



Self-Destructive Behavior

Verdadera is a publication created by and for Monta Vista teens for the purpose of **instigating communication concerning the 'real world' of high school within the community**. Each month, an issue on a topic relevant to the lives of our students is sent home for reading by parents and students alike. We encourage you to discuss and explore the issues and stories, as **the publication aims not only to offer an outlet for expression but to improve our lives**. Keep in mind that the emotions that flow through the text and the feelings behind the words could be those of your child, your classmate, or your best friend. While we do not edit submissions, we aim to publish personal experiences, not opinion articles. Please utilize all the resources present in the publication.

Also, feel free to email comments and feedback. The Verdadera staff thanks you for your interest and support.

This issue includes stories about self-destructive behavior, both mental and physical.

Student Submissions

Ok.

The worst. Probably telling myself that I'm fat. I hate it, but it's the way I feel. I look at myself in the mirror and I feel gross about my body. I see myself and I think who would ever think that was attractive? I think, you have to eat less, you're over weight. You are going to get fatter and fatter if you don't change things. The thing is, it's not like I'm not trying, I exercise every day for hours and I eat a lot healthier than lots of other people. I have had people close to me tell me that I am just fine the way I am and I don't have to change to be a good

person. I have had people close to me tell me that it's just my body type and no one has the right to make me feel bad about it. I've had people close to me tell me that I need to watch what I eat. And when ever that happens, I go home and weigh myself and look in the mirror and think that I'm ugly for being fat and fat for being ugly. I hate it, but that's the way I feel. I don't ever wear shorts because it requires showing lots of skin, I try to wear sweats a lot because then people can't see what I look like. No matter what anyone says though, that's the way I feel and I tell myself every time I get a chance to. I feel fat. I look

fat, I am fat. And I hate it.

Ok.

*"I want to give up, I want to walk away.
I want to forget everything I've ever
known and start a new*

life... I want a life that's worth living."
- Unknown

you know those moments

those moments where all you can think
is "run, get the f*** out, keep going,
drive, faster, faster"

the car is shaking and you don't care
because you're not going fast enough

everyone else better get out of the way

because you need to get out, go faster,
be free

free from what? more like free from
who...

it doesn't matter. just....free.

*"I'm sure it's connected with self-
loathing. You mark yourself because you
feel you can't make a mark anywhere
else."*

Anonymous

For the first time in my life, i lost
someone dear to me. For a long time, i
thought that punching through a wall or
a glass cabinet or cutting myself would

make me feel better. Then again, I dont
know why i did these things to myself. It
seemed that it jsut made things worst. In
the end ,I realized fianlly that it was
regret that caused me to do this. When
"he" was still alive, i took him for
granted, i made him cry, made him
angry, made him dissapointed. For some
reason i found too many cuts and bruises
deep inside that were simply "there "
forever.. He was gone and i longed to
relive that time when he was still alive. I
wanted to honor him, make him proud,
make him laugh, and most importantly
proud. That was all too late now. He is
gone and all i could think of is self
destruction to \"punish\" my self for my
things i should have done so that his
soul could rest in peace in that heaven he
lives in now. It was regret and anger
that needed to be let out.

*"The plain fact of it was that I was
miserable—though my misery wasn't so
much sadness as it was a shrieking
unease, a gnawing despair, which I had
been trying that morning to cut out of
myself."*

Caroline Kettlewell, *Skin Game*

There are many kinds of self destructive
behaviors, mental and physical. Usually,
the mental one comes first and then
when that sort of torture no longer
appeases the inner turmoil, one
sometimes will resort to physical
behaviors to relieve the pain inside.

For years, I have been picturing myself
being killed or committing suicide in
almost every fashion I could think of -
shooting, hanging, overdose of pills,
slitting important arteries or veins,
jumping, drowning, suffocating,
stabbing, poison, getting hit by some sort
of imagination and soon the juices of the

imagined diversified deaths ran dry. In my mind's eyes, I was more or less dead anyway, so I did not hesitate much when I picked up the small crafts' blade on evening after an intense six-hour-study of schoolwork and made my first cut.

