

































## DATING

Dating can be one of the most interesting experiences while in college. Below are some suggestions to help you along the path of dating life:

- *Be active.* Go out and meet people; participate in events on campus and be a part of activities in your residence hall or living center.
- *Be yourself.*
- *Don't be afraid to talk to people you are interested in.*
- *Be a friend.* Sometimes it is best to be friends first to see how compatible you are.
- *Get to know yourself.* Remember the importance of always knowing what you want out of your life and having the self-confidence to only stay in relationships that will allow you to grow as a person.

### On Campus places to meet people:

- Campus Life Night
- Student Organizations
- Athletic Events
- Recreation Center
- Classes

### Common places in Grand Rapids to meet people are:

- Coffee Shops such as Four Friends and the Kava House
- The Bob, located on Monroe.
- Concerts at Van Andel and The Intersection
- Local bars and restaurants

The following websites are also helpful:

[www.dating.com](http://www.dating.com). A website that has information on finding someone as well as a question and answer guide to dating issues.

[www.dateable.com](http://www.dateable.com). A place to get advice on dating.

[www.datingsitesguide.com](http://www.datingsitesguide.com). A guide to various website dedicated to dating.

<http://www.datingdoctor.com/index.asp> A guide to building relationships as well as programs and local appearances by David Coleman.



<http://www.gvsu.edu/lakerhelplink/index.cfm?id=6A6FB766-C335-844F-A4FA5F96E273307A>

## VIOLENCE AND ABUSE FACT SHEET

Statistics will show that one in three women will experience some sort of violence in their lifetime. Below is a checklist to see if you could potentially be in an abusive relationship. Remember, women between the ages of 16-24 experience the highest rate of domestic/dating violence and sexual assault.

### **Does someone you care about...**

- Constantly put you down?
- Repeatedly call or show up to check on you?
- Make fun of you in a cruel way?
- Control all the money?
- Scare or threaten you? "If you do that again, I'll..."
- Always blame you?
- Force you to touch or be touched when you don't want to?
- Glare, yell, raise fists or break things?
- Grab, shove or hit you?
- Control who you see or what you do?

### **Do you...**

- Believe if you tried harder that everything would be ok?
- Feel like you have to "walk on eggshells" to avoid anger?

If you have even checked one of these please consider calling a resource listed below. You do not deserve abuse; you do have choices.

### **For questions or help call:**

The Counseling Center at 331-3266

The YWCA of Grand Rapids at 459-7062

Center for Women in Transition in Holland at 616-355-9747 (Crisis Line is 1-800-848-5991)

### **For more information please visit:**

The Stop Family Violence Project, [www.stopfamilyviolence.org](http://www.stopfamilyviolence.org)

The Center for Women in Transition, [www.aplaceforwomen.org](http://www.aplaceforwomen.org),

The Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network, [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org).

<http://www.gvsu.edu/lakerhelplink/index.cfm?id=6A7295F5-9E2C-D6B1-61A9CB549E51C858>

# DEALING WITH TEST ANXIETY

## What is test anxiety?

Test anxiety applies to students who have mastered test material through studying but become irrationally anxious during tests with feelings of panic, a rapid heart beat or upset stomach. This irrational anxiety can lead to poor test performance caused by the inability to recall learned material, and/or difficulty organizing thoughts or comprehending test questions.

## What can I do about it?

There are several things you can do to reduce or prevent test anxiety before the day of the exam, on the day of the exam, and during the exam.

### Before the test.

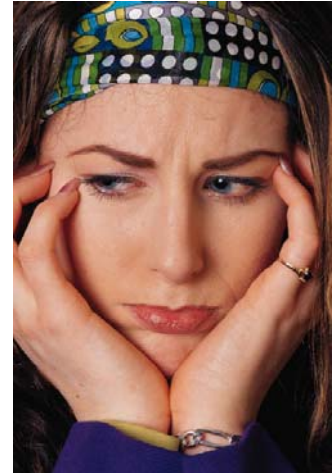
- Learn and practice some simple relaxation techniques such as deep breathing or breath control.
- Don't procrastinate; prepare several days in advance. Ask yourself what questions may be asked and try to answer them.
- Work on improving your "test-taking attitude" (avoid thinking of yourself in irrational, all-or-nothing terms; set up a post-test treat/reward for yourself).
- Get a good night's sleep.

