TLC Launches Groundbreaking BFRB Precision Medicine Initiative

A report from the TLC Board of Directors

Outreach, education, answers. This is the mantra announced in our last newsletter. We’re seeking better answers by launching a bold step toward TLC’s future, the Body Focused Repetitive Behavior (BFRB) Precision Medicine Initiative (BPM). The BPM is TLC’s major strategic research initiative focused on increasing remission rates for people in our community who suffer from hair pulling, skin picking and other body-focused behaviors.

Launched in April 2014 at TLC’s annual conference, the BPM’s mission over the next five to seven years is to:

- Understand the foundational neurobiology of these disorders
- Identify new and targeted behavioral and pharmacological treatments
- Increase BFRB remission rates to more than 70% - a major increase from today's 10%-20% levels

Now is the right time to initiate the BPM because we have full collaboration. TLC’s Scientific Advisory Board, composed of scientific and academic leaders in the BFRB and related fields, and more than 20 academic and medical institutions across the United States, are fully aligned with BPM. BPM’s goal is to identify BFRB treatment options at a faster pace to significantly reduce the suffering our community experiences.

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Members of TLC’s Scientific Advisory Board and scientists from across the US met last November to develop a strategic plan for research that could significantly improve remission rates in BFRB treatment.
The Trichotillomania Learning Center's mission is to end the suffering caused by hair pulling disorder, skin picking disorder, and related body-focused repetitive behaviors. We envision a world where:

- Body-focused Repetitive Behaviors (BFRBs) are diagnosed quickly.
- BFRBs are not a source of shame.
- Effective treatment is available to all people with these disorders.
- Treatments are more effective and eventually cures are found.
- Information and emotional support are available to people of all ages and their families.

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The information in this newsletter is not intended to provide treatment for Hair Pulling or Skin Picking Disorders. Appropriate treatment and advice should be obtained directly from a qualified and experienced doctor and/or mental health professional. The opinions expressed are those of the individual authors.

TLC Event Calendar
Find out more about any of these events on our website: www.trich.org or by calling 831-457-1004.

New York City One-Day Workshop
Oct. 4, 2014
Details coming soon!

Seattle One-Day Workshop
Oct. 25, 2014
with Stacy Shaw Welch, PhD
Phinney Neighborhood Center
Seattle, WA

Atlanta One-Day Workshop
Nov. 1, 2014
with Suzanne Mouton-Odum, PhD
Elana Zimand, PhD
Natalie C. Arnette, PhD, LLC

Professional Training Institute
Oct. 24-26, 2014 - Chicago
A Continuing Education Program for Licensed Clinicians
Facilitated by:
Charles Mansueto, PhD
Jon Grant, MD, JD MPH
Fred Penzel, PhD
Renae Reinardy, PsyD

The Professional Training Institute (PTI) offers clinical training in effective, CBT-based treatment for trichotillomania, skin picking, and related body-focused repetitive behaviors. Earn 20 CEs, gain understanding of these behaviors from leading experts in this field. Sign up online via www.trich.org.

Upcoming Webinars
Please check www.trich.org for upcoming webinar listings.

TLC Annual Conference
SAVE THE DATE!
April 10-12, 2015 - Arlington, VA
Sponsors needed! Help support the ONLY conference in the world specifically focused on hair pulling, skin picking, and related behaviors. Contact leslie@trich.org for information.

Find out more about upcoming events on our website: www.trich.org
New Jersey's First Trot for Trich and BFRBs

TLC Ambassador "Jersey" Christina Hammell reaches out in New Jersey

If you are a member of any facebook trichotillomania groups, you probably know "Jersey" Christina Hammell. Christina is a regular supporter within online BFRB groups, and shares her recovery story with people all over the world. She has become a prolific online activist within the BFRB community.

On June 7, Christina took her virtual activism out in her own community, when she hosted the first annual Trot for Trich / BFRBs in Camden County, New Jersey.

Christina (shown left, with her fiance and fellow TLC Ambassador, Nathan Lang) utilized social media and her own support network to raise awareness about BFRBs. Through her efforts and the generous donations of her friends, family, and TLC community members, Christina raised over $1400 to support TLC research programs.

Inspired by her success, Christina hopes to make the Trot for Trich and BFRBs a national event next year.

