

What is the Link?

The Relationship Between NSSI and Social Media



Why Self-Injury and Social Media?

92%

of teens go online daily

14-21%

of teens self-injure

- Online connections appeals to teens experiencing feelings of isolation
- Expectation that anonymous social media interactions will help form meaningful relationships with others who can relate
- Self-injury is an increasingly common staple in print and visual media (being depicted as a relatively normal part of growing up)

- Social contagion is an effect when two or more people who are part of the same group engage in self-injury within 24 hours of each other
- Media enhances the likelihood of social contagion by providing opportunities to connect with similar others and through social modeling in movies, books, songs, etc.

Where Do People Go?



- Videos on sites like YouTube (videos are often uploaded without warnings)
- Online message boards like Tumblr
- Images enhance the likelihood that emotion-laden memories are stored and recalled



Is All Social Media Harmful?

Positive Effects of Social Media on Self-Injury

Most people who self-injure and who seek online communities report feeling like these communities help them more toward stopping self-injury and encourage more self-acceptance

Increased sense of social/peer support found in online communities of individuals with similar experiences

May act as a type of therapy, motivating introspection, and realization of why one self-injures and the best way to address it

Reduced social stigma as a result of greater awareness and willingness to share

In communities moderated by mental health professionals, the trained therapist can ensure that discussions are useful and supportive

Policy Guidelines

YouTube

- Does not explicitly say self-injury
- Has a section that says no content that is harmful, dangerous or could cause people to get badly hurt is permitted

Tumblr

- Has a section posted online stating that their site is not to be used for the "promotion or glorification of self-harm"
- No content that encourages others to self-injure will be permitted

Twitter

- Explicitly mentions self-harm and warns viewers that they may come across a user who is considering suicide or engaging in self-injurious behaviors
- Will reach out to a user upon hearing about a person who is considering injuring himself or herself

Facebook

- Does not mention self-injury in their policy guidelines
- Only criteria listed are that no hate speech, threatening or pornographic content or information that encourages violence can be posted

Instagram

- Does not allow for any content that glorifies self-injury to be posted
- Any pictures that support self-injury will be taken down and accounts will be disabled

How to Help



Help people find social media outlets that enhance the likelihood of feeling uplifted and more likely to engage in recovery activities

For Those Who Monitor On-Line Behavior

- Know the social media platforms and online communities being used and assess the content
- Assess total time devoted to social media and online activities
- Instead of banning sites—direct youth towards healthier and more beneficial avenues
- Focus on enhancing "internet literacy" skills

For More Resources

Cornell Research Program on Self-Injury and Recovery

<http://www.selfinjury.bctr.cornell.edu>

Youth Risk and Opportunity Lab

<https://www.yrocornell.com>

Reddy, N. Rokito, L., & Whitlock, J. (What is the link? The relationship between non-suicidal self-injury and recovery. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY

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