### On the day of the test.

- Eat a moderate breakfast and avoid coffee, tea or soda if caffeine makes you jittery.
- Do something relaxing the hour before the test (no last minute cramming!).
- Plan to arrive at the test location early (this will allow you time to relax).
- Avoid stressful situations or confrontations.

### During the test.

- First review the entire test; then read the directions twice. Work on the easiest questions of the test first.
- For essay questions, construct a short outline for yourself and then begin your answer with a summary sentence. For short-answer questions, answer only what is asked; be short and to the point.
- For multiple choice questions, read all the options first, then eliminate the most obvious wrong answers. Rely on your first impressions!
- Do not rush through the test. Wear a watch and regularly check the time to pace yourself.
- If it appears you will be unable to finish the entire test, concentrate on those portions which you can answer well.
- Recheck your answers only if you have extra time.
- Don't be impressed by early finishers (they may not know the answers).



## STD's

There are two basic categories on sexually transmitted diseases: bacterial and viral. Bacterial STD's can be treated with an antibiotic; viral STD's are incurable, but outbreaks can be treated and in some cases there are new suppressive medications available.

**Among the most common sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) are:**

- Chlamydia (most common bacterial STD)
- Gonorrhea (bacterial STD)
- Syphilis (bacterial STD)
- Genital Herpes (HSV)
- Genital Warts/Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)
- HIV/AIDS virus

Often STDs cause no symptoms, especially in women. So, if you are sexually active with more than one partner, you should talk to your doctor about safe sex practices and be periodically be tested or screened for STD's even in the absence of any symptoms. Regular testing will reduce the risk of potentially spreading the infection to a sexual partner as well as the risk of serious health problems if left untreated. For more information on STD's, go to <http://www.epigee.org/guide/stds.html>.

**The basic rules for safe sex are to:**

- Engage in a mutually monogamous sexual relationship with an uninfected partner.
- Correctly and consistently use a male condom to provide a barrier to protect you from contact with genital sores and prevent the exchange of body fluids, such as semen, blood, and vaginal secretions.

<http://www.gvsu.edu/lakerhelplink/index.cfm?id=6A32D055-FE9C-A242-A4AA4ECED7054072>

## Preventing Perfectionism

Going through life as a perfectionist will always damage your self-esteem and strip you of any feelings of self-acceptance you may have for yourself. That is because the impossibly high demands you make of yourself—and the unrealistic expectations you place on others—will invite only disappointment, self repudiations, and widespread unhappiness.

Living your life as a perfectionist will also set you up for continuous rejection and deny you peace of mind. Demanding perfection usually results in failure. Even if you achieve an exceptional result, chances are you will still be unhappy because you will find additional reasons for not being good enough. Nothing for a perfectionist is ever good enough.

Remember, being a perfectionist may paralyze your future chances of success—in either your personal or your professional life—because you will eventually fear taking any new actions that might produce imperfect result. Preventing perfectionism begins by saying *no* to unreasonable high demands that produce only failure and self-contempt. The new way of thinking requires you to choose goals that are easier to achieve and are within the realm of your possibilities. Moderate your expectations—and stop focusing on faults and flaws—then watch your performance and self-esteem soar.

Briefly describe a situation or part of your life in which you would like to be less “perfect”. What are some specific ways that you could moderate your goals in that particular situation/area? What consequences might follow from such changes?

### Power of Failure

Failure is a teacher and it can be a source of personal growth. Experiencing failure—and learning to judge your own capabilities—demonstrates that you have the strength to accept life’s challenges. Condemning yourself for not succeeding is unfair. See failure for what it really is: an opportunity to discover that future success lies in another strategy or direction. You will achieve your next goal if you learn from your past mistakes.

*“Life is either a daring adventure or nothing”.*

*--Helen Keller*

<http://www.gvsu.edu/forms/counsel/PDH4.pdf>

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# Dealing With Homesickness

## Me Homesick?

You've waited through four years of high school to get to college. You looked forward to getting out of the house and finally being on your own. Meeting new friends, living in a new place and learning new things sounded so exciting, until you got there. Like Dorothy, you found out quickly "there's no place like home."

You're homesick. And, believe it or not you are not alone. Many college students find themselves craving home-cooked meals and longing for high school friends. You may even be asking yourself "why?" It's not surprising that homesickness occurs -- especially during your freshman year. You leave your home life -- a situation in which you find comfort, a place where you already belong. Then, you enter college life -- where you are just as unknown as the place around you. Believe it or not, realizing that you are homesick is the first step towards getting over it.

