PANDAS: Association with Trichotillomania?
Jon E. Grant, JD, MD, MPH, TLC Scientific Advisory Board Member
Brian L. Odlaug, MPH
University of Minnesota, Minneapolis

Editor’s note: Recently the internet and parent message boards were abuzz about a possible link between strep infections and the development of OCD, Tourette’s Syndrome and, by default, trichotillomania. We asked TLC Scientific Advisory Board member Dr. Jon Grant and his colleague Brian Odlaug to help us understand how this research applies to BFRB onset.

Published evidence indicates a possible etiological association between group A beta-hemolytic Streptococcus (GABHS) infection and a subset of individuals with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), Tourette’s syndrome and autism. The research suggests that antibodies that develop against a subgroup of Streptococcus pyogenes may cross-react with human brain tissue in genetically susceptible children. It has been hypothesized that some individuals develop OCD, Tourette’s Syndrome, or autistic spectrum disorders as a result of this post-infection autoimmune response. Some animal research also supports the hypothesis that some neuropsychiatric syndromes may be triggered by direct action of GABHS-associated antibodies on the brain.

Many individuals with trichotillomania, therefore, have questioned the possible association of hair pulling with infectious causes. This question has arisen due to the research concerning OCD and the phenomenon known as PANDAS. To address the question of trichotillomania’s relationship to PANDAS, a brief review of the PANDAS literature, and its limitations, is required.

What is PANDAS?
PANDAS is an acronym for ‘Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal Infections’ and is a highly publicized and controversial issue amongst clinicians and researchers. PANDAS describes the state of onset of neuropsychiatric illness, most commonly OCD or tic disorders, in children following recurrent GABHS pharyngitis (what we commonly refer to as ‘strep throat’). Coined by Susan Swedo and colleagues in 1998, PANDAS defines a subgroup of individuals with OCD or tics who have five core characteristics: 1) the presence of OCD and/or a tic disorder; 2) onset of symptoms before puberty; 3) abrupt onset of symptoms or a pattern of dramatic recurrent symptom exacerbations and remissions; 4) association with neurological abnormalities (e.g., motoric hyperactivity, choreiform movements, jerks of the extremities, slurred speech, clumsiness, handwriting deterioration); and 5) a temporal association between GABHS infection and OCD/tic onset.

As we bring in the New Year many people have the goal of making a significant change in their life. If you struggle with a body focused repetitive behavior (BFRB), that goal might be increased control over picking or pulling. In Part One of the Personal User’s Guide, we discussed how building a healthy foundation through nutrition, exercise and sleep are important to good health and decreased urges. We also looked at the balance of how we live our life in comparison to how we would like to spend our time and energy. Spirituality was also briefly discussed as a tool to improve our experience. Any one of these areas could be the focus for changes in 2012. Do not overwhelm yourself, narrow your goals to what makes sense to you. The purpose of the Personal User’s Guide is to serve as a self-guiding compass. It is not a final destination, but a process of change.

Here are some other things to consider in planning your route in your personal change process.

My Mind
We are all actors in our internal soap operas. Our thoughts are incredibly powerful, yet we tend to just accept our internal script without much editing. Cognitive behavioral therapists encourage the process of cognitive restructuring. This involves identifying, challenging and replacing thoughts that are not true or helpful to us. It is good to look inside of your mind to make any helpful editorial changes to your internal script about BFRBs. Thoughts can involve perceptions of self control, permission-giving thoughts, perfectionism, and/or social judgments to name a few. Just like a soap opera, there tends to be many areas of dialog that can use some editing to more accurately reflect reality.
From the Editor

Leslie Lee

Early last December, 11-year-old Chloe from Minneapolis posted a youtube video soundtracked to one of her favorite songs. Within a few days, the video had over 100,000 views! The vitality of this video was sparked in large part by the songwriters re-posting the video to their own websites and Facebook pages.

Also last month, 15-year-old TLC member Claire Cameron was featured in a national teen magazine. The focus of the article, Trichotillomania. Again, the web was buzzing about Claire’s recovery story—from Facebook to blog posts to message boards.

These are just the two most RECENT stories I have about young people standing up, standing proud, and demanding a difference for themselves.