To stay up-to-date on Christina’s advocacy efforts, join her facebook group: https://www.facebook.com/groups/700268839997596

Students Raise Awareness and Funding for Research

Battlefield High Interact Club, Burke, VA

Much gratitude to the Interact Club at Battlefield High School in Burke, VA. These students, at the suggestion of their club advisor, Michelle T., a parent of an 11-year-old trichster, posted signs around their school and sold bandanas to fundraise for TLC research programs while raising awareness among their peers. The Interact Club is a service club and when Michelle posed the idea to her students to raise funds for research, they were really excited about it. They immediately got to work on ideas. The club purchased BFRB Awareness Ribbons to give when people made donations. They had a table set up at school for two weeks, signs up around the school, and announcements were made in the morning and afternoon. During the fundraising, Michelle even met a student who said she has trich!

Thank you to all the members of the Battlefield High Interact Club!

Purchase a Calligram and Support TLC!

Artist shares Etsy proceeds with BFRB community

After more than 15 years of picking at her skin, Melanie Evette finally discovered it was an actual condition and got some help. Melanie is so happy to have discovered TLC and a community that understands, she wants to give back. She sells beautiful “Calligrams” on Etsy.com and will donate 50% of net sales to TLC!

Creativity has always been a great outlet for Melanie; it helps her with picking, depression, and anxiety. When she was a young girl, her dad gave her a calligraphy kit and she taught herself calligraphy. Years later in college, Melanie picked up the pen again and started making drawings out of calligraphy. These “Calligrams” are all handwritten using meaningful quotes, poems, and other literature to form an image related to the words. A lot of Melanie’s inspiration comes from films, travel, or suggestions from friends, but she also makes custom drawings. Check out her shop "Melanmeal" on Etsy.com and see what Calligrams are about!
The Christina Pearson Award is TLC’s highest honor for volunteer service. Created by the Board of Directors fourteen years ago to celebrate the first decade of TLC Founder Christina Pearson’s devoted service to this community. This is presented annually to an individual who has made an outstanding and long-standing volunteer contribution to TLC and our community.

At our Conference in April, the 2014 Christina Pearson Award was presented to the Reverend Noelani Jai. Noelani has been a tireless TLC advocate for more than 17 years. She has been the most active volunteer support group founder and mentor in TLC’s history. She created SoCal H.E.A.R.T. (Helping Educate and Reach Out to Trichsters), which has become a model for many more parent/youth support groups. As a support group leader, she has served countless children, teens and parents in Long Beach, California and the greater Los Angeles area since January 2005.

Noelani has also been a brave advocate for BFRB awareness – actively sharing her story with the media, encouraging others to do so, and organizing educational events for the public. Her HEART group created the short film, Straight From the Heart, which has been distributed across the world.

In her acceptance speech, Noelani said, “When I got the notification about this [award] a while back, I burst into tears because TLC is my organizational hero. There is no organization like TLC on earth. And Christina Pearson is my personal hero, and so just put those two together and I didn’t know how to contain my emotions. So, thank you. There is just no higher honor that I can imagine.”

Thank YOU, Noelani.

To learn more about Noelani and the HEART support group model, visit http://www.facebook.com/HEARTSupportGroupForTrichotillomania

To learn more about Christina Pearson, visit: www.ChristinaPearson.com

Rev. Noelani Jai, center, with her HEART; current and former members of the youth support group she has run for nearly 10 years.
What if...
there were more effective treatments available that significantly reduced BFRB urges?

Learn More:
Visit www.trich.org/research
The planning of the BPM (BFRB Precision Medicine) Initiative was achieved over the last two years with the dedicated volunteer work of TLC’s Scientific Advisory Board (SAB), members of TLC’s Board of Directors, and in consultation with experts from related scientific fields, and discussion with leaders of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH).

The TLC Board of Directors charged the SAB with creating a strategic plan for research – to provide a roadmap to real answers and better treatment outcomes. Rather than plan for the funding we have, plan for the funding we need.

Since then, the members of TLC’s Scientific Advisory Board have worked even more devotedly and fervently than usual – spending increased hours in meetings and conference calls -- to tackle the question of how best to significantly move this field forward, achieve effective treatments, and reduce remission rates for BFRB sufferers.

