



Issue 1

SUPPORT AWARENESS UNDERSTANDING RECOVERY

Feb 2008

Welcome to the first edition of the Scar Tissue Newsletter!

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It's been a strange year for us on the Scar Tissue team - we've seen our membership grow, we've revamped our sister site, [Written on The Body](#) and we've redesigned our website complete with a new logo and motto! But it doesn't stop there - we've got plans to make Scar Tissue even bigger and better (which you can read about further on)! We're also getting heavily involved in **raising awareness** of self harm for March 1st (and hope you'll take some of our ideas on board and get writing to people in your area) as well as linking up with the LifeSIGNS charity, who have kindly allowed us to publish some great publications on the site.

We've tried our best to make this first issue as exciting and vibrant as Scar Tissue and its members, and I hope you'll find it both informative and enjoyable. We've got a great range of articles and information in it for you, including information on **surviving Valentine's Day** (it's great if you've got a partner but where will the rest of us get our flowers from!); a **draft letter** you can copy and use for self injury awareness day (March 1st every year so you have no excuse for forgetting) and some posters for you to print out and put up.

As well as all that we've got the **latest news** from Scar Tissue and its members; a bit of **history** about the site as well as what our plans are for the future, and how you can **support us** and the work we do.

That's it for my editorial this issue. If you have any comments or want to see anything featured, please drop me a line at letters@scar-tissue.net.

Bethan

Scar Tissue: Past, Present and Future

Scar Tissue began life as a message board on the ezboard network, created by Julia. When I joined it was still a relatively small site with a few members, Alison (whose name I'm sure you'll recognize as Scar Tissue's other admin) being one of them. As membership of Scar Tissue grew, Ali became an admin with Julia while I became a moderator. When Julia decided the time was right for her to leave Scar Tissue, I joined Ali as an admin.

From there membership grew until at one point, I think, we had somewhere in the region of 900 members. But there were problems with ezboard and those, together with ezboard's proposed move to Yuku, meant we had to start thinking about Scar Tissue's future. After a long discussion me and Ali decided to give the members the facts and put it to a vote - should Scar Tissue stay with ezboard or branch off and host the board on our own server, with our own website? It was a close vote, but moving away from ezboard was agreed and <http://www.scar-tissue.net> was born.

That was 18 months ago and I think it's safe to say we haven't looked back. As well as [Scar Tissue](#) (which has more active members than ever and a wider range of forums on self injury related topics) we also have [Written on The Body](#) - a message board for those who support self harmers to find help and a place to talk about how they feel. The Scar Tissue website is also growing and we now have a range of articles, downloadable leaflets and links to some excellent self injury information.

So what about the future? Well, as our new motto says we want to provide **support**, raise **awareness**, foster **understanding** and, where we can, aid **recovery**. We'll do this by continuing to provide support and advice to those who self harm and the people helping them. The message boards have always been what Scar Tissue is about and they'll continue to have a strong focus placed on them, but we also want to provide first hand information about self injury so expect more leaflets, articles and advice on the site.

Watch this space.



What's in a Name?

Scar Tissue has been called that since its ezboard days but why that particular name? Well, scars (and so scar tissue) are an inherent part of self injury - no matter how you do it you're going to end up with some. Scars also mean something to the person wearing them - whether that meaning is good or bad the scar is an important part of that person's identity. But perhaps most important of all, scar tissue is strong - stronger than the skin around it and the same goes for our members. Everyone on the board has gone through something in their life that's hurt them but they've dealt with it, come out the other side and are now supporting others. That takes strength.

Written on The Body has a double meaning for me personally. Not only is it the name of one of my favourite books but it's also a name I suggested for a Scar Tissue forum on ezboard. While it wasn't used on Scar Tissue I did think it would be a good name for a support forum. Self injury is a language that's written on the body but like all foreign languages it's not always easy to understand. Written on The Body aims to give parents, carers, friends and family a place to understand that language and help them communicate with the people who use it.

