

Statement Of Intent

I became interested in producing *CUT* after learning that a good friend's daughter had been injuring herself for 4 years. While looking for information and resources, I found representations of the behavior to be somewhat distorted and exploited, and that teens were being judged and objectified instead of reached out to. Yes, there were accessible resources, however most people gathered information from the media – which often sensationalized and exploited the behavior without sharing the importance of understanding many of the underlying issues that contribute to someone struggling with self-injury.

My background is rooted in harm-reduction outreach, arts advocacy and music/media production. All three areas of training strongly influenced how I approached the making of *CUT*. I wanted to present a project that would help communicate the perspective and experiences of teens in a way that was compassionate, non-judgmental and educational - media that could open the lines of communication hindered by stigma and stereotypes. To do this, I chose stories, poetry and art to weave the film together - allowing audiences to engage in a way that is both personal and universal. I believe these vital artistic threads are missing links in our understanding of self-injury.

Early in production I contacted Karen Conterio, CEO, Director and Co-Founder (along with Dr. Wendy Lader) at S.A.F.E. Alternatives® - a nationally recognized treatment approach, professional network, and educational resource base, committed to helping achieve an end to self-injurious behavior. S.A.F.E.'s knowledge and philosophy became a resource and sounding board for the project that was very important during production. The organization's 25 years of experience is an important contribution to the mental health field and I'm fortunate to have an interview with Karen Conterio included in *CUT*. Karen's perspective and expertise strengthen and provide a broad context for many of the stories shared by the film's participants.

When *CUT* premiered at the Wisconsin Film Festival in 2007, the enthusiastic response led me to pursue screenings as a vehicle to market the DVD and raise awareness simultaneously. College, high school and conference events set in motion a wave of interest and led to an understanding that previously did not exist. Events also put a stamp of validation on the prevalence of self-injury and sent a strong message to students and faculty that the veil of silence could be lifted. Each event I host (or co-host with student groups, departments or counseling/health services) draws back a curtain and provides an important place to start – dialog, acceptance, education.

I believe that media and the power of sharing stories and experiences is one of many crucial paths to take at this time. I hope that you find the film useful to you in some way.

Please contact me via the website if you have questions about this project.

Wendy Schneider