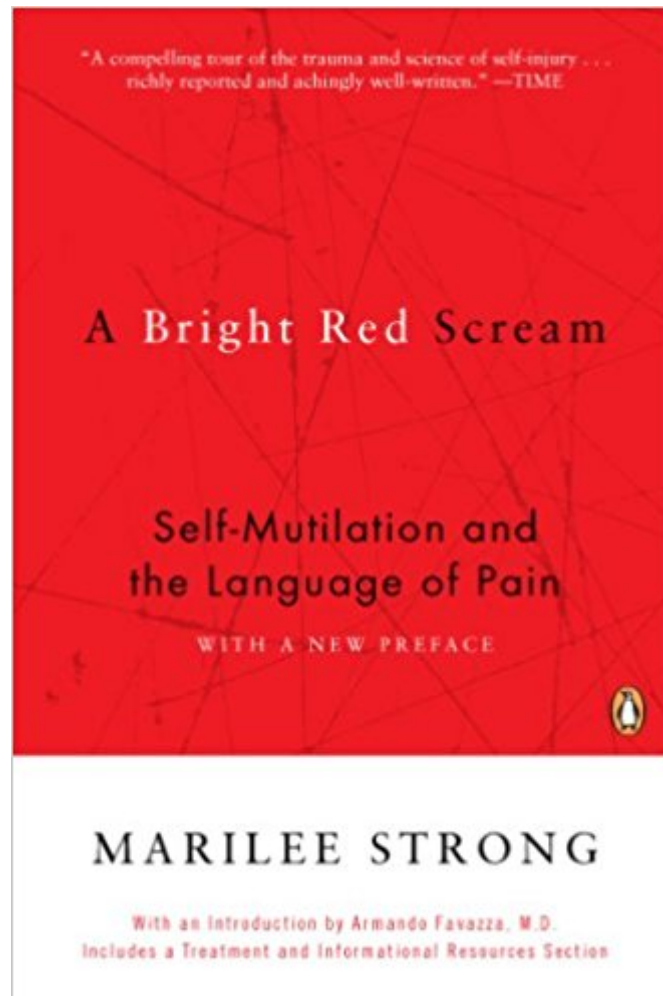




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# **A Bright Red Scream: Self-Mutilation And The Language Of Pain**



## Synopsis

Self-mutilation is a behavior so shocking that it is almost never discussed. Yet estimates are that upwards of eight million Americans are chronic self-injurers. They are people who use knives, razor blades, or broken glass to cut themselves. Their numbers include the actor Johnny Depp, Girl Interrupted author Susanna Kaysen, and the late Princess Diana. Mistakenly viewed as suicide attempts or senseless masochism--even by many health professionals--"cutting" is actually a complex means of coping with emotional pain. Marilee Strong explores this hidden epidemic through case studies, startling new research from psychologists, trauma experts, and neuroscientists, and the heartbreaking insights of cutters themselves--who range from troubled teenagers to middle-age professionals to grandparents. Strong explains what factors lead to self-mutilation, why cutting helps people manage overwhelming fear and anxiety, and how cutters can heal both their internal and external wounds and break the self-destructive cycle. *A Bright Red Scream* is a groundbreaking, essential resource for victims of self-mutilation, their families, teachers, doctors, and therapists.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A bright red scream" is how one of the subjects Marilee Strong interviews in this chilling yet compassionate study of self-mutilation describes the sensation of intentionally inflicting pain upon oneself. It is a compulsion that, while shocking and bewildering to most people, affects 2 million or more Americans and countless others around the globe--one of whom, the late Princess Diana, also

