Description vs Evaluation: An Example:

Our minds are wonderful tools that help us solve all kinds of problems. However, they can also cause problems for us. Let's look at a simple example of how our mind works. If I ask you to describe the properties of an object, like this page for example (whether it is printed on paper or displayed on a screen), I am sure you could do it. You could describe the shape of each letter, the color of the box surrounding this text, and the sounds that the letters represent to form words. You could do this in a way that any person you described it to, would agree. Such as this description, "this text box consists of 4 sides". No one would argue with that.

At another level though, your mind does more than just describe; it evaluates. These evaluations are based on your personal history, memories, personality, etc. People will evaluate the same thing in very different ways. Let's look at this text box again. How does your mind evaluate it? Is it good, bad, ugly, beautiful, poorly designed, etc.? When I notice the evaluation my mind gives of this text box, it says, "This text box is simple and pleasing to look at." I would bet that your evaluation was a little different and so too would another person's evaluation.

So, what does this have to do with hair pulling and urges?

Well, your child's mind does the same thing. It both describes and evaluates his/her thoughts, emotions, and urges related to pulling. We are trying to get better at noticing the urges for what they are, simple bodily sensations (such as tension, itching, or pressure) and nothing more.

However, like all of us, your child's mind does not stop at the description. It also evaluates these experiences and tells a story about them. Perhaps the bodily sensations are "bad," or "scary," or "too much." We are working to notice these evaluations for what they are—stories that your child's mind tells. They may seem very real, but with work we can practice noticing them for the bodily sensations and nothing more.

Homework

Exercises – work to build a habit.

Stimulus control – keep it up!

How you can help: When talking to your child about urges, try not to buy into the stories that he/her (and you) have about them. They aren't "good" or "bad," they just are. Look for descriptions of the urges and use those.