The explosion of Chloe’s video inspired a slew of video responses. Claire’s bravery inspired many other teen girls to speak up about trich in their own communities. These girls aren’t going to be shamed by this disorder. Instead, they are doing their part to make sure future boys and girls aren’t shamed either.

I say we honor the bravery of these young women by making 2012 The Year of Making Noise. It doesn’t take much to create some BFRB buzz in your local community...drop off some brochures at the local college health center or donate a copy of Bad Hair Life or Hair Pulling Habit and You to your local library. Maybe you are ready to be a bit more public: post a link to trich.org on your Facebook page, host a local meet-up for trichsters and picksters, pitch your story to your local paper or weekly arts rag, or even make your own youtube video. I want to know how YOU are inspired to make some noise this year...if you need some ideas, give me a call!

On another note, registration is now open for THE largest event focused entirely on hair pulling and skin picking disorders. Turn to pages 8-9 for more information on this year’s program.

If Chicago is not in your cards for the year, we have a host of other events coming up, all across the country. I hope to see you at one of them.

Cheers to a healthy and happy 2012!

~Leslie

Silver Spring, MD One-Day Workshop

February 11, 2012, Silver Spring, MD

Learn real tools for recovery with the authors of The Hair Pulling Habit and You, and BFRB treatment experts Ruth Goldfinger Golomb, MD, and Sherrie Mansfield Vavrichek, LCSW-C, when they join TLC Founder and recovered puller/picker Christina Pearson to help you end the cycle of shame and isolation.

Presentations for adults, teens and parents will cover important new research findings to experiential hands-on exercises that can help shift perspectives. This one-day session offers a powerful educational experience for sufferers, family members, and interested professionals. Develop new insight into why it can be so difficult to alter these behaviors, and also learn about emerging understanding of more effective ways to both live with, and heal from, these problems.

When: Saturday, Feb. 11, 2012, 10:00am - 5:00pm
Where: Crowne Plaza Hotel, Silver Spring, MD 20910
For more information, visit http://tlcmd2012.eventbrite.com or call 831-457-1004.

TLC’s Annual Conference

May 4-6, 2012 | Chicago, IL

Registration is now open for THE largest event focused entirely on hair pulling and skin picking disorders. Turn to pages 8-9 for more information on this year’s program.

Non-TLC Events:

Winter Park, FL Workshop with Cheryn Salazar

hosted by Mary Travis, PhD
February 18, 2012

Join author, trichster (and parent of 2 trichsters), and founding TLC member Cheryn Salazar for a day-long workshop on learning to cope with the emotional and physical aspects of hair pulling disorders. Open to those with hair pulling or skin picking disorder, parents, spouses and/or support persons.

When: Saturday, Feb. 18, 2012, 9:00am to 5:00pm
Where: St. John Lutheran Church
1600 S. Orlando Ave. (US HWY 17-92), Winter Park, FL
Cost: $85.00/person
For More Information:
Contact Dr. Mary Travis, Travis Psycho-Educational Services
407-644-1522
dmary@travisps.com

Volunteer Opportunities

Online Support Group Moderators
Under the direction of Christina Pearson, Online Support Group Moderators will assist staff with the moderation of TLC’s various online support groups. Volunteers should be a current member of at least one of TLC’s online support groups, be fluent in internet-group protocols, and available for approximately five hours a week. Duties include daily approval of new members, monitoring posts each day, reporting questions, issues, or problems to TLC staff when they arise.

Salesforce Database Developer

Hone your Salesforce Database skills and build your developer portfolio! TLC is seeking an experienced Salesforce developer who can assist staff in the development of customizations and extensions of Salesforce. This volunteer will work directly with TLC Membership Services and the Executive Director to help TLC improve its use of Salesforce and relevant applications.

Office Volunteer Intern

TLC needs a volunteer to assist with day-to-day operations at TLC Headquarters in Santa Cruz, CA. Volunteer duties will vary from administrative work to event support, plus special projects as assigned. The ideal candidate lives in or near Santa Cruz, CA, and is available approximately 5 hours per week. Duties include:

- Data entry, filing, copying and related office tasks
- Internet research
- Administrative support

For students in the South Bay Area, TLC offers internship and senior project opportunities in the areas of PR & marketing, event planning and nonprofit management.

