What might I feel when I learn that my child is self-injuring, and how do I deal with these feelings?

If you learn your child is self-injuring, you are likely to experience a range of emotions, from shock or anger, to sadness or guilt. All of these are valid feelings.

**Shock and denial** Because self-injury is a secretive behaviour, it may be shocking to learn that your child is intentionally hurting him or herself; however, to deny the behaviour is to deny your child's emotional distress.

**Anger and frustration** - You may feel angry or frustrated that your child has possibly lied to you about his/her injuries or because you see the behaviour as pointless or because it is out of your control. As one parent said, "There is a frustration in terms of that little voice in the back of your mind that is saying 'just stop it!' It's very hard, I think knowing more about the condition and about the underlying factors makes it easier to push that little voice away." ...but remember that you can never control another person's behaviour, even your child's, and trying to do this does not make things better.

**Empathy, sympathy and sadness** Though empathy helps you to understand your child's situation, sympathy and sadness can sometimes be condescending because they imply that your child needs to be pitied. These feelings may also hinder your ability to understand the behaviour.

**Guilt** You may feel as if you did not offer enough love and attention to your child. However, though your actions can influence your child's behaviour, you do not cause their self-injury.



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