In April 2013, at its annual meeting, the SAB developed the backbone of the initiative – debating what questions most urgently need answers and would provide the best path for better treatments. Committees continued this work by phone on biweekly conference calls throughout the year. Darin Dougherty, M.D., MSc., Director of the Neurotherapeutics Division of Massachusetts General Hospital, co-chaired the committee and volunteered great time and talent to moderating discussions and developing the initiative.

Steven Koppel, a TLC volunteer and the newest member of our Board of Directors, has been an integral part of this project. As a trustee with the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute Steve brought to TLC a vision for larger scale collaborative research. After representing TLC at the twice yearly meeting of the NIMH’s Alliance For Research Progress, Steve shared the insight that TLC’s own research direction fit closely with the precision medicine priorities of the NIMH.
Seeking advice and input in planning our research initiative, Steve secured a meeting with NIMH director Thomas Insel. On September 4, 2013, TLC met with the director of the NIMH, Thomas Insel, Gemma Weiblinger, Director of the Office of Constituency Relations and Public Liaison, Michael Kozak, Chief of the Adult Psychopathology and Psychosocial Interventions Branch, Division of Adult Translational Research, and Joel Sherrill, of the Intervention Research Division.

TLC was represented by Steve Koppel and Scientific Advisory Board members, Dr. Martin Franklin, University of Pennsylvania Medical School, Dr. Darin Dougherty, Massachusetts General Hospital, Dr. Joseph Garner, Stanford School of Medicine, Dr. Jon Grant, University of Chicago, and Dr. Charles Mansueto, Behavior Therapy Center of Greater Washington.

We then held a two-day planning summit, on November 1-2, hosted at Massachusetts General Hospital. The majority of our SAB members attended this meeting, and additional guest experts from a variety of relevant fields of expertise presented on current cutting edge knowledge and research techniques in their fields. These presentations helped TLC’s SAB connect the dots between research in related behavioral health fields and its potential applications to research in the BFRB field.

Guest consultants included Joshua W. Buckholtz, PhD, Director, Systems Neuroscience of Psychopathology Lab Harvard University; Bruce Rosen, MD, PhD, Director, Athinoula A. Martinos Center for Biomedical Imaging; Benjamin Raby, MD, MPH, Director, Brigham and Women’s Pulmonary Genetics Center; Jeremiah Scharf, MD, PhD, Director, Neurology Tic Disorders Clinic Massachusetts General Hospital; Thaddeus Pace, PhD, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences in the School of Medicine at Emory University; and Thilo Deckerbach, PhD, Director of Research in the Division of Neurotherapeutics at Massachusetts General Hospital. Drs. Kozak and Sherrill of the NIMH teleconferenced in on the second day to answer questions as well.

Many thanks to all those who have volunteered time and expertise to develop the initiative plan. The generosity and collegiality of our Scientific Advisory Board and of all the researchers who are drawn to assist our community continues to astound me on a daily basis. A great deal of work is still being done to make this initiative a reality, but the strong collaboration achieved to plan the effort is testament that TLC’s team is well-positioned to achieve a successful, multi-site research effort.

Watch online!
2014 Conference Keynote Address:
Research Update and Overview
with Jon Grant, JD, MD, MPH

Where are we in terms of treatment and understanding of BFRBs, where do we need to go and how will we get there? TLC Scientific Advisory Board Chair Dr. Jon Grant provides an overview of BFRB research to date and the implications for treatment and recovery moving forward.

www.trich.org/research

TLC Board member Steve Koppel updates the SAB on the precision medicine priorities of the NiMH.
What if...

after 30 years of hairpulling, Christine found a treatment that works?

Learn More:
Visit www.trich.org/research
"Today, I am one year and six months pull-free.

The hard work never stops, but I can tell you that it does get easier. For my family TLC was the first sign of hope when I was diagnosed with trich. TLC’s workshops and annual conferences have helped to connect me with so many other trichsters. I’ve made friendships at these gatherings that I know will last a lifetime. This organization has become my family and shown me I am never alone.

- Katherine Paris, 2014 TLC Conference

"Today I have 99% abstinence from picking.

While I may not be pick-free, I have the tools to keep any picking to a minimum. I’m just not doing the damage I used to do. And so, for my daughter and for my grandmother who never stopped, I’m going to keep doing this one day at a time.

Like the spokes of a wheel, together we are very strong. TLC creates a hub around which we can advocate. I feel excited and blessed to be part of something powerful and strong.

