

Treating the Self-Harming Adolescent

How to Make Technology Your Ally

MEAGAN HOUSTON

Suicidal and self-harm behaviors are among a therapist's most anxiety-provoking concerns, especially when it comes to adolescent and teen clients. Now, with social media amplifying the pressure to gain peer validation and alluring online forums that actually encourage self-harm, we're seeing an increase of these behaviors. But technology and the internet can also be used therapeutically with our young clients to address and counter self-harm behaviors. In this workshop, discover how to:

- Assess how your client's social media use might be contributing to self-harm behaviors, and why they might find online self-harm forums alluring
- The most effective strategies to reduce self-harm behaviors, including incorporating technology into treatment, such as self-harm recovery forums, self-harm reduction apps, and peer-support sites
- Involve parents and other caretakers in treatment to increase positive outcomes and engagement

*Meagan Houston, PhD, is a licensed psychologist with a private practice. She's a police psychologist for the Houston Police Department and the author of *Treating Suicidal Clients and Self Harm Behaviors: Assessments, Worksheets, and Guides for Interventions and Long-Term Care*.*

Treating the Self-Harming Adolescent

How to Make Technology Your Ally

MEAGAN HOUSTON

Learning Objectives:

1. Assess how your client's social media use might be contributing to self-harm behaviors, and why they might find online self-harm forums alluring.
2. Determine how to incorporate the use of technology into treatment planning for clients with self-harm behaviors.
3. Evaluate how to increase treatment compliance with the use of technology and educate caretakers about this benefit.

Outline:

1. Assess how your client's social media use might be contributing to self-harm behaviors, and why they might find online self-harm forums alluring.
 - Understand peer influence, socialization, and contagion effects
 - Identify what makes some adolescents more vulnerable to pro-injury and pro-suicide sites
2. Describe how to incorporate the use of technology into treatment planning for clients with self-harm behaviors.
 - Learn how to use social media site to positively influence client compliance and therapy outcomes
 - Including the benefits and costs of using technology in treatment planning and development of an informed consent form
3. Explain how to increase treatment compliance with the use of technology and educate caretakers about this benefit.
 - Learn how to educate caretakers on the stages of self-harm engagement and the usefulness of technology during various stages of this behavior
 - How to use technology as an intervention in treatment.

References:

Grunberg, P. H., & Lewis, S. P. (2014). Self-injury and readiness to recover: Preliminary examination of components of the stage model of change. *Counseling Psychology Quarterly*, 28(4), 361–371.

Marchant A, Hawton K, Stewart A, Montgomery P, Singaravelu V, Lloyd K, et al. (2017) A systematic review of the relationship between internet use, self-harm and suicidal behaviour in young people: The good, the bad and the unknown. *PLoS ONE* 12(8): e0181722
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0181722> PMID:28813437 [View Article](#) [PubMed/NCBI](#) [Google Scholar](#)

Minkkinen J, Oksanen A, Kaakinen M, Keipi T, Räsänen P. Victimization and Exposure to Pro-Self-Harm and Pro-Suicide Websites: A Cross-National Study. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*. 2017;47(1):14–26. doi: [10.1111/sltb.12258](https://doi.org/10.1111/sltb.12258) [[PubMed](#)] [[Google Scholar](#)]