Scar Tissue Online

Scar Tissue can now be found online in a variety of social networking and news websites, (including MySpace, Facebook and Bebo) and we could use your support! Check us out (links below) and add us to your friends list. If you know any other sites that would help spread the word about Scar Tissue let us know (letters@scar-tissue.net).

[Bebo](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Deviant Art](#)

[MySpace](#)

This is invite only
so you'll need to
contact me.

[Twitter](#)

[All Poetry](#)

[Blogspot](#)

[Feedburner](#)

Self Injury Awareness Day 2008



March the 1st is self injury awareness day (SIAD) but what does this mean and what can you do about it?

Much like most other health awareness days (Disability Awareness, AIDS Awareness, Stress Awareness) SIAD is the one day of the year devoted to raising the awareness of self injury around the globe. Of course we can raise awareness every day, but it's nice to have a day to focus on, particularly for things like getting the media involved.

Some things which can be done to help promote SIAD include:

- ❖ Write a letter/e-mail to your local politician telling them about SIAD (see below for a draft letter)
- ❖ Write a letter/e-mail to your local newspaper.
- ❖ See if you can appear on local radio or TV.
- ❖ Hold an event at your school, university or workplace.
- ❖ Show your support by wearing orange clothes (orange is the colour for self-injury awareness), or make a SIAD T-shirt.
- ❖ E-mail all your contacts to let them know about SIAD.

Things to think about when writing a letter:

- ❖ One letter can't suit everyone's needs. A letter which you write to a local newspaper or radio station would need to be different from one you are sending to a local school. For instance, do you want them to publish a copy of the letter from you, or do you even want to be invited to speak on local radio?
- ❖ Whether to give your contact details - do you want a reply from the person (remember that even if you want a reply a LOT of people will not reply)? When writing to a newspaper they usually require an address of some sort. If you're writing to your local MP it would certainly be good for them to know that you live in the area they represent.
- ❖ Whether you want to e-mail or send a 'real' letter. E-mails don't normally cost anything, and you can potentially contact more people. But sometimes people take more notice of a letter on paper.

- ❖ Emphasise what will be important to the person you are writing to. For instance if writing to a place of employment, emphasise the fact that self-injury does not just affect young people. If you are writing to a place where most people are male, emphasise the particular problems which males who self-injure face. If you're writing to a healthcare professional talk about any negative experiences you might have had, and how you think things can be improved in the future. Are you starting to get the idea?!
- ❖ Think about websites or further information which you can link to. It would be great if you can mention www.scar-tissue.net, in the near future we're going to have a lot more self-injury information up in here, and links to other sites which people will find useful.
- ❖ You might want to include a poster or leaflet - we will be posting some stuff up on www.scar-tissue.net that you can use (and you can see the end of this newsletter for some examples) or you could make your own.

SIAD Draft Letter

Address

Date

Dear _____(name)

I am writing to tell you about Self-Injury Awareness Day (SIAD) which takes place on 1st March every year. SIAD is an international event, and I am helping to spread the word about it to as many people as possible. There is still a lot of stigma and misunderstanding surrounding self-injury, and SIAD is a good opportunity to let people know the truth about self-injury.

Some facts about self-injury:

- Self-injury is a coping mechanism that people use to deal with emotional distress.
- People use many different ways to injure themselves, for instance cutting, burning and taking overdoses without suicidal intent. Not all self-injury results in physical scars.
- People self-injure for different reasons and these reasons can change over time.
- The physical severity of the injury does not usually relate to the amount of emotional distress that a person is in, although an individual's self-injury can become worse over time.
- Self-injury can affect anyone regardless of age, gender, religion, race and culture. Self-injury is NOT something which only affects teenaged girls.
- Self-injury can also be called other things like 'self-harm', although self-harm is often seen as a more broad term (for instance including alcohol abuse and eating

disorders). It is best to avoid using the term 'self-mutilation' as this can be offensive.