It felt good.

Yeah, it hurt and it was a pretty shallow line, but pain was the point of that band, at the same time, I was scared, too. I was afraid that I actually had the capacity to *do* something like that. I did not think I would ever do it again, I mean, although I instantly felt better and more awake, I was frightened at the fact that all of my rehearsed dreams of suicide could come true.

How wrong I was.

I found out how addictive it was and after a while I picked up the blade again. It was not too soon when my friends found out about it. They were worried and scared about me and I found myself being dragged out of class or out of the crowd to be "counseled" .

I apologize to those who i had influenced and probably tainted black with my behaviors

You cannot understand the guilt I felt when I found out that some of my friends were doing it, too.

I gave it up afterwards because I did not want my friends sinking deeper.

But, you know, I never really saw what was so bad about it. Yes, it hurts a lot when you find out your friends do that. Yes, it hurts a lot of people around you when they find out that you do it. Yes, it hurts when you realize how cowardly you are. Yes, it hurts because

no matter how much you hurt inside, no one really understands. It does not matter how many times you friends tell you "everything's gonna be okay" or the "I'll always be there for you if you need me" because deep down, you know they will not. Your friends are not your emotional parents; they do not have the obligation or the duty of protecting your every emotional swing or breaking your fall each time you face pain and disappointment.

Life is tough and full of bitterness; deal with it.

So in the end, you still to stand for yourself. And when you find that you see yourself dead anyway, there is no real difference when you inflict a few slices on your skin. It relieves the pain and anger and disappointment and frustration inside. It releases all the unspoken things that you know you can never share with anyone else. We all gets cuts and bruises anyway; what is the difference from getting a bigger one that is just intentioned to be there? Besides, they look pretty.

Just as long people do not find out.

"The most self-destructive thought that any person can have is thinking that he or she is not in total control of his or her life. That's when, 'Why me?' becomes a theme song. "

-Roger Dawson

Black words
Typed neatly against
White, white paper
Stories entwined with dark plots
Telling of different people
Of different world

A distance intangible

Black words

Typed neatly against

White, white paper

Tells the story of sad, sad souls

So bitter and so full of pain

A distance intangible

Black words

Typed neatly against

White, white paper

Slashes crimson streaks in between the lines

In between the eloquently chosen words

In between the sorrowful songs of each

tragic hero

And heroine

A distance intangible

Black words typed neatly against

White, white paper

Screams in muffles

Of pleas of help

Of salvation

Can you not see I am in pain?

Can you not see I am d.y.i.n.g...

A distance intangible

Black words typed neatly against

White, white paper

With coffee ring stains

And crimson-smearred last attempts of life

A distance intangible at the point of a blade

Black words streaked solemnly

Smearred

Against the white, white papers

Shredded

Blowing in the wind

In my dreams

A distance tangible at the point of a blade

Black words unspoken tacitly

Rooted in the petals

Of the white, white roses

Lying on the gray, gray tombstone

Of an author denied...

"I'm so afraid of falling down, I am living on my knees."

- Kevin Connolly

i have reached a low point. so fed up with my body, that i bought a bottle of diet pills. i hate myself for being so shallow, but i also plan to follow the directions on the bottle for the next forty-four days. this is a formal apology to myself.

"I hurt so bad inside; I wish you could see the world through my eyes."

- Korn

There is a knife that is permanently situated in the top drawer of my bedroom cabinet.

I haven't cut myself, nor do I plan on ever doing it. But I have thought about it too many times to count or even remember. I suppose its something similar to when someone is really angry and they go running. I expect a similar kind of exhilaration, of endorphins and pain for pleasure.

Suicide, too, has crossed my mind frequently during times of absolute hopelessness when no end is conceivable to the countless hours of meaningless work or the constant stream of hateful words from my stupid, stupid parents' mouths.

