

The self-injury epidemic

Nearly half of U.S. teenagers surveyed admit to cutting, burning, or otherwise mutilating their own bodies as a coping mechanism, says *LiveScience.com*. The disturbing finding comes from an anonymous survey by Brown University of 633 high school students from the South and the Midwest. To the surprise of researchers, 46 percent of the kids reported engaging in one or more self-mutilating behaviors—including cutting themselves with knives and blades, burning their own skin, biting themselves, and picking at the skin to draw blood. Self-injury was once associated with mental illness, but it has become increas-

ingly common among teenagers, and is glorified in some movies, songs, and Web sites. In the survey, some teens explained that hurting themselves gives them some sense of control over lives that feel out of control; others said the physical pain helps express and lessen the psychic distress they feel. Others admitted they hoped the wounds they inflicted on themselves got the attention of their parents or other people. Study leader Elizabeth Lloyd-Richardson says it's now clear that self-injury "is more prevalent among adolescents in the general population than previously thought," and she calls the findings "a wake-up call."



The cutter next door