- Caroline Colesworthy, 2014 TLC Conference

When you support TLC, you support recovery... for yourself and others.

When you support TLC, you support recovery... for yourself and others.

Outreach

So no one suffers alone.

Your gifts create and maintain the support groups, outreach campaigns, publications, events, and web resources that TLC provides.

Treatment

Effective local treatment.

Your donations support the world’s only professional training programs for BFRBs – each therapist we educate brings effective treatment in reach of hundreds more patients.

Research

Better Answers, faster.

Your support will help launch BPM; TLC’s ground-breaking, collaborative research initiative to dramatically improve treatment options and remission rates.

This is OUR cause.

Join TLC

Share Your Voice

DONATE
Los Angeles, CA
Research Opportunity For Kids and Teens With Trich
UCLA Neuropsychiatric Institute
Studying Non-Drug Behavioral Therapy and the Brain in Trichotillomania (TTM)
• Do you have or think you might have TTM?
• Do you have frequent urges to pull your hair?
• Do you have noticeable hair loss?
• Do you have mounting tension before pulling your hair?
• Do you have a feeling of relief or gratification after pulling?
If you’re a boy or girl ages 7-17 and one or more of the above, you may be eligible for our study.
Eligible Participants Will Receive:
• Free Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) Brain Scans
• Free guidance for a treatment plan
• Free clinical and cognitive testing
For more information, please contact:
Olivia Johnson at (310) 825-2064

Tampa/St. Petersburg, FL
Habit Reversal Training for Children and Adolescents with Trichotillomania: A Controlled Trial
Researchers at the University of South Florida in Tampa/St. Petersburg, Florida are currently investigating how well a treatment called Habit Reversal Training (HRT) works to help children and teenagers with TTM manage and reduce their hair pulling.

All children who qualify for the study will receive eight sessions of HRT. The study also involves four visits to the clinic where you and your child will participate in study assessments. These assessments will involve answering questions about your child’s hair pulling and other psychological symptoms.

To be in the study, your child must:
Be between the ages of 7 and 17 years old
Have significant hair pulling
Not have any health problems that could interfere with study participation
There is no cost to participate in this study. We will not charge you for HRT or any of the evaluations.

For more information, please contact the study coordinator, Erika Crawford, at the Rothman Center for Neuropsychiatry at the University of South Florida at (727) 767-8230.

Chicago, IL
Hair Pulling Disorder Medication Study
Have you tried different medications but are still struggling to stop pulling your hair?

We are currently seeking volunteers for a 10-week research study using an experimental drug for hair pulling. The study will involve 6 visits. Participants will be compensated. You must be at least 18 years old.

Skin Picking Study
Do you pick your skin? Is it causing problems? Does it feel out of control? We at the University of Chicago are currently seeking volunteers for a drug study using a supplement for skin picking.

Participation in either study requires several visits to our Chicago study center. Those interested in participating must live within the Chicago metro area and must be at least 18 years of age. Dr. Jon Grant is directing this study for University of Chicago, Department of Psychiatry, Addictive, Compulsive, and Impulsive Disorders Research Program.

If interested in either of these studies, please contact Katherine Derbyshire for more information.

Katherine Derbyshire, BS
Psychiatric Research Specialist
University of Chicago, Department of Psychiatry
Addictive, Compulsive, and Impulsive Disorders Research Program.

Boston, MA
Do you pull out your hair?
Dr. Nancy Keuthen is conducting a genetics research study of compulsive hair pulling at Massachusetts General Hospital. You may be eligible if you are 18-65 years of age and frequently pull out your hair.

If eligible for this research study, you will come to MGH for one study visit that will include an interview, several self-report scales, and a blood draw. Study participation will take 3-6 hours of your time. You will be paid $50 for participating.

For more information, please call Massachusetts General Hospital-Trichotillomania Clinic at 617-643-8464 or email ewu9@partners.org.
Kent State University, Ohio

Two Child/Adolescent Trich Studies

The Kent State University (KSU) Child Anxiety Research (CARe) Program is looking for youths between 9 and 17 years old who pull their hair. Those eligible for this study receive compensation for their time, a full assessment of symptoms and written and verbal feedback including potential diagnoses and treatment options. We have already recruited nearly 60 children presenting with a range of anxiety and related problems. Many of these children report pulling their hair yet we are seeking to recruit an additional 10-15 children with trichotillomania (hair pulling disorder) over the course of the next year. We hope to be able to present some of these results at TLC’s annual conference in 2015. If you’d like to hear more about this study, you can contact us at 330-672-2200.

