



RETT SYNDROME ASSOCIATION UK

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We are worried about a young woman at our unit who frequently engages in self harming behaviours. Do you have any suggestions as to how can help her?

Repetitive behaviours such as hand biting and wringing can result in injury. These are often difficult to inhibit as they appear to be neurologically driven. Some families have found that gloves or skating mitts can prevent injury. It is always worth investigating the behaviour closely using observations to understand the triggers and maintaining factors for such behaviours. Sometimes emotions such as anxiety affect the behaviour; for other individuals the behaviour may increase when there is a lack of stimulation. All children need to be able to occupy themselves for a while, whilst the adults around them engage in routine chores. A paper by a team of psychologists in Ireland provides a very nice example of how to establish some preferred object or activities for someone with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD).

Ref: CAREY Y, O'REILLY M. NOONAN WALSH P & LANCIANI G (1996) Identifying preferred activities for a student with severe and multiple disabilities. The Irish Journal of Psychology 17,3,251-257

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