I think that maybe putting an end to all the SHIT in my life is worth giving up all the good stuff too. I can pinpoint a few really desperate times I've

considered suicide. Each time I was searching for some way to get *out*: of Cupertino, away from the people, away from MV and sports practices and meetings. But in those rare times I needed help from my parents, a drive to somewhere away from here, some understanding .they just wouldn't give it. When I just needed a day off from school because I was going crazy, they wouldn't excuse me.

So I just cried for hours, stuck my head in my pillow and screamed until my voice was gone, tried to suffocate myself in my own madness, whatever. I'm not dead, but that doesn't mean I'm happy. So please parents, just cut me a freakin break sometimes. Some support, some understanding even when I'm being ridiculous?

I ran away from home today. It s' funny how I would loathe the people who I have heard have done likewise. I never really know what in the world they must have been thinking until now. I always thought they were f***in stupid because there is so much scarier shit going on in the world. They think they have it bad? That s' f***in ridiculous. But, here I am. My parents don t really get along. I know in the next couple of decades or so they won t be together. Both of them have told me that in fact. This past week has been hell at home. Although, I guess it always is. My mom is extremely high strung, and she comes home everyday and screams at me. My dad doesn t even talk to me. They don t talk to each other. He tries to hide his smoking, but we both know he does. I can smell it on him, and I can tell when he runs inside to take a shower. He forgets to pay the bills a lot, and once or twice we didn t have light and the same thing for the telephone. Anyway, I m trying to get my license. However, I don t really know why because the

likelihood of my parents purchasing me a car is slim to none, and I d'have no way to pay for gas. So I vè been driving with my dad until one day as I was driving to my friend s house he got extremely mad. He told me to look left, and I said he did, and we got into an argument. Silly, right? So, he kicked me out of the car, and I walked the last mile to his house. There goes driving with him. The next day, I ask my mom if we can go driving. Of course, the entire time, she is yelling, and it s not like I m hitting f***in trees. She kept screaming, "Slow down! Slow down!"

Mom. I m going 15mph. I m not that great of a driver yet but try driving with someone screaming at you. She screams, and I take a corner wide (in a residential district where no one is around). I was only going 15mph, but she freaks out.

There goes driving with her. Last night, I had a huge falling out with her about driving. Today, I had to get somewhere, but my dad refused to take me until I apologized. For what, I don t know. I say sorry just so we can go. I also have to pick someone up. Of course, since I don t know what the f*** I am apologizing for, once again my absolutely unreliable father flakes out. What the f*** am I supposed to do? I honestly don t know what I am apologizing for. I don t know what he s talking about, but I don t really care either. I call my friend, and tell her I can t pick her up, which screws her over. And then my dad takes away one of the most important things in my life. He takes away my dream and plans after high school. I don t have a reason in life anymore. So, when he left the house, I got a bunch of stuff, climbed the fence, and climbed onto the roof. And that s where I am now. You may think it s f***in stupid, but you have no way to understand what it s like to be as independent as me and to hide all of this

too. It's kind of ironic how peaceful it is up here. Everything is quiet. There's no one yelling at me, and there's no one criticizing me, telling me I'm fat, or saying she never had me. It's wonderful up here. I got to watch the sun set. It was beautiful. I never noticed how green our city is. I love it. Well, now I'm writing blindly in the dark. And tomorrow, I'll wake up really early and walk to school. After school, I don't know what I'll go, but I guess I'll just have to see from there.

