

Comparing body modification vs self mutilation



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Self injury and body modification are closely related to or considered the same thing to some people. The intent one has behind doing these things separate whether it is self injury or simply self expression.

Self injury, self harm, and self mutilation are described as deliberate harm to oneself. The injury usually causes noticeable damage such as: cutting, burning, hair pulling, and even in the worst case scenario, limb amputation. This is not to be confused with an attempt at suicide (Thompson, 2010). This is usually due to a long history of sexual abuse, physical abuse, broken homes, alcoholic homes, and absent parents. Most people attempt self injury because they lack the proper coping skills (Thompson, 2010).

Many people that self-injure try to keep it a secret due to the fact that they are ashamed, feel guilty, or are embarrassed. The fact is that people who self injure are sound and reasonable people that probably were never taught the correct ways to cope with immense emotional pain. People who self harm are in fear that if they tell or ask someone for help that they will be committed or considered psychotic (Thompson, 2010). Sadly enough this is true, people tend to make assumptions about things they don't understand.

The first step in identifying self harm vs. body modification is to identify the directness, lethality, and repetition. Directness refers to how intentional the act is when done. If the act is done with complete awareness and consciousness of its dangerous effects, and an aware intent to produce those effects it's considered direct (Martinson, 2002).

There are different stages of self injury. The most extreme form is major self mutilation. Where this form results in serious disfigurement such as:

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castration, and limb amputation (Thompson, 2010). Then there is the stereotypic self injury which is when one will head bang against a wall, eyeball gouge, and bite. The last type of self injury is the most common form, superficial self mutilation which involves cutting, hair pulling, burning, bones breaking, and interference with wound healing (Thompson, 2010).

One of the main questions people ponder is why would one want to self injure themselves? Self injury helps with intense feelings like anger, sadness, frustration, loneliness, shame, and guilt. People who self injure tend to do so to try and release feelings they can't deal with. Self injurers also feel that maybe if they cut themselves seeing their own blood will make them feel something as opposed to the numbness they are used to (Thompson, 2010).

Another reason people self injure and continue to self injure is because endorphins are released when you self injure. Giving you that calm and relaxed feeling, almost like a high from a drug. Endorphins are protein chains that are released by the Hypothalamus area in the brain. They act in the same way as morphine except that endorphins are 18-50 times stronger (Thompson, 2010). Your body uses endorphins for several purposes. Firstly, to boost energy when you need it; secondly to reduce pain from injury; and thirdly, to signal that you are doing something worthwhile or enjoyable and to encourage you to do more of the same.

Others feel that dealing with physical pain is easier to deal with and easier to understand than what the real underlying issue is. Self injury is also used to "punish" oneself. If they were physically, mentally, or sexually abused. They may feel it was their fault which makes them feel the need to punish themselves for doing nothing to stop it (Thompson, 2010). The Act of self

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injury usually leaves a feeling of calmness and peace, almost like a high from a drug (Thompson, 2010). Since this feeling is temporary it usually leads the person to do it again. Or this may continue until the real underlying problem is solved or they find a better way to cope (Thompson, 2010). It all comes down to lacking the proper coping skills. The definition of self injury is deliberate harm to one's own body. The injury is done to oneself, without another person, and the injury is severe enough for tissue damage, such as scarring to result. Acts that are committed with conscious suicidal intent or are associated with sexual arousal are excluded (Martinson, 2002).

14% of self-injurers were diagnosed with major depression, as opposed to 56% of the suicide-attempters. Alcohol dependence was diagnosed in 16% of the self injury group, but in 26% of the suicide attempters group. Only 2% of the Self Injury group was considered schizophrenic; 9% of the suicidal attempters group was. The self injury group was 12% vs. 7% or to be diagnosed with adjustment disorder with depressed mood 24% vs. 6 % (Martinson, 2002). The reason for some cases of self-mutilation is borderline personality disorder. These people have problems with self-image, mood and instability in their relationships. They may have other issues including depression, anxiety, conduct problems, antisocial behavior and eating disorders particularly bulimia. Almost one-half of adult self-mutilators are reported to be depressed (self mutilation, 2011). Adolescent self-mutilators report an increased use of substances including alcohol. This may be related to impulsivity as a response pattern to stress or other situations. Alcohol abuse or family violence can also play a role in self mutilation and a history

of violent and deprived family situations can lead to self mutilation (Self mutilation, 2011).

One of the main issues separating self-injurious acts from tattoos and piercings is that of pride. Most people who go to get tattooed or pierced are proud, and enjoy their new art expressed on their body. They want to show others their ink, their studs, their plugs. They enjoy telling their story of the pain, the fear, the experience. In contrast, people who self injure usually don't tell anyone about it nor do they want anyone to know. Self-injurers go to great lengths to cover and hide their wounds and scars. Self-injurers do not want to show off their scars. Self mutilation is a distinct behavior, in definition, method and purpose, from tattooing and piercing (Alderman, 2009).

