

OFFER HOPE TO SELF-HARMERS

The problems facing today's young people may not be bigger than what teenagers faced 20 years ago, but they're multiplying. To cope with stress, abuse, broken homes, peer pressure, addictions, depression, and low self-esteem, many teenagers harm themselves through cutting, eating disorders, and engaging in risky behavior.

When life gets tough, there's no help or hope found in paralyzing guilt, rejection, or searching for scapegoats. Instead, it's essential for parents to stick with and accept teenagers, seek help, extend forgiveness, and promote healing.

First, honestly evaluate any signs of self-destructive behavior. Watch for scratches, scars, burns, isolation, fainting, tooth decay, a drastic change in eating habits, or a fixation on perceived physical flaws. Gently but persistently bring the problem to light. Avoid the extremes of blowing up or delicately sidestepping the problem. State the facts while expressing genuine concern. Explain that you'll help your teenager find other ways to work through tough emotions. Work to identify the root cause and sustaining factors, including your current family culture. Then include your teenager as much as possible in an action plan. Work with a trusted physician or counselor, giving your teen some say in the process. This can be the time when teenagers begin walking down the road to freedom, and you can help set them on that course.

TIPS >>>

Group's Emergency Response Handbook for Parents offers guidelines about how to talk to teenagers who are hurting:

What Not To Say

- **"You're scaring me."** Expressing shock or horror reinforces the belief that teens are isolated, different, and even deserving of the inflicted pain.
- **"If I find you doing this again..."** Self-destructive behavior isn't a character issue. Rules and consequences won't affect emotions, although you can limit negative influences.
- **"You're too skinny."** This brings the focus back to body image and makes weight loss the center of attention.

What To Say

- **"I know you've been hurting yourself."** The only effective way to deal with this problem is to face it head-on. Accusations and demands usually backfire, but a humble, honest explanation of the truth can be a first step to freedom.
- **"Have you noticed any circumstances, events, or patterns that occur before you react this way?"** Upon reflection, teenagers may realize they feel the urge to engage in self-destructive behavior at certain times. Work together to find other means of responding to emotional pain.
- **"Let's get help."** Assure teenagers you love them unconditionally and will walk with them through whatever it takes to find healing.

THE VIEW

- One in five teens says they've purposely injured themselves at some time.
- An estimated one in every 200 teenage girls cuts themselves regularly. Without treatment, this behavior often continues into adulthood.
- In a study, most chronic self-mutilators described their families as "full of anger... in which they were told to always be strong and prevented from expressing their feelings."

PONDER THIS

- What self-destructive behavior or choices of your own might be influencing your teenagers?
- What adjectives would best describe your home life? How can you make it more conducive to honest expressions of emotion?





Rx for Healing

Expert Insights for Parents of Teenagers

By Megan Hutchinson

I've been blessed to come alongside hurting teens for many years and have recognized that they all have one thing in common: something significant is missing deep within. And that something is very basic and is intentionally designed by God. Kids want to be 1.) nurtured patiently, 2.) accepted as they are, and 3.) loved genuinely. If these are absent from teenagers' primary relationships, there inevitably will be pain.

Typically, that pain begins to surface during the adolescent years, when developmental changes are at their peak. And that's where parents and youth

workers come in. We're privileged to be part of these kids' lives just when they're hurting the most. Here's how you can meet their three key needs:

1. Patient Nurture. Be tender and empathic. Come alongside young people and help them grow as if they're a fragile plant in need of gentleness and care. Nurturing is powerful because it validates the very emotion that's gone ignored and subdued in each hurting teen.

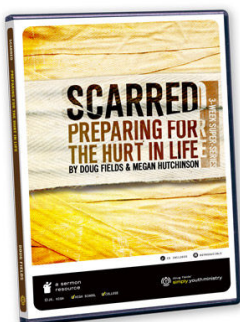
2. Unconditional Acceptance. This means welcoming teenagers as they are. Respect who they are as people, not as "kids" who need special treatment. Embrace

teenagers regardless of your personal preferences or moral positions...no strings attached.