- Self-injury is not a diagnosis, but it can be a symptom of an underlying mental health problem such as depression.
- Self-injury is NOT suicidal behaviour. While some people who self-injure might go on to attempt suicide, it is emotional distress which leads to suicide, not self-injury. In fact for some people self-injury can be seen as the opposite of a suicide attempt since it is a survival strategy.
- People can not just stop self-injuring until they have alternative coping mechanisms in place. The road to recovery can be a very long and difficult one, and telling someone to stop self-injuring, or asking them to make promises to stop, is most likely to make things worse.
- All people who self-injure deserve to be treated with respect and compassion. They are not attention-seekers, and should be treated the same as any other person.
- There is help available for people who self-injure. One place to get help is an online support forum where people can talk to others who self-injure and offer support while looking for more positive ways to deal with emotional distress. A well moderated forum can be found here - www.scar-tissue.net (and an increasing amount of information related to self-injury can also be found here). It is important to be careful online as there are some dangerous sites on the Internet for instance those where people share pictures of injuries.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter, and I hope you will pass it on to anyone who might be interested.

With best wishes

_____ (name)

Don't forget to let us know how you get on with promoting self injury awareness day. Send your stories (good or bad) to letters@scar-tissue.net and we'll publish a few of the best next issue.

FAQs

Anyone who self injures will inevitably be asked the question 'Why do you do it?' Well at Scar Tissue we've made as comprehensive a list of frequently asked questions concerning self injury and depression as possible. The list includes the obvious (who, how and why) as well as the distinction between self harm and suicide; body modification and self injury and what support is there for parents and carers.

Check the FAQs out on the [website](http://www.scar-tissue.net), and if you can think of any more questions that need to be answered drop me a line at wolfbane@scar-tissue.net

Surviving Valentine's Day



As most of you know, February is the month for Valentines' Day and by the time you get this newsletter it won't be far away. While this time of year can be great if you're in a loving relationship, (we all like to be treated now and again don't we?) for those who are on their own or have recently split up from a partner it can be a rough time.

While we at Scar Tissue can't give you a magic cure, we can offer some tips and advice on how to keep safe this week.

Treat Yourself:

While your friends might be out with their partners that doesn't mean you should mope around inside the house. Make time for yourself and treat yourself to something nice - you deserve it after all. Why not...

- relax in a bubble bath with a good book
- rent a film you enjoy and spend the night on the settee
- go for a walk (exercise keeps you healthy both physically and mentally)
- arrange a Valentine's Day meal with your friends - you don't have to go to a restaurant; arrange for everyone to bring a dish and meet at your place

Focus on The Good:

While there are good points to being in a relationship there are good points to being single as well. You don't have to put up with watching football (or girlie films) when there's something else on you want to watch; you can spend Sundays in your PJs and not worry about not looking your best; you don't have to spend ages in the morning waiting for the bathroom...I could go on! So remember to focus on the good aspects of being single as well.

Misery Loves Company:

Well, the same's true for happiness. The main thing to remember is not to dwell on the fact that you're not in a relationship. A big part of being happy is being able to accept yourself and be okay in your own company; you don't need anyone else to make you feel good if you can feel good by yourself. And before you know it, Mr (or Ms) Right will be knocking at your door.

Dealing with Domestic Abuse

The flip side of Valentine's Day however, and the one most forgotten about this time of year, is the number of people caught up in abusive and violent relationships.

UK statistics show that an estimated 635,000 incidents of domestic violence happened in 2001/2 in England and Wales - 81 per cent of the victims were women and 19 per cent were men. Trying to leave an abusive relationship can be extremely hard and it's important that you try to protect yourself as much as you can, even if you're not ready to leave.

There are a number of organisations which are there to provide help, information and support if you're in an abusive relationship.

If you are ready to leave there are shelters which can give you information and provide a place of safety.

For more information on domestic abuse visit:

www.womensaid.org.uk

www.refuge.org.uk

www.endabuse.org/

And remember that you can always call 999 (911 in the US) and the emergency services. The police **will** take reports of domestic abuse seriously.

