

Cut It Out!

Harm Reduction Strategies For Self Harm

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Housekeeping and Ground Rules

- The title of this training was selected unanimously by a group of people who currently do or previously have engaged in self harm.
- Make space, Take space!
- Say It Ugly!
- Be open to contradictions.
- This is heavy subject matter! If you are having a hard time staying in the room, it is okay to take a break and step out. Just be respectful of everyone else in the space.
- What else?

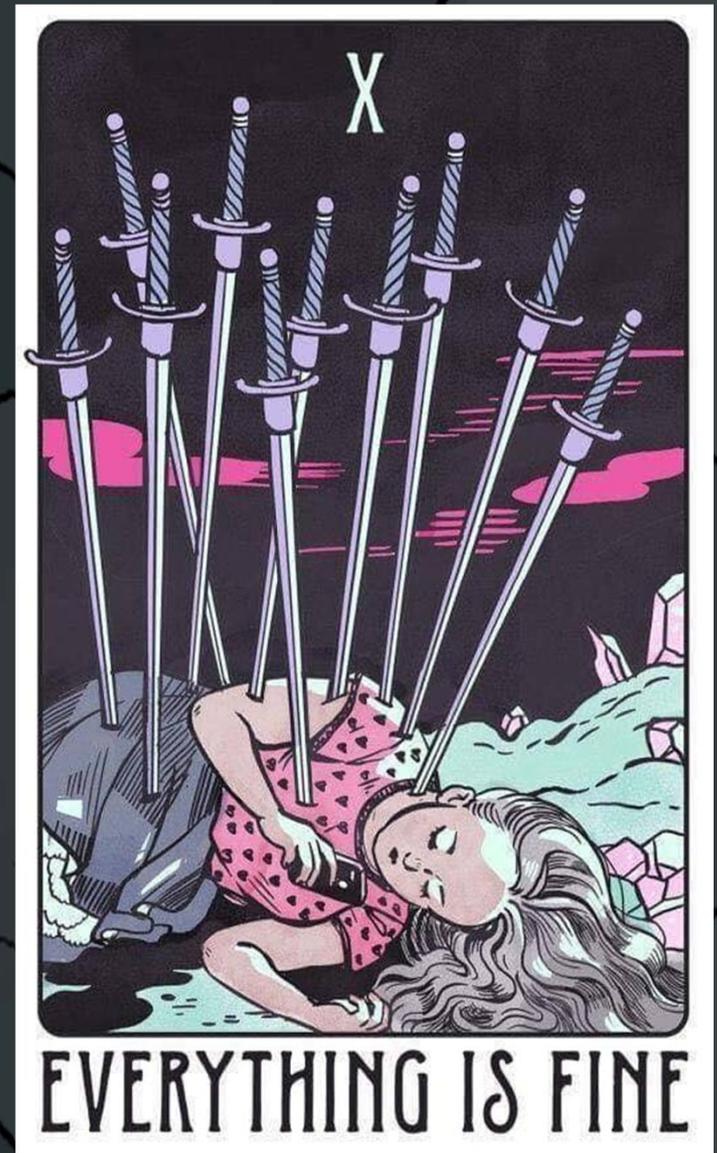
Agenda

- What is Self Harm?
- Reducing Stigma
- Why do people engage in Self Harm?
- Harm Reduction Interventions for Self Harm
- How do we engage in Self Harm?
- Harm Reduction Supervision for Self Harm

What Is Self Harm?

Self-harm includes acts that cause short and long-term damage that may impact on your life later on.

There are many different kinds of self harm that all carry their own specific and unique risk factors. Some risk factors are physical in nature, while others may be more internalized.



What is Self Harm?

When we think of self harm, we tend to specifically think of self injury.



Are there other kinds of self harm?



Are there kinds of self harm that may be seen as acceptable, or carry less stigma than others?



What is Self Harm?