3. Genuine Love. Be the hands, heart, and mouthpiece of Jesus with kids. See each one as a precious soul cherished and loved by the Creator himself. Consistently show up in their lives with encouragement, belief, and hope for what they cannot see for themselves. Just as Jesus modeled with the woman at the well, love teenagers the way they are, but then refuse to leave them the way they are.

Megan Hutchinson, co-creator of the curriculum *Life Hurts, God Heals*, writes at SimplyYouthMinistry.com.

RESOURCE



The three-week series *Scarred: Preparing for the Hurt in Life* (Simply Youth Ministry) by Doug Fields and Megan Hutchinson helps young people prepare to deal with life's pain but also shows them how God can use that pain to create beauty.

BIBLE FOCUS

Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you. Instead, be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering, so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world.

1 Peter 4:12-13

MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

MAINSTREAM MUSIC



FLORENCE + THE MACHINE

Background: This English band consists of singer Florence Welch and a group of collaborators. Their first album was a hit—especially in England—but they’re now well known here, too. Their style recalls past alternative acts, such as Kate Bush and Siouxsie and the Banshees, along with modern artists such as Björk and Fiona Apple. Florence is also known for her unique fashion stylings. Both albums focus on love and especially heartache.

Albums: *Ceremonials* (2011), *Lungs* (2009)

What Florence + the Machine Says: “When you’re heartbroken, you’re at your most creative. You have to channel all your energies into something else to not think about it. Contentment is a creativity killer, but don’t worry. I’m very capable of making myself discontented.”

Explore: Both albums are on Spotify. “Shake It Out,” the first single from *Ceremonials*, is available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=WbN0nX61rls.

CHRISTIAN MUSIC



KARI JOBE

Background: This 30-year-old worship singer went to #3 on the Billboard Christian chart and #1 on the iTunes Christian chart. Jobe is a refreshing voice in a worship arena usually dominated by men and Hillsong-related women.

Albums: *Where I Find You* (2011), *Kari Jobe* (2009), *Le Canto* (2009)

What Jobe Says: “I was standing in a worship service, and I didn’t really care for a song that was playing, and so I was just kind of watching. I felt the Lord saying to me very strongly, ‘Does it really matter what song it is?’ ... It just makes me remember we are so full of the flesh.”

Explore: Listen to Jobe’s songs at myspace.com/karijobemusic. An acoustic version of her hit single “We Are” is available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=B07iK9uh9qY.

MOVIES

Movie: *Red Tails*

Genre: Action, Drama, War

Rating: PG-13 (for some sequences of war violence)

Synopsis: This WWII drama profiles the famed Tuskegee airmen, black pilots who posted stellar records but had to fight both German pilots and prejudice from their own country.

Our Take: Such films offer great opportunities to talk about prejudices and how we should address them. Plus, teaching teenagers about history is always a good thing.

Movie: *Underworld: Awakening*

Genre: Action, Horror

Rating: Not Yet Rated (Probably R)

Synopsis: After discovering that vampires and werewolves are real, humans try to wipe out both species.

Our Take: This is a decidedly nonsparky take on vampires, with lots of guns, violence, and bloodshed. I’m not a fan of films that manipulate viewers so they root *against* humans.

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VIDEO GAMES



Trials Evolution—The follow-up to the smash Xbox Live Arcade game features more motorcycle mayhem. Now, instead of being in warehouses, the crazy courses are indoors, outdoors, and anywhere you can imagine. All 60 tracks were created with the same level editor that comes with the game, so players have hours of creative potential. And there’s no violence, other than crashing *hard* when you miss a jump.

Silent Hill HD Collection—The horror titles in this collection all received critical acclaim, but this is *not* something you want your kids playing. It’s deeply disturbing, filled with paranoia and unspeakable monsters (including barely dressed nurses) designed to scare players physically and psychologically.