

4 Reasons why we Self-Injure

“All cutters are demon possessed.”

This was the comment I received recently on facebook:

“This is a demon spirit and people need the power of the Holy Spirit to be delivered from this. Mark 5:5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.”

I couldn't disagree with this more. Here is what I said:

“I appreciate your heart for prayer regarding those who self-injure. (I used to be one of them) But I don't think everyone who cuts is demon possessed. If we assumed this from Mark 5:5 then we could also assume that everyone who has seizures or convulsions is also demon possessed based on Luke 9:42”

There are many misunderstandings about self-injury, including the one above. The most frequent misunderstandings center on the reasons why people self-injure. Perhaps providing some clarity would help. Here are 4 reasons why:

1. **TO FEEL** - Affect modulation (distraction from emotional pain, ending feelings of numbness, lessening a desire to suicide, calming overwhelming/intense feelings)
2. **TO CONTROL** - Maintaining control and distracting the self from painful thoughts or memories
3. **FOR SELF-PUNISHMENT** - (either because they believe they deserve punishment for either having good feelings or being an "evil" person or because they hope that self-punishment will avert worse punishment from some outside source)
4. **FOR VALIDATION & EXPRESSION**- Expression of things that can't be put into words (displaying anger, showing the depth of emotional pain, shocking others, seeking support and help). Expression of feelings for which they have no label -- this phenomenon, called [alexithymia](#) (literally no words feeling), is common in people who self-harm

Credits:

- Reasons = See Osuch, Noll, & Putnam, *Psychiatry*62 (Winter 99), pp: 334-345 /Zlotnick et al, *Comprehensive Psychiatry* 37(1) pp:12-16.
- Content taken from <http://www.selfinjury.org/>.

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