## You Can Deal.

Many students can overcome the feeling of homesickness and find happiness in their new environment. Here are a few suggestions...

Create a home away from home environment. Decorate with posters from your "old room". Bring knickknacks from home that remind you of special times.

Make a hometown scrapbook. Arrange photos of friends, family or special places in a photo album. Add to it special momentos, stickers, cut-outs, anything that enhances the photos to make them even more memorable. Share the scrapbook with your roommate, friends and family. Look at it whenever you feel sad or lonely.

Reach out and touch someone! During your battle with homesickness, call your family and friends from home more often. Tell them you miss them, you'll be reassured that they miss you too.

Get Involved! Join a club or student organization. This will not only immerse you into the college environment, but it will also get your mind off things. The busier you are, the less time you have to be homesick.

Find a special interest or hobby. Maybe it's hiking, biking or arts and crafts. These activities are even better if you find a college buddy to do them with!

Go to college events - homecoming, pep rallies, football games, or just hang out in the student center. You're bound to find lots of activity going on around a college campus. And where there's activity, there's a chance to meet new friends.

Keep a journal. Write about your expectations of college and all your experiences. Include your daily feelings. This will help you track your progress in dealing with homesickness. If you are able, make use of the Internet. E-mail family and friends often (or do it the old fashioned way - write them a letter). They are bound to write you back - and everyone loves to get mail!

Talk about your feelings. You'll find that you have a lot of support around you. Your RA, counselors, or other campus officials are ready and willing to help you. If you feel more comfortable, express your feelings to your roommate, you may find he/she shares your feelings about being away from home.

DO NOT find comfort in bad habits or addictions! Partying more or hiding behind alcohol, drugs or sex will not make your feelings go away. They only magnify the situation and make you feel worse!

Most of all remember that adjusting to college life takes time. It is very hard to adapt to a new situation or environment. Realize that it may take awhile before your blues go away. Ease yourself into it and you'll find that college can be your home away from home.

<http://www.rockhurst.edu/studentlife/reslife/CBIssue2/Content/rar2fe00.htm>

## Coping with the Death of Your Pet

When a person you love dies, it's natural to feel sorrow, express grief, and expect friends and family to provide understanding and comfort. Unfortunately, the same doesn't always hold true if the one who died was your companion animal. Many consider grieving inappropriate for someone who has lost "just a pet."



Nothing could be further from the truth. People love their pets and consider them members of their family. Caregivers celebrate their pets' birthdays, confide in their animals, and carry pictures of them in their wallets. So when your beloved pet dies, it's not unusual to feel overwhelmed by the intensity of your sorrow. Animals provide companionship, acceptance, emotional support, and unconditional love during the time they share with you. If you understand and accept this bond between humans and animals, you've already taken the first step toward coping with pet loss: knowing that it is okay to grieve when your pet dies.



Understanding how you grieve and finding ways to cope with your loss can bring you closer to the day when memories bring smiles instead of tears.

### What Is the Grief Process?

The grief process is as individual as the person, lasting days for one person or years for another. The process typically begins with denial, which offers protection until individuals can realize their loss. Some caregivers may try bargaining with a higher power, themselves, or even their pet to restore life. Some feel anger, which may be directed at anyone involved with the pet, including family, friends, and veterinarians. Caregivers may also feel guilt about what they did or did not do, and may feel that it is inappropriate to be so upset. After these feelings subside, caregivers may experience true sadness or grief. They may become withdrawn or depressed. Acceptance occurs when they accept the reality of their loss and remember their animal companion with decreasing sadness. Remember, not everyone follows these classic stages of grief—some may skip or repeat a stage, or experience the stages in a different order.



### How Can I Cope with My Grief?

While grief is a personal experience, you need not face loss alone. Many forms of support are available, including pet bereavement counseling services, pet-loss support hotlines, local or online Internet bereavement groups, books, videos, and magazine articles. Here are a few suggestions to help you cope:

- Acknowledge your grief and give yourself permission to express it.
- Don't hesitate to reach out to others who can lend a sympathetic ear.
- Write about your feelings, either in a journal or a poem.

- Call your local humane society to see whether it offers a pet loss support group or can refer you to one. You may also want to ask your veterinarian or local animal shelter about available pet loss hotlines.
- Explore the Internet for pet loss support groups and coping information.
- Prepare a memorial for your pet.