In addition to the study above, the Kent State University CARe Program is also looking for youths who pull out their hair between 8 and 17 years old. Eligible families will receive a free evaluation and a tailored, 12-week exercise program at no charge. In short, we are trying to see whether exercise – either by itself or in combination with existing treatments – might be a beneficial intervention for kids who pull their hair. If your child is already receiving services for hair pulling or related problems, he/she can still participate. Children can earn up to $60 for participating, and eligible families will be entered in a raffle to win a $200 Amazon gift card. If you’d like to hear more about this study, you can contact us at 330-672-2200.

Philadelphia, PA

Does your child suffer from trichotillomania?

Martin Franklin, PhD, is examining treatments for children at The Center for the Treatment and Study of Anxiety in Philadelphia. Participants will receive either Behavior Therapy or Supportive Counseling. Children and adolescents, ages 10 through 17, who repetitively pull their hair may be eligible to participate in this study. Must live in the greater Philadelphia area to participate.

For more information on this program, contact:

Kristin Benavides
Child/Adolescent OCD, Tics, Trichotillomania and Anxiety Group (COTTAGE)
Phone: 215-746-3327
Email: kben@mail.med.upenn.edu

FREE Offer from OCD Center of Los Angeles

Free weekly meditations on BFRBs

Every Sunday, subscribers will receive a free online e-lesson with a specific theme of particular relevance for anyone suffering with hair pulling disorder, skin picking disorder, or related BFRBs.

The theme is introduced with an inspirational quote, followed by a short discussion and three questions for self-directed reflection. Each week’s lesson concludes with straightforward, concrete advice on how you can implement the current theme into your life over the course of the coming week.

Sign up online: http://tinyurl.com/mv9svdc
BPM builds on past TLC donor-funded research, including our successful genetics research collaboration. While much progress has been made, many of these research projects were characterized by small sample sizes due to the limited amount of funding available. In addition, we lack understanding of the underlying neurobiological markers of BFRBs. Achieving an in-depth neurobiological understanding is essential to offering personalized behavioral and pharmacological treatments to each individual sufferer to improve outcomes. This approach is called precision medicine, a proven medical research approach and one that the NIMH and behavioral health scientists worldwide advocate.

Precision medicine represents a cutting-edge research approach now being used successfully across the world to develop treatments for multiple chronic illnesses. For example, many of our most effective cancer treatments have resulted from new biological understanding of the molecular markers present in each individual's tumor. Precision medicine is now being used for the development of treatments for Parkinson's, heart disease, stroke, and age-related diseases. TLC has been consulting closely with the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) on BPM. NIMH believes the future of behavioral health research can be transformed by applying precision medicine – and this is exactly our approach with the BPM research.

People in remission from BFRBs are generally asymptomatic for meaningful periods of time. However, BFRB remission rates for current treatment methods are approximately 10-20 percent. In contrast, remission rates for more biologically complex disorders, such as depression, are more than 70 percent. For this reason, we believe if more effective treatment methods are identified for individual people through the BPM initiative, remission rates could reach and even exceed 70 percent.

How will BPM research be different from past studies? Standard research protocols will be developed and implemented at intake centers across the United States and hundreds of new people will enroll in this research initially over a three-year period. Existing data from over 400 patients who have participated in TLC's genetics research will be combined with new data and analyzed together.

The research process includes three steps:

- Identify phenotypes
- Analyze neurobiology
- Identify treatments

The first step is to identify phenotypes, or the specific characteristics of how BFRBs manifest themselves in sufferers, which can be grouped into subtypes. A series

TLC's Scientific Advisory Board, or "The Dream Team" as they are affectionately known around the office, from left to right: Chris Flessner, PhD, Jon Grant, JD, MD, MPH, Joe Garner, PhD, Charles Mansuetto, PhD, Carol Novak, MD, John Piacentini, PhD, Ruth Golomb, MEd, LCPC, Nancy Keuthen, PhD, Suzanne Mouton-Odum, PhD, Darin Dougherty, MD, MSc, and Fred Penzel, PhD. Not shown: Martin Franklin, PhD, David Pauls, PhD, Dan Stein, MD, PhD, John Walkup, MD, Douglas Woods, PhD, and Harry Wright, MD, MBA.
of standardized cognitive tests will be administered to determine the various types of pullers and pickers that exist. Through analysis of each phenotype, researchers can develop hypotheses around key behavioral drivers to target for effective treatment.

