

New Zealander says eating finger was cry for help

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A mentally ill New Zealand man who cut off and ate his own finger in a rare case of self-cannibalism has described his action as a cry for help but "ultimately, a very stupid idea".

The man's case was outlined last month in the medical journal *Australasian Psychiatry*, which described it as one of only eight documented instances of self-cannibalism recorded in the world.

The report's authors, forensic psychiatrist Erik Monasterio and clinical psychologist Craig Prince, said that the man applied a tourniquet to his little finger, cut it off with a jigsaw, cooked it with vegetables and ate it.

He was suffering from moderate depression, insomnia and [suicidal thoughts](#) at the time of the 2009 incident, they said.

The journal reported said the man, aged 28 at the time, was not psychotic when he was assessed in hospital and had not consumed drugs or alcohol.

However, the *New Zealand Herald* reported Wednesday that the man told the paper he did experience a psychotic episode at the time but it had passed by the time he reached the hospital.

He expressed frustration at his difficulty in receiving medical help for psychosis, saying he struggled to convince mental health workers his condition was not simply depression.

"I have lost all faith in the system. You have to say you are going to kill someone or kill yourself (to receive attention)," he told the newspaper.

The man, who described himself as a Buddhist vegetarian, said he now regretted eating his finger.

He said his action was a desperate attempt to get attention from mental health authorities and he hoped his case would encourage others with mental illness to seek help.

He told the newspaper his current flatmates did not "freak out" when he told them what he had done but they were curious about the experience.

"They asked me 'what did it taste like? Does it taste like chicken or pork?," said the man, who was not named.

He said he had told his flatmates he did not know as "I haven't eaten chicken or pork in such a long time".

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