suffered from the eating disorders that characterize between 35 to 80 percent of all cutters. Rejecting the classic psychiatric wisdom that views self-mutilation as a species of suicidal behavior, Strong links the phenomenon instead to the will to live--often in the face of such overwhelming childhood abuse that the resulting dissociative behaviors are something akin to posttraumatic stress disorder. Strong touches on other issues as well: Why are most cutters women? And is the current fascination with tattooing and piercing, from its most extreme forms in the "alternative" culture to its growing mainstream acceptance, a sublimation of the cutters' instinct? Through interviews with more than 50 self-injurers, Strong tells the moving story not only of their rage and self-punishment, but also of the courageous journey towards reintegration. (The book also contains an introduction by psychiatrist Armando R. Favazza, author of *Bodies Under Siege*, one of the leading clinical experts on self-mutilation.) --Patrizia DiLucchio --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Strong's research into "cutters" combines journalistic passion with academic integrity. Through dozens of interviews conducted for a 1993 San Francisco Focus article, she explores the reasons that lead over two million Americans to injure themselves regularly and deliberately with such items as knives, razor blades and broken glass. Although most cutters are young women who have been emotionally, sexually, or physically abused as children, Strong's research shows that this specific type of self-harm also appears in other groups. Most interviewees here claim to use cutting to distance themselves from pain and rage, or to "feel something" after years of abuse have left them emotionally numb. The powerful first-person stories, in which the cutters describe their ritualistic methods and somewhat addictive cravings for seeing their own blood, highlight the problem and ultimately lead to understanding and sympathy for those who suffer from the disorder. (A foreword from University of Missouri-Columbia psychiatrist Armondo Favazza, author of *Bodies Under Siege*, discusses past difficulties in bringing the disorder to the public's attention.) In addition to presenting a psychological focus, Strong also investigates possible neurological and chemical changes that both abuse and cutting can cause. A brief foray into comparison with the American tattooing trend and scarification in other cultures proves to be the book's only weak point, drawing on hypotheses rather than concrete fact. The author recovers quickly, however, when she explores the comprehensive programs and treatments available to cutters. Riveting and dynamically written, this book is an important addition to psychological literature. Agent, Sandra Dijkstra. Author tour. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book is great for cutters as it helps to know others "get it." The author does not judge, but instead attempts to explain cutting. I have shared this book with others - therapists, loved ones - and have been told it has helped them understand better and worry less. This book does a great job of explaining that cutting is NOT a suicide attempt. It gives the reader some insight into the mind of a cutter.

Strong is a journalist who has written a comprehensive and powerful book on self-injury. I have read this more than once and get something new out of it each time. The best book on self-injury I have ever read. It is NOT written from the perspective of a sufferer but rather an observer. Read the NY Times article she references for extra insight into the disorder.

This is the only book I have ever found that really breaks down, and explains cutting, and everything behind it. I am a former cutter, and I recommend this to anyone suffering from it, or anyone who is wanting to understand cutting. This book might be a trigger for some, because of the personal stories in it, so be careful.

Despite the fact that I am male, every aspect of this book feels like it directly applied to me. I don't think reading this is going to help me to stop my self destructive behaviors, but being able to explain the why will certainly help the people in my life sympathize with what I'm going through.

This book is very informative and takes a deep look into the minds of those that self-harm. I am the parent of several "cutters" and this book helped me to understand and offer more compassion to my children. It was recommended to me because I am starting a Parent to Parent support group for those that have children that self-harm/mutilate. I have already recommended this book to several therapists and psychologists and it is among my recommended reading list for parents. My own children are itching to read this as a means of emotional justification that our family is not alone.

This is not written by a psychiatrist, but it comes with high accolades from the nation's top psychiatric experts on this most perplexing problem. It confirmed for me what I thought was going on, namely that my child has severe abandonment issues due to being at the center of a custody battle when she was only six years old. I sent a copy to her father, who has custody but is in no way fit to raise a child, but I doubt he read it. This is not a feel-good book. It is disturbing and upsetting,

especially so for me because I am powerless to change anything for my child. At the heart of (mostly girls) who do this is an intense fear of abandonment and self-loading, brought on by either abuse, abandonment and/or neglect. Incredibly sad, just heartbreaking. The book is illuminating, but this is not a topic any parent wants to read about out of necessity.

Not very helpful... story after story of cutters... not much on what to do to stop it.

This is truly an amazing book, opening up the very sad and alas widespread world too many men and women (more women and more among the young) experience as part of their "normal" lives. Self imposed bodily mutilation, from cutting to a variety of other modes, is discussed from the perspective of the actors as well as those working to help. Marilee Strong exposes a part of our world that for far too long has remained in the shadows.

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