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Non-Suicidal Self-Injury

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Definition

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Non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) is a form of self-harm that is not intended to result in death. It is a complex phenomenon that can be defined as the deliberate or self-inflicted destruction of body tissue without suicidal ideation or intent. NSSI is often used as a coping mechanism for emotional distress, and it is characterized by recurrent, self-inflicted wounds, cuts, or burns. The behavior is typically motivated by a desire to relieve emotional pain, and it is often associated with mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, and borderline personality disorder. NSSI is a serious concern for mental health professionals because it can lead to physical harm, hospitalization, and even death if not properly addressed. The prevalence of NSSI is estimated to be between 1% and 10% in the general population, and it is more common in adolescents and young adults. The behavior is often cyclical, with periods of self-harm followed by periods of remission. The underlying causes of NSSI are complex and can include a combination of biological, psychological, and environmental factors. Understanding the definition of NSSI is the first step in developing effective interventions to help individuals who struggle with this behavior.

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

There is a growing body of evidence that suggests that a combination of interventions, including both psychological and medical treatments, may be most effective in reducing the risk of self-harm. This approach is often referred to as a "multimodal" or "integrated" approach. The following table summarizes the key components of such an approach, based on the findings of the reviewed literature.

Nonsuicidal self-injury: Advances in psychotherapy evidence-based practice

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Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

Problem solving therapy (PST).

Problem solving therapy (PST) is a component of CBT that focuses on helping individuals develop effective problem-solving skills. It involves identifying the problem, generating potential solutions, evaluating the pros and cons of each solution, and implementing the chosen solution. PST is often used in conjunction with other CBT techniques, such as cognitive restructuring and exposure therapy, to address a wide range of psychological problems.

Dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT).

Dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT) is a form of CBT that emphasizes the importance of balancing opposing forces or perspectives. It is often used to treat individuals with borderline personality disorder (BPD) and other conditions characterized by emotional instability and impulsivity.

Journal of Clinical Psychology, 63

Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment, 26

Clinical Psychology, 63

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Contributors

Section Editors Based on Research

Behavioral management strategies

Understanding non-suicidal self-injury: Origins, assessment, and treatment

Functional assessment/ functional behavioral analysis of the self-injury.

Means restriction and delay of self-injury.

Family therapy.

Motivational interviewing (MI).

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