### **Will My Other Pets Grieve?**

Surviving pets may whimper, refuse to eat or drink, and suffer lethargy, especially if they had a close bond with the deceased pet. Even if they were not the best of friends, the changing circumstances and your emotional state may distress them. Give surviving pets lots of TLC ("tender loving care") and try to maintain a normal routine. It's good for them and for you.

### **Should I Get Another Pet?**

Rushing into this decision isn't fair to you or your new pet. Each animal has his own unique personality and a new animal cannot replace the one you lost. You'll know when the time is right to adopt a new pet after giving yourself time to grieve, carefully considering the responsibilities of pet ownership, and paying close attention to your feelings. When you are ready, remember that your local animal shelter is a great place to find your next special friend.

[http://www.hsus.org/pets/pet\\_care/coping\\_with\\_the\\_death\\_of\\_your\\_pet/](http://www.hsus.org/pets/pet_care/coping_with_the_death_of_your_pet/)

## Your Parents' Divorce

Are your parents divorced or getting a divorce? Although children of divorced parents may not think about it all the time, their lives have been subtly influenced by their parents' divorce. A divorce always affects children, even adult children, and almost always has some lingering effects. For example, consider the following questions:

- ~ Do you feel guilt or responsibility for your parents' divorce?
- ~ Have you ever felt that you lost part of your childhood because of the divorce?
- ~ Do you feel either of your parents depends too much on you for emotional support?
- ~ Do you find yourself in the role of "peacemaker" when your parents argue?
- ~ Do you feel that either parent is so involved with his or her own problems or new relationships that your feelings or needs are often overlooked?

These are but a few of the ways you may have been affected by your parents' divorce, and your answers to each of these questions can represent many issues. Your academic work, your present and future relationships, and even your emotional well-being may all be influenced by how you resolve problems and feelings associated with your parents' divorce.

### How To Cope With Your Parents' Divorce

Let's start with some basics. First, you did not cause your parents' marital problems or divorce. Second, it is typical and normal to have strong emotional responses to the divorce, often accompanied by feelings of split loyalties to your parents and pressures to rescue the more fragile parent. Third, you have a right to continue your own life and to attend to your own hopes and needs during this period. Consider the following ideas about what you have a right to want or expect, even if your parents are not currently able to provide them or able to understand their importance.

- ~ You have the right to want a satisfying relationship with each parent.
- ~ You have the right not to be caught between your parents as they struggle with each other.
- ~ You have the right to your feelings whether they are anger, frustration, pain, love, etc.
- ~ You have the right to work through your feelings and to receive cooperation from other family members in dealing with problems you are experiencing related to your parents' divorce.
- ~ You have the right to maintain your position in priority for family resources, especially concerning support for school.

### Basic Guidelines For Survival And Growth

The following tips on how to take care of yourself may serve as guidelines for personal self-care. Not all are applicable to every situation. Use them as they seem to fit for you. The first three guidelines are based on materials that appear in Mom's House, Dad's House by Isolina Ricci (reproduced by permission of the publisher).

1. Don't go through this period alone. Despite frequently touted ideals of rugged independence and making it alone, there is no particular virtue or benefit in going through a crisis completely alone. More realistically, isolation can raise already excessive stress levels, delaying your progress and possibly leading to later complications. Support and acceptance by other people are absolutely essential during big changes.
2. Care for yourself emotionally and physically. Adjustment to your parents' divorce takes enormous amounts of energy. If you don't take care of yourself, stress may get the upper hand. Listen to yourself, your emotions are not tyrants, but are parts of you that have a right to be heard

and cared for. Make time for your inner self, for contemplation and for quiet time alone. Find safe ways to blow off steam, ways to let some of your tensions escape. Take time out for exercise, rest, and recreation.

3. Don't become an emotional junkie. People can get hooked on strong emotions such as anger, depression, grief, blame, guilt, hostility, or revenge. An emotional junkie doesn't work out feelings in safe or structured ways, but instead wants to keep the feelings. Emotional junkies wear their feelings like a badge of courage. To avoid becoming an emotional junkie, it is important to take stock of your emotions to see if they are truly expressions of how you feel or if they are habits, ways of getting attention, or ways to avoid other feelings.