I really did write this on the roof of my house. I really did think nothing would happen. That my parents wouldn't do anything. I mean things like this happen all the time. She'll tell me to get out. She'll tell him to leave. She'll leave. Hey she did on Sunday... I guess I regret leaving home that afternoon because after trying so, so hard to fall asleep in the numbing cold I awoke to a group of people in front of my house. My friends were scouring my neighborhood and the city and making many, many calls to everyone I know, and I *really* don't like that so many people know my issues. None of them, even my best friend, know the whole story, so I feel them judging me. The days I came back to school was so hard because I really could feel the judgments people were making. If you're reading this and you know who I am, I plead that you don't judge me, gossip, or even talk to me about it. I contemplated typing it for six weeks, then I rewrote this paragraph for two hours, and I've been thinking about the send button for a good half hour. It

was *so* hard to convince myself to submit this, please don't let me regret it. It's hard not to let anyone see the things I don't want them to see, but I think I do it well, and if they didn't know, nobody would suspect a thing. That night, six sergeants were searching, and an Amber Alert was put out. A sheriff came to talk to my parents and me, when I came home, for a *long* time, but he didn't resolve anything. He strongly suggested we go to family counseling, which I was kind of looking forward to, so we could maybe be happy again. The rest of my family, my parents, and myself as well have *a lot* of issues that remain unresolved and unidentified that nobody would suspect. But it's been a few weeks and typical of my parents they won't take the initiative to schedule that counseling session because they're that unreliable. You would think something like this might unite a family, but no improvements in our lives have been made. Shit happens. And shit is still shit.

Resources

SANTA CLARA COUNTY Mental Health
Santa Clara Valley Health & Hospital System
Suicide & Crisis Service
24 hours / 7 days

San Jose (408) 279-3312
North County (650) 494-8420
South County (408) 683-2482

1-800-SUICIDE
1-800-784-2433

A hotline for those contemplating suicide

1-800-273-TALK
1-800-273-8255

When one feels lonely and wants to talk with someone.

Why Do I Keep Doing That?: How to Free Yourself from the Bondage of Self-Destructive Emotions and Behaviors (Paperback) by [Todd M. Berntson](#) (Author) - In this book, you will learn a simple, but powerful, model to help you understand how your mind works, what drives you to do the things that you do, why you feel the way you feel and how to change what you feel and how you act.

Managing Intense Emotions and Overcoming Self-Destructive Habits: A Self-Help Manual (Paperback) by [Lorraine Bell](#) - This programme is designed to help a particular group of people who suffer with intense emotional states and have a wide range of problems.

The Five People You Meet In Heaven by Mitch Albom - Albom follows Eddie into heaven where the maintenance man sequentially encounters five pivotal figures from his life (a la *A Christmas Carol*). Each person has been waiting for him in heaven, and, as Albom reveals, each life (and death) was woven into Eddie's own in ways he never suspected. Each soul has a story to tell, a secret to reveal, and a lesson to share. Through them Eddie understands the meaning of his own life even as his arrival brings closure to theirs.

California Youth Crisis Line - 1-(800)-843-5200 Is a support coalition for teen support, encouragement, and referrals to youth needing assistance or in crisis situations.

Self-help Magazine -

<http://www.selfhelpmagazine.com/articles/growth/journalwrite.html> - An invitation for teens with self-destructive behavior to write for themselves.

Psychology Help - <http://www.psychologyhelp.com/book.htm> - A comprehensive self help manual online.

Healthy Place - http://www.healthyplace.com/communities/self_injury/site/index.htm - Online support forum for teens in need.

Postsecret.com (and the **Postsecret Books**) - A collection of postcards from around the world revealing people's deepest secrets, greatest fears, and biggest dreams. It covers everything from families, to suicide, to relationships.

© 2006 Monta Vista Verdadera

Self-Destructive Behaviors in Teenagers

Kristi Sackett, MFT

“to be nobody-but-myself in a world which is doing its best, night and day, to make me everybody else means to fight the hardest battle which any human being can fight, and never stop fighting ”

ee cummings

Why do teenagers engage in self-destructive behaviors? Sometimes, when it feels too difficult or overwhelming to be yourself, you try becoming someone else. In order to cope with the feelings and thoughts this brings up, you seek solace by doing something self-destructive. Unfortunately, engaging in these types of behaviors doesn't help your situation, or feelings, or thoughts, but instead makes your life much worse and in effect, unmanageable. Self-destructive behaviors can give a false sense of self-control in one's life, including the feeling of being okay.

