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Suggestions...

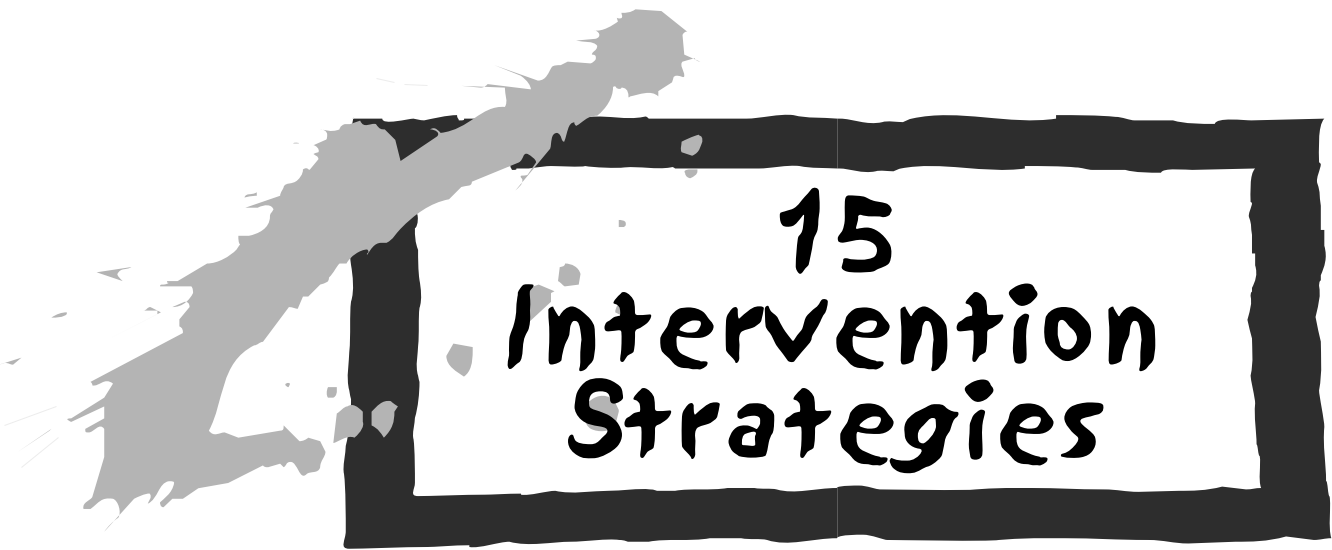
© Suggestions for professional counselors/social workers/psychologists:

It is important to create an environment that provides empathy, caring, unconditional acceptance, trust and rapport among other things (MacAniff & Kiselica, 2001; Conterio & Lader, 2002) The child/adolescent needs to feel that he/she is in this type of environment in order to be able to discuss the deep emotional issues he/she may be facing. In addition, they need a helper who will be committed, consistent, firm and have established boundaries. A professional helper also needs to build on the child/adolescent's personal strengths and instill hope (Selekman, 2002).

For counselors, social workers, psychologists, and other professionals who see this type of behavior, SI can be very challenging to understand and treat. When I first began to see this behavior in my own practice, I contacted other professionals to determine what methods they used in working with this population. The primary response I received from these professionals was that they referred SI clients to someone else. This was very disturbing to me since there is such a demand for professionals who can work with SI. Many professionals do not know how to work with these clients. They experience what I term the "freak out" factor. They don't understand the behavior and don't know what to do to help. Given this particular behavior that reaction is understandable. However, if you have a gift for working with children and adolescents then that is the first step in connecting with the child/adolescent who self-injures. With more information available on this topic, you can increase your level of skills and become more comfortable working with this population.

The primary need for these clients is to be heard, understood, validated, and taught healthier ways of coping with their emotions. When we, as professionals, give the child/adolescent a voice, then we are helping in his/her pursuit of healthier coping. Once a positive, trusting relationship is established, a multi-faceted approach can be incorporated into the treatment plan including learning how to replace self-destructive behaviors with effective self-management skills (MacAniff & Kiselica, 2001).

It is important to know the Do's and Don'ts of how to connect with and help someone who self injures. The following suggestions can provide a guide to making those connections, as a professional helper, an educator or family member.



15 Intervention Strategies

This section includes strategies and activities to use with children and adolescents who SI. Some of the strategies include reproducible worksheets.

1. **Crucial Communication Skills**
2. **Personal Strength Coaching**
3. **Relaxation/Guided Imagery**
4. **Reflective Journaling**
5. **Visual Arts**
6. **Clay**
7. **Sand Tray**
8. **Metaphors**
9. **Music**
10. **Story Telling**
11. **Tactile Diversion**
12. **Creative Dramatics**
13. **Mentoring**
14. **Animal Assisted Therapy**
15. **Prayer Power**

Say It With Clay

Overview

Children/adolescents will learn a tactile way to express a variety of emotions and situations. They will also learn how to transfer any abusive behavior into clay.

Materials Needed

Modeling clay or Model Magic™

Plastic for the floor or work area

A piece of string and/or plastic knife for cutting the clay

Procedure

Have the child/adolescent first get used to the clay by working with it as he/she talks to you. Then give him/her a specific objective (see the list below) and have him/her create anything that comes to mind. Allow enough time for this.

Follow Up

Have the child/adolescent sculpture their safe place. Have them share what and where this place is. (described on page 68)

Sample Clay/Model Magic Work

- 🌀 Create a symbol of your life right now.
- 🌀 Show something you wish you could change.
- 🌀 Create a symbol for happiness.
- 🌀 Create a self-portrait.
- 🌀 Show something you wish you had more control over.
- 🌀 Sculpture an animal that most represents you.
- 🌀 Create a symbol of hope.
- 🌀 Create a symbol of your feelings prior to SI.
- 🌀 Create a symbol of someone or something that is most helpful to you.
- 🌀 Create a symbol of safety.