For more details on these positions, or to apply, visit: http://www.trich.org/involved/volunteer.html or call Leslie at 831-457-1004.
Three months ago, 15-year-old Claire Cameron went out in public with her own full head of hair.

No more scarves or extensions, and no more Hair Club wigs.

Over the past year, Claire managed to grow back her own hair. There were several events that led up to this transformation, starting with a trip to Hair Club for Men and Women and the TLC Conference in Dallas (2010).

Hair Club gave Claire the confidence she needed to starting enjoying her life again. At the TLC Conference, Claire and Brenda wanted to help others experience the power of community and education that is available at TLC events.

...never forget that you don't have to be the smartest in your class; you don't need to be the fastest runner in your grade; you don't need to have perfect hair. It is not what is on the outside that counts; it is what is on the inside that really matters. One day everyone in this room will understand what that means. Carry your head high and be proud of who you are! -- Claire Cameron, a young woman with trichotillomania.

Improving emotional health is the key to finding a sense of belonging and self-esteem. This is particularly true for children with trichotillomania, who often feel isolated and alone.

There are times when it seems like BFRBs may take a bigger toll on parents than the young trichotillomania pullers. Hair pulling and skin picking challenge core parental instincts; these behaviors force parents to let go of expectations about how our children will be.

It's easy to make mistakes when reacting to a child's behaviors, and then later beat ourselves up over these reactions.

We already know that pressure, guilt, and punishment are inappropriate responses to a child's BFRB behavior. But there is the other part of us that "knows better" and wants to make therapy a requirement, or seek reassurance that our child didn't pick that day, or that, not a new bald spot.

TLC recently polled its online email support groups and Facebook fans, with the question, "What things did your parents do that helped or hindered your trich recovery as a child?"

Here’s what our online community had to say:

1. Don’t tie huge rewards to whether or not your child can “stop pulling for a whole month.” Imagine the disappointment they will carry with them for the rest of their lives, that they weren’t able to get that puppy, or go to Disneyland because they couldn’t stop pulling for more than a week. Keep the rewards (and the behaviors you reward) do-able so you don’t set them up for failure. For example, “If you use your strategies 3 times this week we’ll go get ice cream.” Most kids can use 3 strategies, and ice cream (or no ice cream) isn’t the end of the world.

2. Don’t ask “Did you pull out your hair today?” the moment they get home from school. I have had dozens of children tell me that this makes them feel terrible, and makes them want to pull out their hair more.

3. Don’t invest huge amounts of money in therapy and then say little things that imply your child is wasting your money. The better solution may be to hold off on therapy until they are able to get that puppy, or go to Disneyland because they couldn’t stop pulling for more than a week. Keep the rewards (and the behaviors you reward) do-able so you don’t set them up for failure. For example, “If you use your strategies 3 times this week we’ll go get ice cream.” Most kids can use 3 strategies, and ice cream (or no ice cream) isn’t the end of the world.

4. Love me for who I am inside, not how I look outside. Make sure I know this, too.

5. When I say, “I don’t know when/why/how I pulled,” I really don’t.

6. When I say, “I can’t stop,” I really don’t know how to stop.

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For the last twenty years, Christina Pearson has devoted herself to improving the lives of people suffering with trichotillomania, skin picking, and related disorders. In this age of the internet, it may be hard to fathom just how little help or information was available only two decades ago. Before Christina founded the Trichotillomania Learning Center (TLC) in 1991, there was no place for people to get reliable information about these disorders, no way for sufferers to meet each other, and no one bringing together clinicians and researchers to improve understanding and treatment.

With few exceptions, Christina and TLC have played a vital role in all the advances that have taken place in this field since that time. The tenacity and creativity she has shown in her own successful struggle with hair pulling and skin picking only make her more of an inspiration. There is much work left to be done: the ignorance and suffering that surround these disorders is still profound. But the progress we have made is great. Christina has personally been responsible for transforming the lives of many thousands of people around the world, and she has laid the groundwork for the change still to come. She is truly my hero. And in that, I am not alone.