4. Expect to experience a range of feelings. Individuals whose parents are divorcing or divorced often experience problems with concentration, feelings of sadness, anger, and depression. They may also be preoccupied with anxieties about the future, and with feelings of responsibility for one or more family members. Reactions like these are normal and healing takes time. Sharing these feelings with others who have had similar experiences may be helpful.

5. Become informed about what is going to happen. Divorces frequently are accompanied by an absence of accurate, open communication with "children." It is important that you break this conspiracy of silence and talk directly with each of your parents. Discuss such matters as when the divorce will occur, who will be living where, and what changes, if any, will happen with your financial arrangements. Focus on what you need to know for your plans, not on information which is more properly in the private domain of each parent.

6. Keep clear of unhealthy alliances. Divorcing parents often slip into trying to get you to side with one against the other. This may be done blatantly, by openly criticizing and blaming the other parent, or subtly, by being more needy and vulnerable than the other parent and asking for excessive help or comfort. With few exceptions, these efforts by parents are designed either to get revenge against the "wrong doer" or to avoid the pain and anxiety of their own problems. To protect your own emotional well-being you will need to clearly and firmly refuse to be put in the middle.

7. Help your parents understand what you are trying to do for yourself. During a divorce and its aftermath, your parents may have difficulty seeing things clearly or being helpful to you. Your efforts at this time to help them understand what your experiences are and how you are trying to take care of yourself may prevent hurt feelings or misinterpretations of your actions.

8. Find out what works for you. Reactions vary widely to the situation of parental divorce. There are no foolproof methods for getting through it. So, pay attention to whatever you find helpful, to whatever allows you to stay involved in your own life productively without ignoring the feelings and issues raised by the divorce. Above all, try to avoid making major decisions and changes in your life plans. Your familiar surroundings, friends, activities, and plans will usually help you keep on the right path.

9. Learn to use helping resources outside your family. Families almost instinctively exclude or try to protect themselves from "outsiders" during a crisis. Your parents' divorce makes it especially important for you to be resourceful about other places and people who can help. Friends will listen, and written materials can help you better understand what's going on. In addition, established groups such as your church, self-help groups, and professional counselors can provide additional support in helping you through this time.

## What Is Cutting?

Injuring yourself on purpose by making scratches or cuts on your body with a sharp object — enough to break the skin and make it bleed — is called cutting. Cutting is a type of **self-injury**, or SI. Cutting is more common among girls, but guys sometimes self-injure, too. People may cut themselves on their wrists, arms, legs, or bellies. Some people self-injure by burning their skin with the end of a cigarette or lighted match.

When cuts or burns heal, they often leave scars or marks. People who injure themselves usually hide the cuts and marks and sometimes no one else knows.

Self-injury is not new. It's also not a very common behavior. But lately people are talking about it more. As guys and girls hear about cutting, they may feel curious about it and why people do it. Because it seems a little bit forbidden, some younger teens may think that cutting might make them seem daring, grown up, or popular.

With all the talk about it, cutting can almost seem like the latest fad. But cutting is a serious problem.

### Why Do People Cut Themselves?

It can be hard to understand why people cut themselves on purpose. Cutting is a way some people try to cope with the pain of strong emotions, intense pressure, or upsetting relationship problems. They may be dealing with feelings that seem too difficult to bear, or bad situations they think can't change.

Some people cut because they feel desperate for relief from bad feelings. People who cut may not know better ways to get relief from emotional pain or pressure.

There are other ways to cope with difficulties, even big problems and terrible emotional pain. The help of a mental health professional might be needed for major life troubles. For other tough situations or strong emotions, it can help put things in perspective to talk problems over with parents, other adults, or friends. Believe it or not, getting plenty of exercise can also help put problems in perspective.

But people who cut may not have developed these skills. When emotions don't get expressed in a healthy way, tension can build up — sometimes to a point where it seems almost unbearable. Cutting may be an attempt to relieve that extreme tension. It's a confused way of feeling in control.

Younger teens are more likely to cut — perhaps because older teens know other ways to deal with problems.

The urge to cut might be triggered by strong feelings the person can't express — such as anger, hurt, shame, frustration, or depression. People who cut sometimes say they feel they don't fit in or that no one understands them. A person might cut because of losing someone close or to escape a sense of emptiness. Cutting might seem like the only way to find relief or express personal pain over relationships or rejection.