Publications

Scar Tissue has joined forces with the LifeSIGNS charity to provide a range of up to date publications covering issues such as self injury in schools and self injury awareness.

All these and more are available from the [publications page](#) of the Scar Tissue website and we hope that you'll take the time to have a read and maybe even hand them over to teachers, employers and counsellors

A big thanks has to go to Mary Hillery, one of the LifeSIGNS directors, for allowing us to use the publications and giving us this great information.

Telling Someone You Self Harm

With Valentine's Day approaching you might be thinking about telling some of the people around you; parents, partners, friends, even children, about your self harm. It's a big step to take and it's ok to feel worried or nervous. For many people self harm is a topic that's been kept hidden under white lies and long sleeves for years, and you are bound to have some doubts and questions running through your mind.

There are many different ways of telling someone about your self harm and you don't necessarily have to tell them face to face; many people find that writing down the reasons why you self harm is much easier than talking about it. But, like most things, it's best to be prepared so here are a few tips to help you on your way:

Be sensitive to the other person's feelings

It can be nearly as hard for them to hear it as it is for you to tell them. They may be feeling guilt that they did not pick it up earlier or if they did / did not do something to make you do this. Be open to misconceptions about self harm, it will give you an idea of how you can help them come to term with it.

Explain that you are telling them because you love them

Let them know that it is because you love and trust them that you feel able to tell them. Let the person you are telling know you are not trying to punish, manipulate, or guilt-trip them.

Pick a place that is private and allow plenty of time

Try to pick somewhere comfortable and private where you will not be interrupted. The person you are telling may want time to take in what you have said, but they may also want time to ask you questions and talk more about it.

Don't tell others in anger

Take things gently, don't blame the person you are talking to for your self harm. To get the love and understanding you want you will have to be sensitive and give some love to receive some back. This is important even if you think the person you are telling has contributed to the problems that led to your self harm.

Consider having someone else present

If you have a friend or therapist who understands self harm you might want them to be there also. They might be able to help you tell the person and answer questions.

Provide as much information as you can

This is crucial. The more someone knows about something, the less they fear it. Many people have misconceptions about self harm. Be prepared to give them contact points of

where they can find out more, or books that explain self harm. Be as well informed as you can so that you can answer their questions.

Be willing and prepared to answer their questions

You have to educate them about self harm. You might want to think about the questions they will ask and try to put together your answer. You should have a good idea of what you want to do about your self harm and perhaps what you want them to do. Decide what your boundaries are going to be, what is ok to talk about and what isn't. Give them a place to contact for things that you find too intrusive to talk about.

You don't need to go into the most disturbing topics in the first conversation. Avoid graphic descriptions - You can give better descriptions if they need it.

Taken from www.rethink.org

Your Guide to the Scar Tissue Website

As I've mentioned a few times in this newsletter the Scar Tissue website has been revamped. Gone are the dark colours of the old site to be replaced with white, purple and orange (the colour of self injury awareness). We've also got a brand new logo and motto summing up exactly what Scar Tissue does.

So what can you expect to find on the site? Well, the best way to find out is to check it out for yourself (www.scar-tissue.net) but here's a brief guide to what's on and where.

Message-boards - need I say we have links to Scar Tissue and Written on The Body? The most important parts of Scar Tissue are advertised on the main page, the Quick Links section and the drop down menu.

Self Injury Information - the site is full of great information on self injury (including links, reports and frequently asked questions) which can be found in the menus.

Articles and Publications - with our promise to provide more information on self injury we've got a load of downloadable leaflets and publications, found in the drop down menus.

Resources and Helplines - we know how hard it can be to find the right information so we've created a list of useful phone numbers and websites.

We also have a news in brief section on the right of the screen (all Scar Tissue Related news is posted there as it happens) as well as a quick links section where everything you might need can be found at the touch of a button (this is also updated regularly so keep checking to see what links are promoted each month).

So please check out the site and let me know what you think. If you've got any ideas, suggestions or comments please let me know (wolfbane@scar-tissue.net).