Jennifer Raikes, Executive Director, TLC

TLC_Moderated Email Groups

Peer-based support groups moderated by TLC Staff:

Parents
Stay in touch, ask questions, meet other parents, and receive support for those times that are difficult. When a question comes up that we cannot answer, we will refer the question to the appropriate professional and encourage them to respond. Then we will share this with the group.
http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/ParentsTrichSupport

TeenTrichSupport
A safe, non-judgmental email group for teens to share feelings, strategies, and support on the road to recovery from trich.
Come meet others who know EXACTLY how you feel! This teen group is moderated by TLC to ensure safety.
http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/TeenTrichSupport

Purchase Christina’s book PEARLS: Meditations on Recovery from Hair Pulling and Skin Picking

Available online: www.trich.org or by phone: 831-457-1004

“I can’t recommend this small book highly enough to anyone with the conditions it addresses (chronic hair-pulling and skin picking). Christina’s poetic take on self-care, healing, and awareness will apply to anyone doing their best to evolve, and seeking patience with the process. There is no one who would not benefit from reading this book. Lyrical and wonderful. A style reminiscent of no one else. Truly unique voice. Give it to anyone in recovery.”

“This is not a pragmatic discourse on the treatment of Trich, this is a small book, that if read slowly, provides nurture, succor, and a portal to self discovery. As a psychologist who treats Trich I am delighted to include this book in my professional library and to recommend it to my clients.”

Meet Christina at the TLC Conference, Retreat, or a One-Day Workshop

Silver Spring, MD: Feb. 11 | Chicago, IL: May 4-6 | near Santa Cruz, CA: Sept. 20-23

“What an absolute treat to have a full day of Christina pearson speaking! I have been to two conferences and a retreat, this workshop was one of my favorites!”

“I was so thrilled to meet Christina Pearsons! She is my hero! I aspire to be like her.”

“Excellent presenter! Christina is funny, intelligent, and very well-spoken. I truly enjoyed her presentation.”

Kay Ryan won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry this past year, and served as the U.S. Poet Laureate from 2008-2010. This poem was recently published in The New Yorker magazine.

Kay Ryan

On the Nature of Understanding

Say you hoped to tame something wild and stayed calm and inched up day by day. Or even not tame it but meet it halfway. Things went along. You made progress, understanding it would be a lengthy process, sensing changes in your hair and nails. So its strange when it attacks: you thought you had a deal.

-Kay Ryan


Jennifer Raikes
Plan now to join over 400 adults & children, parents & treatment providers at TLC’s 2012 Annual Conference on Hair Pulling & Skin Picking Disorders

Build your own program of education and recovery from a comprehensive schedule of expert-led seminars covering topics from treatment and research to self-help and parenting. Join some of the world’s leading experts and most experienced clinicians, researchers, and other members of our community as they share ground-breaking news on the latest research, outline state-of-the-art treatment strategies, provide take-home resource materials, and cultivate support and recovery. Make support and networking contacts and learn real tools for recovery. Early registration discounts are offered until March 30. Don’t delay!

Who Should Attend?
People of all ages who live with pulling, picking and related behaviors, their families and loved ones, as well as clinicians looking to improve their strategies for treating these disorders. Special programs offered for younger children, teens, parents and adults with trichotillomania or compulsive skin picking.

Why Should You attend?
• Over 50 workshops, symposiums and presentations covering topics from the latest treatment approaches to self-help strategies
• Networking and support-building opportunities with others who suffer from these disorders
• Accessibility to clinicians and researchers who KNOW trich and skin picking
• Inspiration from stories of triumph and recovery and the knowledge that you are not alone!
• Continuing Education offered for psychologists (see www.trich.org for details)

Stay at the Conference Hotel for only $124/night (plus taxes and fees)
The Chicago Marriott O’Hare offers the affordable luxury that Marriott is known for, with the convenience of a near-airport hotel. With round-the-clock complimentary shuttle service to and from O’Hare International Airport, and El-train access on-site, the Marriott O’Hare is your homebase for seeing all the sites of Chicago. Take advantage of this incredibly low rate by reserving your room today:

