



Cutting & Self-Harm: Understanding, Breaking Shame, and Finding Hope

1. What Is Cutting?

Cutting (or other forms of self-harm) is when someone intentionally hurts their own body—often with sharp objects, burning, or scratching—as a way to cope with overwhelming emotions, stress, shame, or numbness.

- Cutting is not usually a suicide attempt, but it is a sign of deep pain.
- It becomes a cycle of temporary relief followed by guilt and shame.

2. Causes & Triggers

- Emotional Overload: Feeling emotions too intensely (anger, sadness, anxiety).
- Numbness: Wanting to feel something when feeling detached.
- Shame & Self-Hatred: Believing lies such as “I deserve this.”
- Control: Feeling powerless in life but in control of pain.
- Trauma & Abuse: Trying to release or escape memories and emotions.

3. The Shame Cycle

1. Pain or overwhelming emotions.
2. Cutting/self-harm to release tension.
3. Temporary relief.
4. Shame, guilt, or fear of being found out.
5. Renewed pain → cycle begins again.

 Biblical Truth: Shame tells us “hide, punish, stay stuck.” Jesus says “come to Me, be cleansed, be free.”

- Genesis 3:7–10 – Adam and Eve hid in shame.
- Hebrews 12:2 – Jesus “endured the cross, despising the shame.”
- Romans 8:1 – “No condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.”

4. Why Stopping Feels Hard

- The brain releases chemicals (endorphins) that bring temporary calm.
- This can feel like “relief” but trains the body to rely on self-harm.
- Healing requires learning new, healthier ways to process pain.

5. Biblical Help & Hope

- God Sees: Psalm 34:18 – “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted.”
- God Heals: Psalm 147:3 – “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”
- God Loves You: Isaiah 49:16 – “I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.”
- God Provides a Way Out: 1 Corinthians 10:13 – He will not leave you trapped in temptation.

6. Practical Coping Alternatives

Instead of cutting, try ways to release or redirect emotions:

- Physical: Squeeze ice cubes, tear paper, punch a pillow, exercise.
- Creative: Journal, draw, write a Psalm in your own words.
- Grounding: Name 5 things you see, 4 you feel, 3 you hear, 2 you smell, 1 you taste.
- Connection: Call a trusted friend, pray with someone, read Scripture aloud.

7. Steps Toward Healing

1. Tell Someone Safe – shame loses power when brought into the light.
2. Replace Lies with Truth – write down lies (“I’m worthless”) and replace with Scripture (“I am God’s workmanship” – Eph. 2:10).
3. Create a Safety Plan – list numbers, verses, and tools for when urges rise.
4. Seek Accountability – walk with a mentor, counselor, or trusted believer.
5. Cry Out to God – pray honestly, like David in the Psalms.

8. Reflection & Journaling Prompts

- When I feel like cutting, what emotion is underneath?
- What lie am I believing about myself or God in that moment?

- Which verse of truth can I hold onto instead?
- Who can I reach out to when I feel the urge?

9. Prayer for Healing

“Lord, You see my pain even when I hide it. You know my scars and my struggles. Help me believe that Jesus’ scars are enough, and I don’t need to add my own. Replace my shame with Your love, my pain with Your presence, and my despair with Your hope. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

10. Resources & Next Steps

- Read Psalms of lament (Psalm 13, 42, 69).
- Journal emotions using the Emotion Wheel.
- Reach out for counseling, discipleship, or trusted accountability.
- Remember: Healing is possible. Scars can tell a story of survival and redemption.

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"Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save..." – Isaiah 59:1

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