- Self Injury
- Disordered Eating
- Chaotic Substance Use
- “Risky” Sexual Behavior
- Tattoos/Piercings
- Procrastinating on Meeting Basic Needs

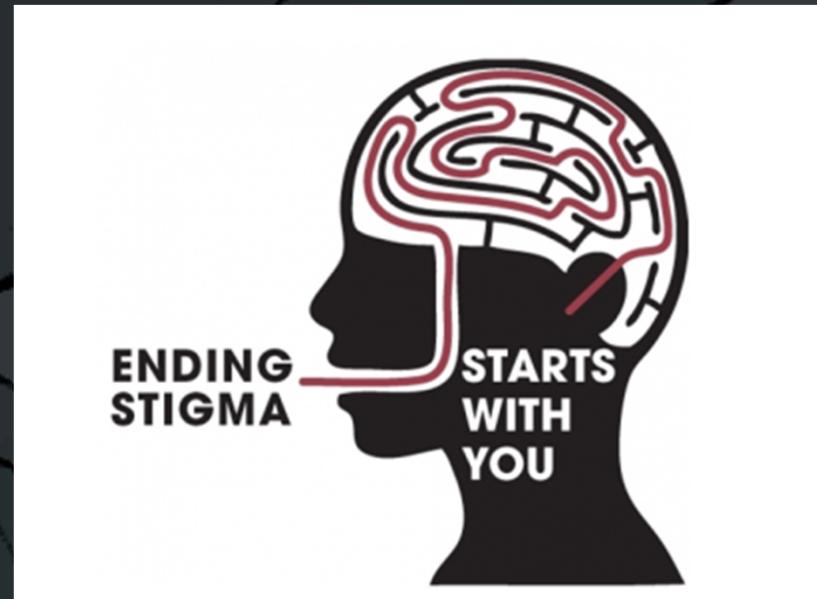
Reducing Stigma

What are some labels society attaches to people who self harm?



Reducing Stigma

We want to help people reduce the harms associated with their self harm, and we want to reduce the harms in discussing self harm with us as helping professionals.



What are some things we can do to reduce stigma around these issues to help our clients feel safe(r) in disclosing?

Reducing Stigma

What language is going to be the least harmful when we are talking about self harm?



Why Do People Self Harm?

Mind, The Mental Health Charity video on
Self Harm



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSEtUbc8JDU>

Why Do People Self Harm? Self Harm As Self Care



“Self Harm can be helpful! It is a path toward healing and control!”

-Young Women's Empowerment Study

Why Do People Self Harm: Self Harm As Empowerment

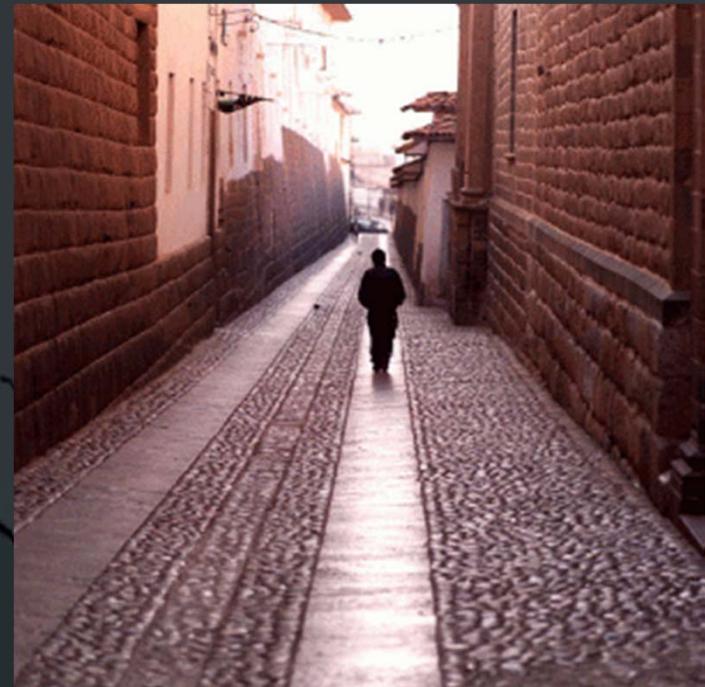


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Wsk3Oa_3F8&feature=youtu.be

Harm Reduction Interventions: Cutting

Across the Tracks vs. Down the Street

(across vs. lengthwise)



Harm Reduction Interventions: Cutting

- Make sure to sterilize the area you cut on both before and after cutting.
- Sterilize your implements and dress wounds.
- Make surface level cuts, try to not cut too deep.