There are many types of self-destructive behavior: using and/or abusing alcohol and drugs (including prescription medications), abnormal eating (starving, overeating, binge eating), self-injurious behaviors (cutting, scratching, burning, hitting self or objects, breaking bones, etc.), and suicide attempts. But what about cigarette smoking, or studying all night long, several nights in a row, or drinking caffeinated beverages/ingesting pills to stay awake, or driving recklessly and dangerously fast down the freeway, or taking pills to go to sleep, or putting yourself down for being too fat, too thin, too dumb, too

The reasons behind engaging in any type of behavior that is negative to the physical, mental, or emotional body are many. And often, these self-destructive types of actions begin in early adolescence. Some of these reasons include:

- To express emotional pain (in a physical way)
- To feel something (instead of feeling empty, numb, or dead inside)
- To punish the self
- To vent anger (by directing it at the self)
- To exert control over one's body
- To feel grounded in reality (instead of detached, depersonalized, or dissociated)
- To get attention
- To punish or take revenge against
- To get relief from psychological pain
- To release tension/stress, fear, or anxiety
- Being overwhelmed by feeling too much

Unpleasant or overwhelming emotions, thoughts, or situations can lead the individual to feel guilty, helpless, rejected, lonely, worthless, disappointed, or be filled with self-hatred and self-loathing. You might fear separation or disapproval, be angry, or feel like a failure. These unpleasant or overwhelming feelings can come in part from influential events in your life—sexual abuse, parents' divorce, violence in the home,

lack of care when a child, parental depression (or other mental/emotional problem), alcoholism, or death of a loved one. The many reasons for self-harm are, however, not as easy to pinpoint as these influential events suggest because each individual is unique in background, family environment, and friends.

Bessel van der Kolk, a psychiatrist in Boston, is a clinician, researcher, and teacher in the area of trauma and its impact on children and adults. He writes,

...neglect was the most powerful predictor of self-destructive behavior. This implies that although childhood trauma contributes heavily to the initiation of self-destructive behavior, lack of secure attachments maintains it. Those who could not remember feeling special or loved by anyone as children were least able to . . . control their self-destructive behavior.

Other therapists and psychologists talk about growing up in invalidating environments. "An invalidating environment is one in which communication of private experiences is met by erratic, inappropriate, or extreme responses (Linehan, 1993). The expression of these inner thoughts/feelings/experiences is not validated by others. Instead, it is often punished or trivialized, and the experience of painful emotions is disregarded. The individual's interpretations of her own behavior are dismissed. To be invalidated in this way tells the individual that she is wrong in how she interprets her own experiences, and even socially unacceptable. Parents may mean well but are sometimes too uncomfortable with negative emotions themselves so cannot allow their children to express them. The result is unintentional invalidation which may sound like this:

You're just not trying hard enough. "

Cheer up - snap out of it - you can get over this. "

You really did do Stop lying. "

You say no but you mean yes, I know. "

You're being hypersensitive. "

I won't let you manipulate me like this. "

Everyone experiences invalidations like these at some time or another, but for people living in an environment where these messages are constantly received, other avenues for self-expression are then sought. This often leads to self-destructive behaviors.

The main issue then is in not having healthy coping skills. To have low self-esteem, a low optimism about life in general, to use problem avoidance as a coping mechanism is to live a life where you perceive yourself as having less control over your own ability to cope. You do not see yourself as empowered to influence your own life in a positive way. It's easier to act impulsively or in tune with your mood at the time. An important part of helping someone minimize or completely stop their self-destructive habits is to help them find more positive ways of getting the same outcome. We need to find the stressors and substitute healthy coping strategies. Therapy is useful to be able to explore underlying causes and to help develop three important self-capacities: the ability to tolerate strong feelings and cope with adversity, the ability to maintain a sense of self-worth, and the ability to maintain a sense of connection to others. Especially if you feel

invisible or inauthentic, reaching out to others and connecting with them by participating in activities that may give you new meaning this may ultimately lessen your reliance on potentially damaging coping mechanisms.