Analyzing the neurobiology of pullers and pickers is the second step. Blood samples will be collected and MRI brain scans will be conducted on the same individuals who participated in the phenotype phase. Blood samples will provide insight into genetics and other biomarkers. Brain scans will be analyzed to determine the structural and functional connectivity of the brain.

Researchers will analyze the data from both the phenotypes and neurobiology and then identify treatments personalized to the individual. We aim to optimize existing behavioral therapy interventions and identify molecular targets for pharmacotherapy, including natural supplements. The results of these treatments will drive the design of future clinical trials.

BPM funding will consist primarily of large-scale, private funding from the TLC community. Unfortunately, limited NIMH money is available for this type of research; most grants fund more prevalent disorders, especially ones where the underlying neurobiology is already understood. We anticipate the BPM will cost a total of $4.5 million during the first three years. The budget for the BPM is designed to be scalable based on the funding available to enroll new patients each year. To date, we have raised $500,000, 11 percent of our goal, and are seeking commitments from major donors. Much of the initial funding was donated by annual conference attendees.

Now it is your turn: TLC community, we need your help to make BPM a reality.

Together we are strong, and you can make a difference in our future:

- Make a major gift to BPM
- Participate in a BPM research study once research opportunities are announced
- Organize a fundraising house party
- Reach out to your friends and family with a TLC First Giving page
- Speak out and spread the word about BPM, especially through social media

This groundbreaking initiative is an exciting turning point in TLC’s history, a bold step toward our future. We have total collaboration among BFRB researchers and their institutions. Our precision medicine approach utilizes the most advanced scientific methods and fills in the gaps in our understanding of BFRBs. We have seen proven successes in more complex disorders. And for the first time, we will have adequate resources to complete a comprehensive research project of this magnitude. Join TLC’s mantra with your personal commitment to BPM research: outreach, education, answers.

For more information about BPM, please visit www.trich.org/research
This letter is adapted from a speech I gave in April at our annual Conference.

**Why are you a TLC member?**
Maybe your answer looks something like mine…

*Self-portrait, Jen Raikes circa 1982*

When I was nine years old, I began pulling out my eyelashes. Out of the blue, I just started playing with them, touching them… I tugged on one and my eyelid popped away from my eye with a little sucking sound. A lash came out… it continued from there and at some point, I realized, I couldn’t stop. My lids were bare and swollen. My fingers moved to my eyebrows…

My mom and I tried everything… oven mitts on my hands. Tape over my fingers. My aunt came to visit during this time and grabbed me by the shoulders and screamed, “What have you done to yourself??!” It was scary and demoralizing and exhausting. Every day, I’d resolve to stop a dozen times, and every day, I’d fail.

By the time I was eleven, this self-portrait expressed how I felt. I can clearly remember fastidiously drawing the fabulous rainbow skirt… and the quick stab of the marker to portray my lashless eyes and short stubby eyebrows. My hands in shackles, fingers positioned to pull, tears of blood rolling down my cheeks.

My mother, too, felt she’d failed. She felt she must be doing something terribly wrong as a parent to have a child who was harming herself this way. My mom was great. My dad was great. I knew it wasn’t their fault. It felt good to pull my lashes and brows and I just couldn’t stop.

This was before TLC existed. There was no information about hair pulling or skin picking. There were no treatment providers skilled at treating these problems. There was no research to show these were genetic and biological problems – not my fault at all. Not my parents’ fault. There was no community of other pullers and pickers to help me realize I did not need to be ashamed.

So this is why I attended my first TLC event in the summer of 1995. Trichotillomania had an enormous impact on my life and I needed help.

Why am I still with TLC?

I no longer feel shame and embarrassment about hair pulling. And I no longer pull – I may catch myself pulling, picking, biting momentarily – but nothing that has caused me a problem in nearly two decades. TLC helped me – and enabled me to help myself.

I came because I needed help. I stay because WE need help.