Visit www.trich.org for registration, sponsorship and exhibitor opportunities

Mail-in Registration Form

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<th>Registration Information</th>
<th>Attendee Names</th>
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<td>2012 National Conference on hair pulling &amp; skin picking disorders</td>
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<td>May 4-5, 2012 - Chicago Marriott O’Hare</td>
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<td>Discover REAL tools for recovery from clinicians, researchers and other community members who KNOW these behaviors.</td>
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<td>- Learn State-of-the-Art Treatment Strategies</td>
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<td>- Share the Latest Research</td>
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<td>Offering programs for adults, kids, parents &amp; treatment providers.</td>
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<td>Register before March 30 and SAVE up to $100/person!</td>
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Full Conference Attendance: Friday, May 4 - Sunday May 6, 2011

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Contribution to Event Scholarship Fund
Up to $150 toward the registration fees for the disadvantaged

Save $100/person on registration through March 30!

Visit www.trich.org for registration, sponsorship and exhibitor opportunities
PANDAS: Association with Trichotillomania?

Continued from page 10

Further reading:


Identify: What is a thought that often comes up about your picking or pulling? How much do you believe it?

Most common emotional triggers:

What sparks my emotions?

What do I do to cope with emotions?

What can I do to cope with emotions?

Once you are aware of your emotional triggers, you can start to learn and practice some adaptive emotional coping skills. For example, if you notice strong picking or pulling urges when you are frustrated, it may be helpful to learn a relaxation exercise such as controlled breathing or progressive muscle relaxation. Most cognitive behavioral therapists can help you identify which skills would be best for you to regulate trigger emotions.

Other Triggers

This article has already discussed some of the cognitive (thought-related) and emotional triggers of BFRBs, but it is important to look at other factors that may also influence your behavior. It is common for people to have certain locations that become conditioned as situational triggers (i.e., picking in the car, picking when washing your face before bed, etc.). Sensory triggers are the fascinating experiences that people have when they pick or pull. It can be a tingly scalp, the coarse feeling of a hair, a bump on the skin, or the pop of a blemish. There can be much satisfaction in these sensory cues, so it is important to understand if they are a factor for you, and what substitutes can be used to satisfy these sensory experiences.

Situational triggers:

Sensory triggers:

The script that we rehearse is the life that we choose to live. In addition to identifying, challenging and replacing toxic thoughts, it is also good to practice mindfulness. Mindfulness involves awareness of ourselves and how our mind functions. It is turning off autopilot. There is quite a bit of information out there on the benefits of mindfulness training. I would encourage you to practice a mindfulness activity daily. One thing at a time, being aware of ourselves and our activity in that moment. This also helps to improve awareness of BFRBs and can be a good substitute if your picking or pulling puts you into a "trance-like" state.

My Emotional Triggers

Emotional triggers are very common in picking and pulling behavior. It is good to understand what emotions your BFRBs are trying to regulate. Do you pull when you are bored? Tired? Frustrated? Unsure? Angry? Excited? Intolerant of less than perfect skin or hair?

My Mind:

Example: Practice walking meditation twice per week

My Life:

Example: Decrease soda consumption to 2 cans per week

My Spirit:

Example: Decrease soda consumption to 2 cans per week

My Other Triggers:

Sensory, Situational, Habits

Example: Meet sensory needs by using fiddle toy while on computer

Example: Modify situational trigger by practicing quick in and out of bathroom without lingering

Example: Make picking or pulling more difficult by wearing a rubber fingertip

Meeting physical needs to promote overall well-being

My Story

As you practice these new patterns you will find that they will become stronger and the BFRBs will decrease in the frequency and intensity of urges. It is important to remember that it is still a part of you, but it can go into "hibernation." Monitor how you are doing and evaluate which strategies work best for you in getting and keeping your picking or pulling under control by giving your body and mind what it needs in other ways.

What sparks my emotions?

What do I do to cope with emotions?

What can I do to cope with emotions?

My Strategies

In this section, take a few minutes to focus on one or two strategies/goals in each area. If it is overwhelming, break it down and focus on one area at a time. Once that becomes more of a habit add another to your daily routine. Remember to be flexible; there are often twists and turns in any journey.

There are a number of strategies that can be used; it may be helpful to review some of the resources on the "Articles, Treatment Guides, and Brochures" tab on the TLC website for some additional inspiration.