When engaging in self-destructive behaviors interferes with your daily life family, school, work, relationships and are health or life threatening, a more serious approach to treatment may be necessary. Hospitalization for eating disorders, alcohol poisoning, or accidents from risk-taking, or living in a residential treatment facility for drugs or alcohol abuse may be a necessary step towards saving your life. Hopefully, your friends will let you know if your actions scare them, and you will be able to hear their concerns for you. Your friends may even decide to talk with your parents about the problem so that it gets noticed and discussed. Sometimes medication is required, when the need is properly diagnosed by a psychiatrist, to manage depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive behaviors, or racing thoughts that can lead someone to engage in self-destructive behavior. Cognitive-Behavioral therapy can help someone understand and manage their thoughts and feelings, replacing the desire to self-destruct with more positive acts.

You don't have to lift bottom with your self-destructive acts. Ask for help. Talk to your friends they want to help you. Find a therapist. If someone you care about is engaging in these behaviors, educate yourself. Go on the web, read books, talk with others at school. Don't take your friend's behavior personally. Try to understand your own feelings around their negative behavior. Be as supportive as you can by bringing the issue up with them, being available, setting limits as to what you will and will not do with them, letting them know that you care about and love them (i.e., they don't have to be drunk or high to be liked or accepted), doing something fun/distracting with them, taking care of yourself, and maybe most importantly, acknowledging their pain. It doesn't make their pain go away, but it can make it more bearable. Listen to them talk of their deep hurt, emotional pain, the things kept apart from themselves. And then encourage them to seek help, remaining hopeful about the possibilities for change.

Resources:

Google Self-Destructive Behaviors or Self-Injurious Behaviors. This leads you to such sites as www.healthyplace.com, www.nmha.org, www.facetheissue.com, www.focusas.com, and <http://teenagerstoday.com>.

Another website is: www.siari.co.uk (SIARI Self-Injury & Related Issues) in Great Britain.

The Scarred Soul by Tracy Alderman

Bodily Harm by Karen Conterio and Wendy Lader, Ph.D.

A Bright Red Scream by Marilee Strong

Cutting by Steven Levenkron

Kristi Sackett Marriage & Family Therapist
(408) 257-6662
1745 Saratoga Ave., Suite 205
San Jose, CA 95129

© 2006 Monta Vista Verdadera

Upcoming Issues and Submission Deadlines

Issue	Deadline
Drugs	6pm, Sunday, May 20 th

Ways to Submit

1. Visit us at www.verdadera.org. You can submit stories here, learn more about Verdadera, and meet staff members.
2. Stories can be turned in to **any staff member** – hardcopies or emails, anything is welcomed. Staff members are also there to help answer your questions about issues, topics, anything.
3. Email it to verdadera.entries@gmail.com

© 2006 Monta Vista Verdadera

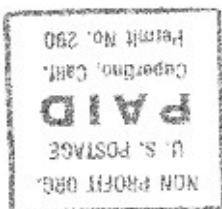


Self Destructive Behavior

September 2007

Staff: Kimberly Ang, Symrin Chawla, Paulina Dao, Gillian Decker, Anneliese Fetterman, Hermes Huang, Jyoti Kaur, Casey Ly, Chris Moe, Kate Sackett, Bhumit Shah, Rosie Wright
New Staff: Nita Chen, Natasha Desai, Dinah Draluk, Kai Kang, Serena Lee, Yifang Qiu, Robert Rodine, Evelyn Shaw, Tim Wheeler, Vicky Xu, Matisse Yoshihara
Advisor: Hung-Wei Chien, Carol Satterlee

© 2006 Monta Vista Verdadera Visit us at www.verdadera.org



Monta Vista Verdadera
21840 McClellan Road
Cupertino, CA 95014