Self-Harm

Syllabus

Introduction

Expert – Dr. Richard Delaney, psychologist

This course explores common types of self-harm, teases out motivations for the behavior in the case studies, and offers steps for helping the child find safer outlets for stress or pain.

Self-Injury

Examination of self-injury through the story of Sarah, 15, a foster child who cuts into her skin.

- Cutting without the goal of suicide
- Depression
- Chemical imbalance in the brain
- Stress-relief
- Self-punishment
- Steps for coping
- The need for professional evaluation

High-Risk Behavior

Sherry, 15 and in foster care, engages in risky sexually promiscuous behavior.

- How Sherry’s family history may feed the behavior
- Misguided attempt to fill a need
- Modeling healthy, non-sexual male-female relationships
- Medical examination
- Therapy to root out the cause for the behavior
Suicidal Behavior

Brendan, 12 and in foster care, openly states his desire to be dead and engages in minor self-harming activities. He has anger issues and seems depressed.

- Characteristics of youth at high risk for suicide
- Genetic predisposition to depression
- Need for professional assessment
- Need to communicate with social worker
- Strict adherence to a safety plan
- Having an emergency plan in place

Reckless Accidents

Kevin, 6, who is adopted, seems unusually accident-prone.

- Normal vs. problem accident-proneness
- Possible causes
- Educating the child about safety
- Child-proofing
- Assessment to rule out ADHD

Hair Pulling

Amelia, 16, a foster child, pulls out clumps of her own hair.

- Ruling out medical causes for hair loss
- What might be fueling the behavior
- Behavior modification
- Positive substitute behaviors
- Other compulsive behaviors