The history of tattooing is very extensive. Something which is now pretty acceptable and common in society. Tattoos have been around for more than 5000 years (Tattoogallery, 2007). Tattoos are used today as a form of expression. People get tattoos to commemorate lost family members, show off things they have interest in, and perhaps just a design they enjoy.

Tattooing had many very important purposes in the beginning of time for many different reasons, and many different cultures. In Egypt before 2000 B. C, only priestesses were allowed to be tattooed for ritualistic purposes. In Thailand men were the only people allowed to have tattoos. Thai people believed that tattoos place magical protection on the skin. Women were considered strong enough to live without the need of protection (Tattoogallery, 2007).

The original purpose of tattoos was to be centered around being involved and in tune with nature. Tattoos were believed to possess magical abilities, blessings and to ward off demons (TattooGallery, 2007). Around the time tattoos were beginning, the bible was being written and certain religious leaders spoke out against the art of tattooing your body, because they believed that your body is your temple and created with no flaws. To them marking your body with symbols is basically telling the gods or god that they made a mistake when creating you (TattooGallery, 2007).

As time continued tattoos became more of a symbol of status and less of a magical purpose. With certain tribes like the Celts and Native American tribes, markings were tattooed on the skin to tell stories, events, and their ranking in the tribe hierarchy. On the other hand, In Greece and Rome slaves were tattooed, criminals so that no one would mistake them if they tried to flee (Tattoo Galllery, 2007).

As long as there has been man there has been tattooing. Tattooing has been used in almost every culture, and for almost every purpose. One of the main arguments with tattooing is that some cultures and religions are not acceptable to tattooing. In the Jewish religion there are some Jewish customs that prohibit a burial if the person has a tattoo (Self mutilation). Body art has basically evolved with mankind evolving.

The intent one has behind getting a tattoo or piercing is the distinguishing factor between self mutilation and just an everyday tattoo. There are many factors that play a role in this, such as: self esteem. People do things for many different reasons. Some get tattoos because they really like an art

piece, they enjoy the way it makes them look, or perhaps a way it makes them feel. For some tattooing is a self esteem booster, they feel they are more unique more special than others, it makes them feel pretty. It is not always the case that people walk into a tattoo shop to get a tattoo specifically for the pain. The experience you have while getting a tattoo also plays a role in if you continue to want tattoos. There are many people that get a tattoo and don't get another one due to the experience they had, they are not happy with the results, or they did it on a whim and regret it. It is not always about a pain inducing want.

The era that one grows up in also has an effect on liking or disliking tattoos, agreeing with or disagreeing with tattoos. You cannot expect everyone to be on the same page if their whole lives they grew up in a household when tattoos weren't common and were extremely frowned upon. These people may not see the purpose, a point to tattoos, or just plain think they are ridiculous.

Self injury is harm to one's self, by one's self, not with the intent to kill oneself. In the cases of tattooing and piercing the harm is definitely done to oneself, but not with the intent of killing yourself or with the sole purpose of pain in mind. Receiving a tattoo or piercing is a poor and ineffective way to try getting relief for a self injurer. One of the main reasons people self injure is because they are in control and can do the act themselves, and in turn have the control to hide it. So the idea that either of these behaviors would be done as a suicide attempt or a self injury attempt does not seem to be the case. Most people don't tattoo or pierce themselves; instead they find the assistance of a professional. Occasionally someone may tattoo

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themselves, particularly in settings such as detention facilities, inpatient programs and other residential environments (8). Self-piercing is more common as it is fairly easy to do. This is what distinguishes the “ true” self-injury from tattoos and piercings is the idea that self-injury is performed by one’s own hand, and is usually the main purpose of self injury.

In conclusion, self injury and body modification are closely related to or considered the same thing to some people. The intent one has behind doing these things separate whether it is self injury or simply self expression.

Some differences between self injury and body modification are, Making a statement vs. making self feel better, uniqueness vs. coping, set apart from mainstream vs. shame, and proud vs. secret, conscious choice vs. unable to control urge. These are some things that can distinguish self injury from tattoos and piercings. Many people that self-injure try to keep it a secret due to the fact that they are ashamed, feel guilty, or are embarrassed. The fact is that people who self injure are sound and reasonable people that probably were never taught the correct ways to cope with immense emotional pain. People who self harm are in fear that if they tell or ask someone for help that they will be committed or considered psychotic (Thompson, 2010). Sadly enough this is true, people tend to make assumptions about things they don’t understand.

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pain, the fear, the experience. In contrast, people who self injure usually don't tell anyone about it nor do they want anyone to know. Self-injurers go to great lengths to cover and hide their wounds and scars. Self-injurers do not want to show off their scars. Self mutilation is a distinct behavior, in definition, method and purpose, from tattooing and piercing (Alderman, 2009).

If anything, the history of tattooing gives an indication of the evolution of the mindset of humankind through the ages, depending on their era. Looking back, that the nature of tattoos is now more cosmetic than ritualistic, as the widespread belief in magic has been replaced by the importance of looks and individuality, and the use of the body as a canvas for art(Tattoo Gallery, 2007).

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Uniqueness vs. coping

Set apart from mainstream vs. shame

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