People who cut or self-injure sometimes have other mental health problems that contribute to their emotional tension. Cutting is sometimes (but not always) associated with depression, bipolar disorder, eating disorders, obsessive thinking, or compulsive behaviors. It can also be a sign of mental health problems that cause people to have trouble controlling their impulses or to take unnecessary risks. Some people who cut themselves have problems with drug or alcohol abuse.

Some people who cut have had a traumatic experience, such as living through abuse, violence, or a disaster. Self-injury may feel like a way of "waking up" from a sense of numbness after a traumatic experience. Or it may be a way of reinflicting the pain they went through, expressing anger over it, or trying to get control of it.

## What Can Happen to People Who Cut?

Although cutting may provide some temporary relief from a terrible feeling, even people who cut agree that it isn't a good way to get that relief. For one thing, the relief doesn't last. The troubles that triggered the cutting remain — they're just masked over.

People don't usually intend to hurt themselves permanently when they cut. And they don't usually mean to keep cutting once they start. But both can happen. It's possible to misjudge the depth of a cut, making it so deep that it requires stitches (or, in extreme cases, hospitalization). Cuts can become infected if a person uses nonsterile or dirty cutting instruments — razors, scissors, pins, or even the sharp edge of the tab on a can of soda.

Most people who cut aren't attempting suicide. Cutting is usually a person's attempt at feeling better, not ending it all. Although some people who cut do attempt suicide, it's usually because of the emotional problems and pain that lie behind their desire to self-harm, not the cutting itself.

Cutting can be habit forming. It can become a **compulsive behavior** — meaning that the more a person does it, the more he or she feels the need to do it. The brain starts to connect the false sense of relief from bad feelings to the act of cutting, and it craves this relief the next time tension builds. When cutting becomes a compulsive behavior, it can seem impossible to stop. So cutting can seem almost like an addiction, where the urge to cut can seem too hard to resist. A behavior that starts as an attempt to feel more in control can end up controlling you.

## How Does Cutting Start?

Cutting often begins on an impulse. It's not something the person thinks about ahead of time. Shauna says, "It starts when something's really upsetting and you don't know how to talk about it or what to do. But you can't get your mind off feeling upset, and your body has this knot of emotional pain. Before you know it, you're cutting yourself. And then somehow, you're in another place. Then, the next time you feel awful about something, you try it again — and slowly it becomes a habit."

Natalie, a high school junior who started cutting in middle school, explains that it was a way to distract herself from feelings of rejection and helplessness she felt she couldn't bear. "I never looked at it as anything that bad at first — just my way of getting my mind off something I felt really awful about. I guess part of me must have known it was a bad thing to do, though, because I always hid it. Once a friend asked me if I was cutting myself and I even lied and said 'no.' I was embarrassed."

Sometimes self-injury affects a person's body image. Jen says, "I actually liked how the cuts looked. I felt kind of bad when they started to heal — and so I would 'freshen them up' by cutting again. Now I can see how crazy that sounds, but at the time, it seemed perfectly reasonable to me. I was all about those cuts — like they were something about me that only I knew. They were like my own way of controlling things. I don't cut myself anymore, but now I have to deal with the scars."

You can't force someone who self-injures to stop. It doesn't help to get mad at a friend who cuts, reject that person, lecture her, or beg him to stop. Instead, let your friend know that you care, that he or she deserves to be healthy and happy, and that no one needs to bear their troubles alone.

## Cutting — The New Cool?

Girls and guys who self-injure are often dealing with some heavy troubles. Many work hard to overcome difficult problems. So they find it hard to believe that there are some teens who cut just because they think it's a way to seem tough and rebellious.

Tia tried cutting because a couple of the girls at her school were doing it. They pressured her. "It seemed like if I didn't do it, they would think I was afraid or something. So I did it once. But when I walked away, I thought about how lame it was to do something like that to myself for no good reason. Next time they asked I just said, 'no, thanks — it's not for me.' "

If you have a friend who suggests you try cutting, say what you think. Why get pulled into something you know isn't good for you? There are plenty of other ways to express who you are. (Not giving in to peer pressure is one of them!)

Lindsay had been cutting herself for 3 years because of abuse she suffered as a child. She's 16 now and hasn't cut herself in more than a year. "I feel proud of that," Lindsay says. "So when I hear girls talk about it like it's a fad, it really gets to me."