Supporting Scar Tissue

Scar Tissue is a non-profit organisation which aims to provide information on self injury and give support to those dealing with it.

If you would like to support Scar Tissue there are several things you can do; the most obvious is to continue using the site and the message-boards, but you can also help by spreading the word. Tell your family, friends and colleagues about us or download some of our [posters](#) and display those. We can also be found on various other websites, including MySpace, Facebook and Bebo, and we could use your support there (see page 3 for links).

Like most non-profit organisations, Scar Tissue is funded by myself and Alison, who pay for the site with our own money and dedicate our time to running it. If you would like to help cover the cost of running Scar Tissue (all money raised will go back into running the site) you can buy our self injury awareness wristbands and keyrings. The wristbands are made of orange silicone and are embossed with the Scar Tissue name and website address (coming in adult and youth sizes), while the keyrings have the Scar Tissue logo and website address on them. Check them out (and order online) at our [services](#) page.

You can also take Scar Tissue with you wherever you go and help raise awareness with our online shop at Cafe Press! We have a range of items for sale (including mugs, t-shirts and teddy bears!) that promote the site and all profits go straight back into running it. You'll find us at cafepress.com/Scar_Tissue.

Scar Tissue News in Brief

Scar Tissue on The Volts Show - I've been doing some publicity work in Wales this year (even though we are only halfway through the second month!) and have made quite a good list of contacts so far. This list includes a very nice radio programme controller called Paul, who runs the radio station at Morriston Hospital and broadcasts online to an audience of about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a million each Sunday and Tuesday (www.thevoltsshow.com). I'm pleased to say that I'm getting involved with the show and on a visit to the station in January got my first taste of fame. I got called into an interview (with only 10 minutes' warning might I add) where I had a chat about a few topics, self injury being one of them, and promoted the Scar Tissue website and message-boards. Check out the interview on the website (coming as soon as I've converted the file type).

Self Injury Awareness Cymru - As well as running Scar Tissue with Ali there is another project I'm working on as well! Some of you might have seen the news about the spate of suicides in Bridgend, and after much research into the provision in Wales for a self

injury / suicide prevention strategy (and disappointment in not finding any) I've decided to do something about it. [Self Injury Awareness Cymru](http://SelfInjuryAwarenessCymru.org.uk) is a bilingual site aimed at providing information on self harm in Wales. It's still in the baby stages at the moment but I've got a lot of hopes for it. I'm looking into running it as a charity so if anyone has any advice to offer (or can translate it into Welsh for me!) drop me a line at bethan.jones@selfinjuryawarenesscymru.org.uk.

Birmingham University's Web Resource - I've also been doing some work for Birmingham University over the last few months. The university is setting up an interdisciplinary web resource to provide information on self injury to students in several of its departments. I've been lucky enough to attend some meetings to discuss the resource, and have just finished some research on websites that fit the learning objectives. I should be hearing soon about the next step and will let you know what happens.

Research Projects on ST - We had our first request for a research project a few days ago (funnily enough from a Birmingham University student)! The link to the questionnaire can be found on Scar Tissue so feel free to follow the link and complete it (if it helps self injurers it can't harm), but the reason both me and Ali are excited about it because it really shows that people who don't know about Scar Tissue are Googling the site, reading, and using it - long may it continue.

Last But Not Least - Finally it's a big welcome to Mary Hillery who's come on board to share her expertise with Scar Tissue. Some of you might know Mary from her work with the LifeSIGNS charity and now Scar Tissue is benefiting from her knowledge. You'll find Mary's articles on the Scar Tissue site, with more to come.

That's it for this edition. I hope you've enjoyed reading, and that we'll see you on the site and boards. Don't forget to let us know how your Self Injury Awareness Day went, and we'll publish a selection of comments next issue. You can contact us at letters@scar-tissue.net.

Until next time, stay safe.
Bethan

www.scar-tissue.net: Support Awareness Understanding Recovery