Less deep = less risky!

- Use dull tools for cutting (It will have the same effect with less risk to go deeper.) OR if you can't use dull implements, use disposable blades.
- Always have band aids, rubbing alcohol, and other first aid supplies on hand.

Harm Reduction Interventions: Disordered Eating

- If you are in a binge/purge cycle, wait as long as you can after binging before you purge to help your body absorb some nutrients.
- Drink a lot of water before purging, during purging, and drink something with electrolytes (Gatorade, pedialyte, etc.) afterward.
- Make smoothies with protein, fruits, and vegetables if you struggle to not purge after eating solids.
- Brush your teeth and use mouthwashes that have fluoride in them. (ACT Kids is great for this purpose)

Harm Reduction Interventions: “Risky” Sexual Behavior

- Consistently and correctly utilize barriers (condoms, insertive condoms, dental dams) when engaging in sexual acts to prevent transmitting or contracting an STI.

note: as a facilitator, I prefer the term “insertive condom” for the product marketed as “female condom”

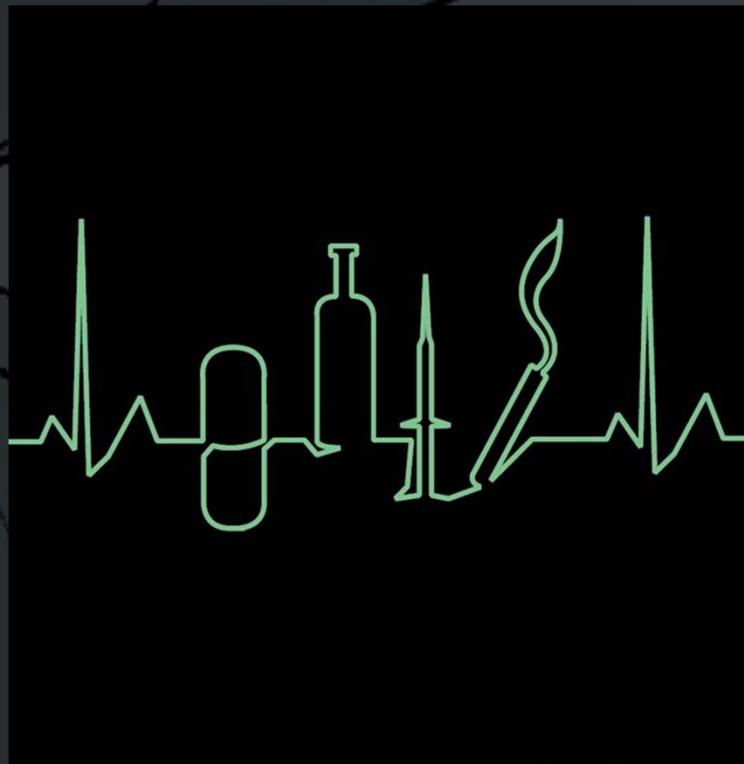
- For individuals that are not living with HIV and interested in anal sex, insertive anal sex involves less risk of HIV transmission than receptive anal sex.
- Engage in “low risk” sexual acts (acts that do not involve bodily fluids)
- Use lube!! Lube reduces the possibility of anal/vaginal tears, and the risk of condom breakage.