My Body: Diet, Exercise, Sleep

Example: Practice breathing exercise when mind is racing before bed

Example: Make picking or pulling more difficult by wearing a rubber fingertip

Finding a different way to cope with emotions

Example: Practice walking meditation twice per week

If you are frustrated, it may be helpful to learn a relaxation exercise such as controlled breathing or progressive muscle relaxation. Most cognitive behavioral therapists can help you identify which skills would be best for you to regulate trigger emotions.

Other triggers:

Edited thought: What is my new self-care script about picking or pulling that is more positive, realistic, or takes a problem-solving approach?

Example: Practice breathing exercise when mind is racing before bed

Is this thought true?_____________________________________

Is it helpful?___________________________________________

Is there another way of thinking about it that would be more helpful?____________________________________________

Finding a different way to cope with emotions

Example: Practice walking meditation twice per week

Try to regulate
do you pull?

Is this thought true?_____________________________________

Is it helpful?___________________________________________

Is there another way of thinking about it that would be more helpful?____________________________________________

Finding a different way to cope with emotions

Example: Practice walking meditation twice per week
Dear ones,

Welcome to 2012! This year is a “focus” year for me, on both a personal and professional level. Let me explain. At the grand and marvellous age of 55, I have come to understand fairly well what works for me, and what doesn’t (look long enough!)

For example…


What DOES NOT work: Thinking I can “pay less attention now” that I have a pretty solid period of hair pulling and skin picking recovery (14 years or so). Going for days without real physical exercise. Eating/drinking anything in excess. Not sleeping. Having unresolved interpersonal conflict. Being dishonest. Saying yes when I should say no.

Professionally, what DOES work: Engaging in work that I feel is of value. Better management of task completion. Working fairly autonomously within a goal-oriented team. Working with people I respect and love to reduce suffering. Pushing the envelope as opposed to daily maintenance (that’s the trailblazer in me…). Better understanding of the needs I am serving with people I respect and love to reduce suffering. Engaging in work that I feel is of value. Better management of task completion. Working with people I respect and love to reduce suffering.

What DOES NOT work: Spending too much time record-keeping (bane of my existence!). Being micro-managed (don’t worry, I am not!). Feeling hurt that folks are afraid - unwilling - to step in me…). Better understanding of the needs I am serving with people I respect and love to reduce suffering.

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What DOES NOT work: Spending too much time record-keeping (bane of my existence!). Being micro-managed (don’t worry, I am not!). Feeling hurt that folks are afraid - unwilling - to step in me…). Better understanding of the needs I am serving with people I respect and love to reduce suffering. Engaging in work that I feel is of value. Better management of task completion. Working fairly autonomously within a goal-oriented team. Working with people I respect and love to reduce suffering. Better understanding of the needs I am serving with people I respect and love to reduce suffering.

More and more, research is showing that it is possible to change behaviors – but also that it is hard work. Recent research into dieting is a good example – losing weight is hard, but keeping weight off is harder. Apparently, our body conspires against us by making us feel hungry, and slowing our metabolism after we lose significant weight. Those who succeed in keeping the pounds off have found a way to be vigilant about using the tools that help them – regular weigh-ins, strict calorie limits, daily exercise with a friend… whatever works, every day. To be honest, I got a bit tired and depressed just reading about it. And I have often felt that way about the work it takes to control pulling.

In the last issue, I talked about TLC membership, and the organization’s need to deeply understand what motivates you (our beloved TLC membership) to participate, and stay involved. I asked 4 questions, posting my email. I have to say that I received incredibly thoughtful emails from people about their membership motivations, and I am so very grateful for the responses.

More on this soon…

Now I have a final question for you to answer: Please list three things that you would like to see TLC offer that you feel would support real recovery in your life or your loved one’s life.

Email your response to christina@trich.org

Love All Ways, Christina

Jennifer Raikes
Los Angeles, CA
Jennifer@trich.org

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! And… Happy Valentine’s Day! It is amazing how quickly the transition occurs from hectic (and hopefully joyful) holidays to the new year with its new beginnings, resolutions, and new “to do.” By the time you read this, 2012 will be well underway.

How is it going?

I appreciate the little burst of energy that a new year brings – the feeling of a clean slate and starting anew. But it can quickly bring despair if we set goals or resolutions and soon fail. I joined a gym two months ago and have only managed to get there once. I resolved to leave the house early enough to walk my older daughter to preschool instead of driving. First day back to school found me strapping Audrey into her carseat again.

