Non-suicidal self-injury and young people, what is it and what can we do?

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Non-suicidal self-injury has become an increasing issue for young people worldwide. It is defined by the international society for the study of self-injury (NSSI) as the deliberate, self-inflicted destruction of body tissue without suicidal intent and for purposes not socially sanctioned (International Society for the Study of Self Injury, 2007). Studies on the prevalence of self-injury have provided differing figures, however most account for a figure of 10%-20% of young people having self-injured at some stage. It is, at times, referred to as self-injurious behavior or deliberate self-harm. It is a complicated and mystifying condition; purposefully causing pain in order to feel better and is by its very nature, a complex issue. Research suggests that the relationship between non-suicidal self-injury and attempted suicide is particularly strong and second in magnitude only to suicide ideation. While the prevalence of self-injury is increasing there is limited information disseminated to professionals on how best to manage this issue. It has been listed as a syndrome since the 1980’s yet is not listed as a separate disorder in the DSM V. It has been listed for further study indicating that it is being seriously considered for inclusion in a later update of the DSM. Reasons for self-injury behavior are numerous and this workshop will explore and address a number of these. Research suggests that continuity of self-injuring behavior is linked to the individual’s level of resilience. This has important preventative and clinical implications. This highlights the importance of social skilling programs in the school and community environment. Additionally this workshop will explore both pharmacological and therapeutic interventions.

Biography

Garry King has extensive experience in working with young people, experiencing self-injury and suicidal behavior. His experience results from having worked as a Teacher, Youth Worker and Counselor and complimented by degrees in Welfare and Education as well as Master’s degrees in Counseling and Suicidology. He is a Lecturer in Suicidology at the Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention (AISRAP), Griffith University. He is the recipient of a Churchill Fellowship to the USA. He is a peer Reviewer for the International Journal of Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention. He is an invited author for the 2016 School Social Work USA and is a Member of the International Society for the Study of Self Injury. His most recent book is “What Every Parent Should Know about Teenagers and Self Injury”. He continues to develop and deliver youth suicide prevention training and seminars on self-injurious behavior nationally and internationally.

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