What is Trichotillomania?

Trichotillomania is a condition where individuals repeatedly pull out their own hair leading to noticeable hair loss.

People with trichotillomania often experience anxiety and/or depression symptoms in addition to their hair pulling behavior and urges to pull.

How Prevalent is Trichotillomania?

It is more common than you might think. Estimates range from 0.6% to 3.4% of adults. That means that somewhere between 17,400 to 98,600 people in Utah alone have trichotillomania.

Automatic verses Focused Hair Pulling

Most people with trichotillomania engage in two different types of pulling behavior. We call these automatic and focused. Both will be addressed in this program.

It will be helpful for you to familiarize yourself with these terms. At this time, your child likely will not be able to tell the difference between automatic and focused pulling. That's okay.

Automatic pulling

This is pulling that happens outside of your child's awareness. This often occurs when people are engaged in an activity such as, watching TV, reading, or daydreaming. Treatment will involve exercise to help your child become more aware in the moments.

Focused pulling

This is pulling that happens when your child is aware of what they are doing. Usually, focused pulling is done in order to reduce some type of urge, tension, emotion, or anxiety. Treatment will involve using exercises to stop pulling and learning to make space for these sensations and experiences.

Why Does My Child have Trichotillomania?

Research is not at a point where we can answer that question. A mix of biological and environmental factors likely play into the problem. Regardless of the cause though, we know that psychological treatment (like this program) can have a meaningful impact on trichotillomania.

How Can I Best Help My Child Succeed in Treatment?

Homework

What people do between sessions can make or break treatment. Some form of homework will be given after each session. Do what you can to set the stage for them to engage in this homework. This might include reminders, encouragement, or rewards.

Daily check in

Daily tracking is essential to monitor progress and help us know what is working or not working. Please do your best to complete this short check in each day.

Stay positive

Treatment can be hard—for your child and for you. Remember that change takes time and that it won't always go perfectly. Frame mistakes as learning opportunities and keep moving forward.

Your role

Focus on being more of a supporting player on your child's team and less their coach. You are there to help and support in whatever way you both decide on and that you think fits best for them. Ask how you can be their best team player. Ask for permission to remind them about homework. Ask how they would like for you to handle times when you catch them pulling. Your support can make a huge difference, but only if they are willing to have it.