And one of my most vivid memories of being a child with trichotillomania is staring at my digital clock a few minutes after midnight, feeling the stub of my last eyelash in my fingers, and realizing I had already failed in my resolution to stop pulling my eyelashes.

These failures are normal and speak to the problem of setting a destination without a detailed map of how to get there. Drive and perseverance are important to success, but it is not enough to just want something badly. I think it is a mixture of the “how” – the tools that work for you – and resolve - the booster shots of motivation and social support for your goals.

More and more, research is showing that it is possible to change behaviors – but also that it is hard work. Recent research into dieting is a good example – losing weight is hard, but keeping weight off is harder. Apparently, our body conspires against us by making us feel hungry, and slowing our metabolism after we lose significant weight. Those who succeed in keeping the pounds off have found a way to be vigilant about using the tools that help them – regular weigh-ins, strict calorie limits, daily exercise with a friend… whatever works, every day. To be honest, I got a bit tired and depressed just reading about it. And I have often felt that way about the work it takes to control pulling.

One of the truest moments in Bad Hair Life (my documentary about trich) is when Christina says, “I don’t know where we get the idea that life is going to be easy. Life is difficult, a lot of the time.”

But I have recovered from hair pulling. Though I pull occasionally, it hasn’t caused me great distress or visible damage for many years now. The tools were important – the weekly check-ins and self-monitoring, the band-aids and fiddle toys, the self-awareness or “mindfulness” I developed about my behavior. But equally so were the motivation and social support that have enabled me to keep using those tools: the support group members cheering me on each week, the TLC workshops, Conferences and Retreats peppered throughout the year, the pleasure I took in seeing results – eyelashes, eyebrows –in the mirror.

If the energy of the New Year is already lagging for you, I highly recommend attending the TLC Conference this May. The many lectures and workshops are designed to arm you with the Tools, but just as importantly, the overall experience is an amazing dose of inspiration, support, and motivation. For me, the social support I get at the Conference puts the pleasure into the hard work needed to remain in recovery. And that is what makes it do-able.

If the Conference isn’t feasible this year, I do suggest finding other ways to achieve a motivation boost – if you are like me, we simply need them throughout the year. A new basket of fiddle toys. A visit to your local support group. Buddying up with a friend from an online group to check-in weekly or daily. Meanwhile, if I am going to walk my daughter to preschool, I need a plan of action. Is it worth it to set the alarm clock 20 minutes earlier? Should we forego some of the playtime in her room after waking? Could I make her lunch the night before? (I can’t even tackle the gym plan right now. What was I thinking?).

Much love to you,

Jennifer

Christina Pearson
Santa Cruz, CA

Founding Director’s Report

(TLCSings from Christina)

Executive Director’s Report

(TLCSings from Jennifer)
Yes! I would like to make a pledge to TLC of:

☐ $100/mth  ○ $50/mth  ○ $30/mth  ○ $20/mth  ○ $15/mth  ○ $10/mth  ○ $______ other amount

I would like to make my donation on the _____ day of each month, beginning in February 2012.

I would like to make a one-time gift of $ ___________ to support TLC’s mission and work.

Please initial:

___ I understand that I can change or cancel my pledge at any time by contacting TLC.
___ I understand that I will receive a receipt from TLC each year for my tax records.

Please apply my donation to the TLC Scholarship Fund

TLC is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization and all contributions are tax deductible. Our TAX ID number is 77-0266587.

Please select a payment method:

☐ Check or money order enclosed (US funds only)
☐ Electronic funds transfer (please enclose a voided check, if possible)
☐ Appreciated securities (TLC will contact me)
☐ Charge my credit card: (we accept all credit cards) Amount to be charged: ____________________________________________
   Cardnumber:_____________________________________________________________________________________________
   Exp.Date:________________________________________3-Digit Security code _______________________________________
   (from the back of the card. AmEx users, please provide the 4-digit number from the front of the card)

Cardholder’s Name: _______________________________________________________________________________________

AuthorizationSignature:_____________________________________________________________________________________

Mail completed form to:
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