



Bleeding to Ease the Pain: Cutting, Self-Injury, and the Adolescent Search for Self (Abnormal Psychology)

Lori G. Plante

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Parents, teachers, friends, and even many clinicians are both horrified and mystified upon discovering teenagers who intentionally cut, burn, and otherwise inflict pain upon themselves. Often causing permanent and extensive scarring, as well as infections, cutting is increasingly prevalent among today's youth. As many as 1 in 100 adolescents report cutting themselves, representing a growing epidemic of scarred and tormented youths, as we see in this revealing work. As author Plante discusses here, the threat of suicide must always be carefully evaluated, although the majority of cutters are not in fact suicidal. Instead, cutting represents a growing teenage method for easing emotional pain and suffering. Bleeding from self-inflicted wounds not only helps to numb and vent the despair, it can also be a dramatic means of communicating, controlling, and asking for help from others.

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In this book, Plante features the stories of self-injurers and helps the reader understand the meaning of the injuries, and how to help teens stop. This author, who is a psychologist, a parent, and a Stanford University Medical School faculty member, explains in clear detail how cutters and the adults who love them can heal the pain and stop self-injury. Plante describes the frightening developmental tasks teenagers and young adults face, and how the central challenges of the three I's (Independence, Intimacy, and Identity) compel them to cope through self-destructive acts. Readers will feel as if they are in the therapy room with Plante and these struggling teenagers as they seek to overcome their internal pain and that desperate need to cut and self-injure.

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