

## **SIGNIFICANT ADULTS' KNOWLEDGE OF AND ATTITUDES TO ADOLESCENT SELF-HARM**

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The adults who surround young people in their daily social life (parents and teachers) have a crucial possibility of preventing the young persons' self-harm and suicidal behaviour through their attitudes and their acts.

A total of 3898 parents completed a questionnaire on adolescent self-harm and their children completed one on their own self-harm. Thus, it is possible to compare the responses of each young person and his or her parents. 305 class teachers completed a questionnaire on adolescent self-harm opening up the possibility of studying significant adults and their knowledge, attitudes and reflections on prevention seen in the light of the attitudes and reflections of the young people themselves.

Only a minority of the young people's parents know of their child's self-harm, and their attitude to self-harm and prevention varies depending on whether they have any knowledge. Both parents and teachers misinterpret the young people's intentions and acts. Parents and teachers do not consider the young people's acts to be as serious as the young persons themselves indicate.

The basis of general prevention of self-harm and suicidal behaviour is the involvement of parents and teachers. The adults who surround the young people in their everyday lives have the possibility of focussing on the young persons' vulnerability and social network, and the school has the possibility of focussing on destructive behaviour and ostracism. Ostracism humiliates and contributes to giving solidarity and care for others a lower priority.