## Getting Help

There are better ways to deal with troubles than cutting — healthier, long-lasting ways that don't leave a person with emotional and physical scars. The first step is to get help with the troubles that led to the cutting in the first place. Here are some ideas for doing that:

1. **Tell someone.** People who have stopped cutting often say the first step is the hardest — admitting to or talking about cutting. But they also say that after they open up about it, they often feel a great sense of relief. Choose someone you trust to talk to at first (a parent, school counselor, teacher, coach, doctor, or nurse). If it's too difficult to bring up the topic in person, write a note.
2. **Identify the trouble that's triggering the cutting.** Cutting is a way of reacting to emotional tension or pain. Try to figure out what feelings or situations are causing you to cut. Is it anger? Pressure to be perfect? Relationship trouble? A painful loss or trauma? Mean criticism or mistreatment? Identify the trouble you're having, then tell someone about it. Many people have trouble figuring this part out on their own. This is where a mental health professional can be helpful.
3. **Ask for help.** Tell someone that you want help dealing with your troubles and the cutting. If the person you ask doesn't help you get the assistance you need, ask someone else. Sometimes adults try to downplay the problems teens have or think they're just a phase. If you get the feeling this is happening to you, find another adult (such as a school counselor or nurse) who can make your case for you.
4. **Work on it.** Most people with deep emotional pain or distress need to work with a counselor or mental health professional to sort through strong feelings, heal past hurts, and to learn better ways to cope with life's stresses. One way to find a therapist or counselor is to ask at your doctor's office, at school, or at a mental health clinic in your community.
5. Although cutting can be a difficult pattern to break, it is possible. Getting professional help to overcome the problem doesn't mean that a person is weak or crazy. Therapists and counselors are trained to help people discover inner strengths that help them heal. These inner strengths can then be used to cope with life's other problems in a healthy way.

[http://www.kidshealth.org/teen/your\\_mind/mental\\_health/cutting.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/mental_health/cutting.html)

# Computer and Video Game Addiction

Computers, video games, and the Internet have become entrenched features of our daily lives. Computer use has reached beyond work and is now a major source of fun and entertainment for many people. For most people, computer use and video game play is integrated into their lives in a balanced healthy manner. For others, time spent on the computer or video game is out of balance, and has displaced work, school, friends, and even family.

What is computer and video game addiction?

When time spent on the computer, playing video games or cruising the Internet reaches a point that it harms a child's or adult's family and social relationships, or disrupts school or work life, that person may be caught in a cycle of addiction. Like other addictions, the computer or video game has replaced friends and family as the source of a person's emotional life. Increasingly, to feel good, the addicted person spends more time playing video games or searching the Internet. Time away from the computer or game causes moodiness or withdrawal.

When a person spends up to ten hours a day or more rearranging or sending files, playing games, surfing the net, visiting chat rooms, instant messaging, and reading emails, that easily can reach up to seventy to eighty hours a week on-line with the computer. Major social, school or work disruptions will result. Symptoms of computer or video game addiction:

For children:

- Most of non-school hours are spent on the computer or playing video games.
- Falling asleep in school.
- Not keeping up with assignments.
- Worsening grades.
- Lying about computer or video game use.
- Choosing to use the computer or play video games, rather than see friends.
- Dropping out of other social groups (clubs or sports).
- Irritable when not playing a video game or on the computer.

For adults:

- Computer or video game use is characterized by intense feelings of pleasure and guilt.
- Obsessing and pre-occupied about being on the computer, even when not connected.
- Hours playing video games or on the computer increasing, seriously disrupting family, social or even work life.
- Lying about computer or video game use.
- Experience feelings of withdrawal, anger, or depression when not on the computer or involved with their video game.
- May incur large phone or credit bills for on-line services.
- Can't control computer or video game use.
- Fantasy life on-line replaces emotional life with partner.

There are even physical symptoms that may point to addiction:

- Carpal tunnel syndrome.
- Sleep disturbances
- Back, neck aches
- Headaches
- Dry eyes
- Failure to eat regularly or neglect personal hygiene

For the computer or video game addicted person, a fantasy world on-line or in a game has replaced his or her real world. The virtual reality of the computer or game is more inviting than the every day world of family, school or work. With the increased access to pornography on the Internet and in games, this fantasy world may be highly sexual. The first step to healing is to recognize the symptoms. Help from a professional is often needed.

[http://www.mediafamily.org/facts/facts\\_gameaddiction.shtml](http://www.mediafamily.org/facts/facts_gameaddiction.shtml)