



BIBLICAL COUNSELING AND SELF-HARM

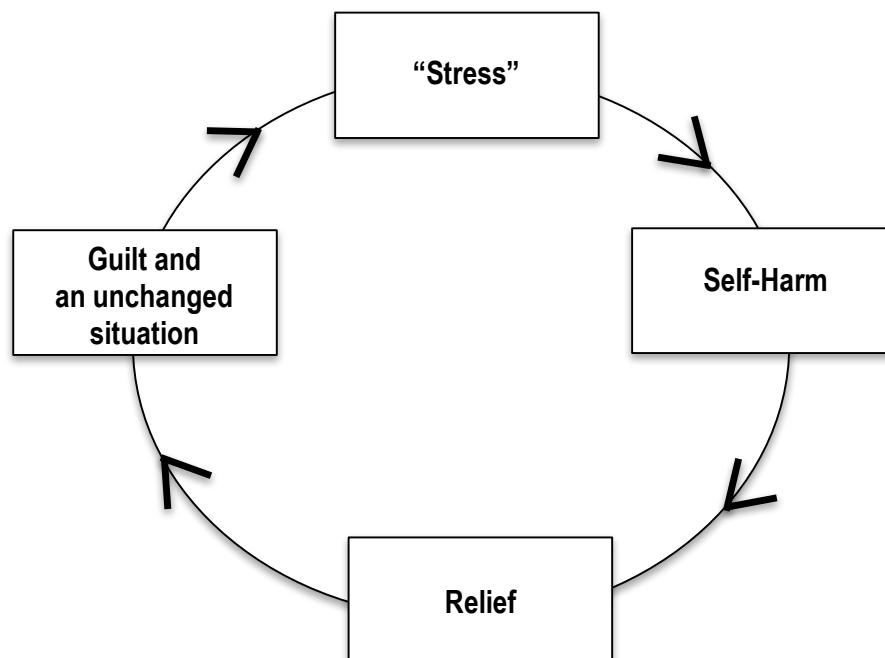
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How do we make sense of self-harm? How do we understand it?

- There are various levels of self-harm.
Some of the more common include eating disorders of various types, cutting, hitting, picking, burning, and breaking.
- What does self-harm say?
It depends. At its core, it says that this person is in battle for his or her soul.
This is an issue of worship.
- Should we counsel someone who self-harms? Or, is it better to send this person to a professional? Don't be fooled into thinking that what you have to say as a biblical counselor isn't exactly what is needed.
- If you believe the person's life is in jeopardy, immediately send them for emergency help.

The Cycle of Self-Harm (The Vicious Circle of Folly applied)





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Big Picture Heart Issues

- This is not exhaustive but should get you started.
- Lack of gratitude (2 Corinthians 5:14-17)
- Misunderstand, misconstrue, or disbelieve the goodness of God
(Matthew 11:28-30; Hebrews 4:14-16; 1 Peter 5:6-7; cf. Psalm 84:11)
- Lack of contentment (James 1:13-18)
- Loss of hope (Jeremiah 29:11; Romans 5)

Big Picture Sanctification Issues (places where they may not understand what the Bible teaches)

- Purpose of trials
- How to handle conflict and problems
- Living by a feeling-orientation rather than truth-oriented (or Christ-centered, gospel-centered)
- Devaluing worship (loving God) and service (loving neighbor)
- Purpose of life (including 2 Corinthians 5:9; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 1 Timothy 4:7-8; Hebrews 12:1-2)

Potential Areas of Idolatry and Sin

- Perfectionism
- Vanity or love of beauty
- Control
- Fear
- Shame and/or Guilt



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Homework Samples

- You want their mind on Jesus, the gospel, the pleasures of a relationship with God in Christ.
- Self-Talk Log
- Replacement Log or Journal (including thoughts)
- Think These Thoughts Journal
- Anxiety Journal
- Character of God assignment (like A W Pink's *Attributes of God*)
- Restructure (certainly this is part of a "battle" plan or an "alternative" plan, "positive" planning)
- Accountability (inviting others into the conversation for help, hope, and fellowship)
- Biblical disciplines (reading and memorizing key passages, specific prayer)
- Reading good and appropriate religious literature (i.e., C. J. Mahaney's *Cross-Centered Life*)

Where do I begin?

- Helping someone with self-injury emphasizes the importance of Christlike love.
- Ask your questions during data gathering with appropriate emotion. Express sorrow. Respond in sadness. Listen with compassion and tenderheartedness.
- Be cautious of speaking in platitudes
- Provide hope!
- Point this struggler to the glories of the gospel and Christ
- Provide for the person's safety if necessary
- Walk slowly, this is a journey not a quick race