We human beings do ask ourselves, why am I here? Me, this speck in the vast universe? What gives my life meaning? My answer has been to try to have a positive impact – on the lives of those who know me, and on the world as a whole. Sometimes that doesn’t seem possible.

**The world’s problems can seem overwhelming…**
**But this is one we can fix.**

That is what I have realized in my time with TLC. This is OUR cause. And it is achievable.

What we need as a community is actually quite simple:

1. We need public education – to end the isolation. To end the sting of ignorance. To end the shame.
2. We need access to well-trained treatment providers.
3. We need research to develop treatments that help all of us.

Over the last 20 years, TLC has put in place an amazing array of programs that are achieving these goals. From the.
start we have been focused on fundamentals – providing trustworthy, scientifically sound information, creating a strong support community, and bringing together clinicians and researchers to provide better treatment.

Along the way, we recognized that it is not just hair pulling disorder that we are tackling, but all body-focused repetitive behaviors.

The progress we’ve made is tremendous.

**We ARE ending the ignorance and isolation.** Nearly half a million people visited TLC’s website in the past year and found hundreds of pages of the best scientifically supported information available.

**We ARE getting the word out about today’s best treatment methods.** TLC’s Expert Consensus Treatment Guidelines has now been downloaded more than 70,000 times.

**We DO know far more about BFRB disorders than we ever have before.** Our growing research efforts have taught us a lot. We know that BFRBs are neurobiological problems – that genetics plays an important role in their development.

We know the terrible impact they have on individuals and families.

And today we do have treatments that are effective for many people when done right – we know recovery is possible.

**But you and I both know we have a long way to go.**

We have a long way to go because the self-portrait I drew thirty years ago is still being drawn by many of our children today.

The world for people with BFRBs is vastly better than when I was a child. But I have children now. And we are not where I want things to be if they, too, find themselves suffering with BFRBs. Not where they need to be for your children. If our children have to face the challenge of BFRBs, I want their self-portraits to look very different than mine.

The needs of this community are great. But the scale of this problem can be our greatest asset. 1 in 50 people suffer with hair pulling and/or skin picking. That is a lot of suffering – but that is a lot of strength if we work together.

My wish is that you feel your STRENGTH. You are tremendously STRONG! You’ve already proven that by coping daily with these incredibly difficult disorders. You have great power to contribute to this cause.

And one of the most satisfying things about getting involved in this mission is that each step we make provides a world of tangible good right away. Each time we share information about BFRBs with a friend means that someone else won’t grow up suffering in terrible isolation. Each time we train a therapist at TLC’s Professional Training Institute means that hundreds more patients will have local access to effective treatment.

With your support of TLC, you are transforming a curse into a cause. This is OUR cause. Our goals are simple. We can see our way from here to a better future.

TLC is the vehicle for making that happen. **But you are the drivers.**

**Share your strength today!**

- Tell a friend about TLC…
- Post your story at [www.trich.org/together](http://www.trich.org/together)
- Send your story to a local newspaper, news program or magazine
- Hand a TLC brochure to your family doctor… to your school principal… to your hairdresser … to your dermatologist… neighbor… accountant… anyone!
- Hold a party for BFRB Awareness week (Oct. 1-7)
- Post a Facebook status about BFRBs
- Start a local support group
- Participate in a research study
- Mail out TLC brochures anonymously to your local school counselors, therapists, dermatologists, pediatricians, journalists… the gatekeepers to reaching others in your community with good information about BFRBs

**Fundraise!**

- Create a personal donation page at FirstGiving.com. Set a goal and reach out to your friends & family to sponsor your progress…
- Set up a TLC lemonade stand in your front yard
- Wear a BFRB Awareness ribbon
- Ask your employer to match your donations to TLC
- Put TLC in your estate plans
- Include TLC information in your annual holiday letter
- Got enough stuff? Ask for donations to TLC for your birthday!
- Buy a new fiddle toy at [store.trich.org](http://store.trich.org)
- Keep renewing your TLC membership. Every year!!!

And write to us about all your efforts – you might inspire others to join you!
I can finally imagine...

...a day when everyone with trichotillomania or skin picking will get individualized and effective treatments.”

--Jon Grant, JD, MD, MPH
Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience, University of Chicago

Together, we WILL make this a reality.
Donate today: www.trich.org