



SEARCH



News

Business

Sports

Entertainment

Lifestyle

Health

Travel

Don't miss: Back to School The Next Spike Michael Jackson Top 100 best selling cars Swine Flu 2010 Olympics

Self-harm victims call for support

Health, education, police and social services are ill-equipped to deal with people who purposefully hurt themselves, several women told a Saskatoon forum on self-harm Monday.

BY THE STARPHOENIX (SASKATOON) JUNE 4, 2008

Health, education, police and social services are ill-equipped to deal with people who purposefully hurt themselves, several women told a Saskatoon forum on self-harm Monday.

A lack of knowledge and qualified specialists means there is little dignity when people who hurt themselves seek help, a Winnipeg woman says.

They could have been intimidated or busy, but health-care workers have bandaged Tonya Tabobondung's slashed wrists without so much as a comforting word, she said.

"I just wanted someone to say, 'You're going to be OK,' " she said.

Earlier that day, when the sex-trade worker and drug addict attempted suicide, police arrived at her home and held her at gunpoint in her pyjamas before an ambulance arrived.

After crying for two hours in an emergency department waiting room, wrists bandaged, Tabobondung got discouraged and left. Police put a warrant out for her arrest and when they brought her back to the hospital, she was isolated in a guarded room, alone again. A nurse wouldn't let her watch TV because she was "a runner."

Tabobondung is one of several Winnipeg women featured in the documentary Pictures of Self-Harm, which tells the story of an art studio where women living in poverty and distress come to express their pain and frustration through art, rather than harmful behaviour. Saskatoon could use a community service such as the Crossing Communities Art Project, several participants said, because it helps fill the gaps left by institutional approaches.

Monday night's forum, organized by the University of Saskatchewan research chair in substance abuse, was a chance for women to talk about what self-harm is and why they do it.

"I never feel comfortable unless I'm uncomfortable," Tabobondung said.

STORY TOOLS

E-mail this Article

Print this Article

Share this Article

Font: A A A A

MOST POPULAR

CANADA.COM

E-MAILED

COMMENTED

- New jerseys mean big cash
- Family of dead autistic boy takes police to task
- Doctors' debate opens door to private delivery of health care
- Strengthening Hurricane Bill reaches Category 4 status
- Family of dead autistic boy takes police to task
- GM calls Canadian auto workers back to work

MORE STORIES



Silver for Priscilla Lopes-Schliep

Priscilla Lopes-Schliep of Whitby, Ont., captured the silver medal Wednesday in the women's 100-metre hurdles

7 MINUTES AGO

- Obama admin to transfer six Guantanamo prisoners
- Codeine after tonsil surgery can be fatal for toddlers

ALSO ON DRIVING.CA



Birth of a track star: New Porsche 911 GT3 RS

The long-awaited 2010 Porsche 911 GT3 RS, the most track ready Porsche off the showroom floor,

Although several speakers talked about cutting themselves to relieve emotional pain and to get attention from peers and teachers, "self-harm" includes a huge range of behaviour such as substance abuse, staying in an unhealthy relationship, working in the sex-trade and contemplating and attempting suicide.

Public-service workers across industries seem to lack knowledge about self-harm, University of Winnipeg sociology Prof. Cathy Fillmore told the forum.

Physical comfort and kind words would go a long way to aid people in distress, she said. Emergency rooms need a specialized health-care worker or social worker available for these kinds of cases, she said.

Winnipeg psychiatrist, artist and author Dr. Jeanne Randolph said the current institutional approach to helping people who hurt themselves has "incredible limits" that restrict the communication that's often most helpful to people in distress.

"There are no substitutes for personal relationships," she said.

Rand Teed, a former high school teacher from Lumsden who now educates youth about substance abuse, said society needs to recognize that people who self-harm aren't bad, immoral or stupid -- it's another brain disease, such as addiction.

Tabobondung said there should be long-term substance abuse recovery programs just for women -- she's been sexually assaulted and threatened in the co-ed programs.

Both she and Winnipeg student Jackie Traverse said more help for their mothers could have broken the cycle of self-harm.

Traverse's earliest memory was opening a door to find her mother crying and her and several friends cutting themselves. Traverse began cutting herself at 13. "All this crap is happening, so I might as well do it to myself," she said.

She dabbed tears from her eyes as she talked about trying to find help for her 13-year-old daughter, who now cuts herself.

"It's been passed down from mother to mother to daughter," she said.

Saskatoon elder Sylvia Petit, who survived the sex trade and suicidal thoughts to become a great-grandmother, told women at the forum to persist in telling their stories.

"Don't stop talking," she said. "Talk, talk, talk until they listen to you."

jfrench@sp.canwest.com

© (c) CanWest MediaWorks Publications Inc.

[E-mail this Article](#) [Print this Article](#) [Share this Article](#)

goes on sale in Canada in March sporting a larger, 3.8-
...

- [Blog: Hyundai Canada offers cash for your clunker, but is it enough?](#)
- [Road Test: 2009 Pontiac Solstice Roadster](#)

canada.com Newsletter

SIGN UP TO RECEIVE:

- The weeks top stories
- Contest and promotions
- Global TV's top shows online

[SIGN UP](#)

[Our Privacy Statement](#)



Get your
Masters
or your
Bachelors
degree online
at UCAN!

[FIND OUT HOW!](#)

UNIVERSITY CANADA

ADS BY GOOGLE

[Stop Your Divorce](#)

[Fibromyalgia Center](#)

[How To Survive Infidelity](#)

New Alternative to Counseling.
As Seen on CNN, NBC, & Fox News
www.StopYourDivorce.com

Our Medical Doctors specialize in
fibro. Sign up for free newsletter.
www.FibroAndFatigue.com

Help Yourself First, Then Learn To
Make Your Relationship Stronger!
HowtoSurviveTheAffair.com

INSIDE **canada.com**



Saying sorry
with diamonds?



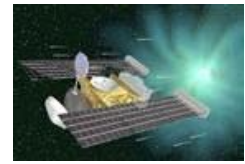
Britney's Circus,
her life or her
tour or both?



Celine Dion
pregnant at 41:
Report



New jerseys
mean big cash



Building block of
life found on
comet

[Home](#) • [News](#) • [Business](#) • [Sports](#) • [Entertainment](#) • [Lifestyle](#) • [Health](#) • [Travel](#) • [Technology](#)

DON'T MISS

- [Back to School](#)
- [The Next Spike](#)
- [Michael Jackson](#)
- [Top 100 best selling cars](#)
- [Swine Flu](#)
- [2010 Olympics](#)

MOST POPULAR

- [New jerseys mean big cash](#)
- [Archie wedding bells make comic-book history](#)
- [Williams shocked at Rogers Cup](#)

FORMATS

- [Sitemap / RSS](#)
- [Contests](#)
- [Blogs](#)
- [Photo Galleries](#)
- [Videos](#)

CANADA.COM

- [About Us](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Work for Us](#)
- [Advertise with Us](#)
- [FAQs](#)

TOOLS

- [Search for a Job](#)
- [Buy/Sell a Car](#)
- [Real Estate Listings](#)
- [Place a Classified Ad](#)
- [E-mail Alerts](#)
- [My Account](#)

SEARCH