Harm Reduction Interventions: “Risky” Sexual Behavior

- If you are not living with HIV and sexually active with a partner who is living with HIV, or engaged in unprotected sex with partner(s) whose status you don't know, PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis) can help to prevent HIV transmission.
- If you have potentially been exposed to HIV, PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis) can help to prevent HIV infection if taken within 3 days.
- Reduce the number of people you have sex with, if possible.
- Get tested and know your HIV status.

Harm Reduction Interventions: Chaotic Substance Use

What substances do you see your clients
using for self harm?



Harm Reduction Interventions: The Buddy System



Harm Reduction Interventions: Replacement Coping Skills

- Mindfulness/Deep breathing exercises
- Holding ice can feel very similar to cutting
- Wearing and snapping elastic bands
- Writing on self
- Professional tattoos and piercings

How Do We Engage in Self Harm?



How Do We Engage in Self Harm?

- Extreme productivity at the expense of physical or emotional health
- Neglecting your own needs to elevate the needs of others
- Not stating your own needs and boundaries

How Do We Engage in Self Harm?

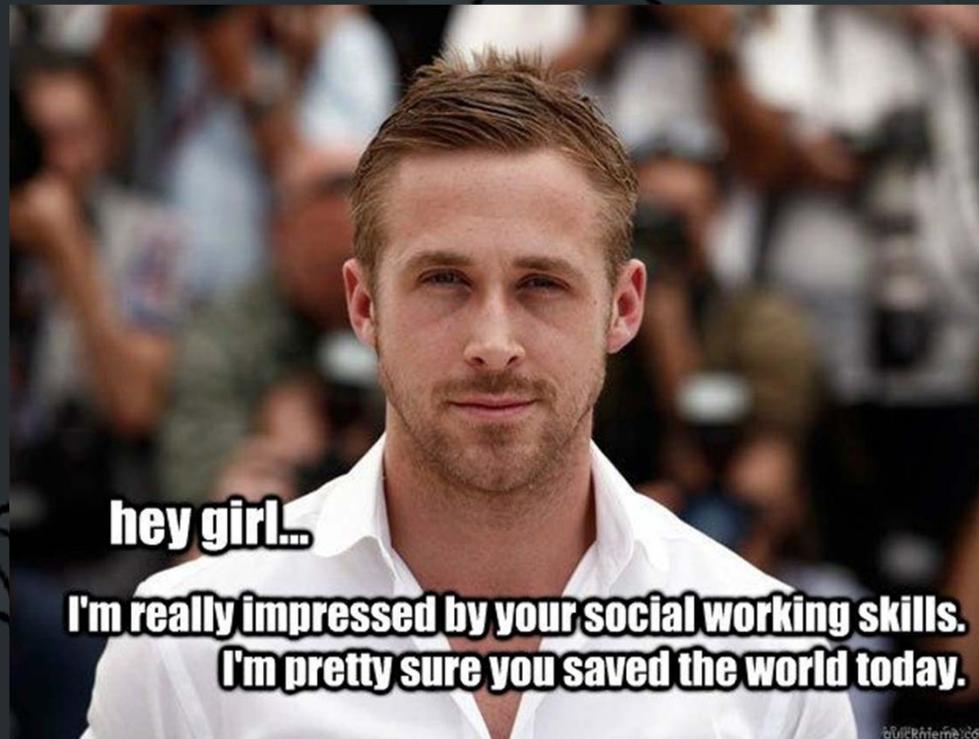


Other people are less opposed to this variety of self harm because it benefits them in some way!

Harm Reduction Supervision for Self Harm

- Acknowledge the difference between personal and professional: Is your boss the best person to discuss self harm with?
- Recognize power dynamics: is it safe to disclose self harm to someone with more power than you?
- Cultivate safety: create an environment where someone can discuss their self harm if they decide that's best for them.

Self Care



What you are doing is hard work and what you are doing is important work. Take this opportunity to set a self care intention for yourself moving forward.

Collective Care



Remember, we are all in this together. It can make hard things easier to do something kind for someone else. Sometimes, when you feel helpless, the secret is getting out of your own head.

Thank You!



Materials reviewed by
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References

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