The Trich Club:
Boys Allowed

By Lauren MacWhirter, Savannah, GA. Printed with permission from trichieblog.wordpress.com.

Most sources agree that trichotillomania is more common in women than men. However, studies also show that men are less likely to report on mental health issues in general, making it difficult to accurately measure the gender gap. One way to tackle this problem is by sharing the stories and experiences of men with these disorders. Writer Lauren MacWhirter recognized this need, interviewing four male community members for her blog. Here is what they shared with her.

What's your experience with Trich (when it started, where you pull, and what, if any, events or conditions triggered it)?

Dave: I've had Trich since I was about 8 or 9 (now 27). I pull from my scalp, facial hair, and pubic area. The one event I remember happening around that time is my parents splitting up.

Eddie: I started when I was 8, in 3rd grade. I pull from my scalp, usually the sides and top. I recently discovered the front takes the longest to grow back. I'm not sure how connected to Trich my OCD is, but I have that too.

JC: I've been pulling since I was 5. I remember the exact day: my mom left me with my new step-dad, while she went with my brother to a baseball tournament. I'm sure I felt abandoned, that must've been the trigger. I started with my eyelashes and head, now I pull from everywhere except head, legs/arms and armpits.

BD: I've had a small tendency to pull hairs from my beard since I was a teenager. In my early 20s. I started picking hairs like crazy from my goatee, specifically the left corner of my lip. It's since migrated to my eyebrows and wasn't that bad until my mom died in 2014. Since then, I've pulled like crazy and haven't been able to grow my eyebrows. I suffer from depression and anxiety, probably stemming from my mom's substance abuse which caused her to leave for hours to weeks at a time.
The TLC Foundation for Body-Focused Repetitive Behaviors’ mission is to end the suffering caused by body-focused repetitive behaviors, including hair pulling disorder and skin picking disorder.

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InTouch is a quarterly publication of The TLC Foundation for Body-Focused Repetitive Behaviors

Articles and letters may be submitted to leslie@bfrb.org

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Text deadline next issue: October 31, 2017

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.

Upcoming Events

Get tickets and details for these events and more at bfrb.org/events

#BFRBweek: Stand Up for BFRBs!
October 1–7, 2017
Plan for for BFRB Awareness Week! Visit bfrb.org/seemestand for details on how you can end the stigma caused by BFRBs.

Register now!
Professional Training Institute: Washington, DC
October 13–15, 2017
Advanced Clinical Training in CBT-based Treatment for Body-Focused Repetitive Behaviors: Learn state-of-the-art treatment for trichotillomania, skin picking disorder, and related BFRBs. Register online at bfrb.org/pri.

BFRB Mini-Conference: Washington, DC
October 14, 2017
Join local BFRB community leaders, treatment providers, and ambassadors for a day of education, connection, and support in Chantilly, VA! People affected by BFRBs and their loved ones are invited to learn about effective treatment approaches and recovery tools that work for these behaviors. Learn more at bfrb.org/ocdc.

Mindfulness-Based Impulse Reduction for BFRBs with TLC’s Founder, Christina Pearson
Ongoing: visit www.hasacademy.org for details
Live, interactive video classes for adults, teens, children, and parents with a focus on BFRB shame reduction, practical living skills, and long-term recovery. Through participation in classes, students learn the cohesive, strategically adaptive Mindful Living-Skills Based approach to managing both hair pulling and skin picking that has kept Christina Pearson’s recovery on track for years, and gain a heart-centered, experiential interpersonal network “in-the-world-you-live-in” for day-to-day support.

Visit bfrb.org/events for detailed event information.

Stories from Our Community

Suzie Avilla is Committed to Recovery
By Corinne Lightweaver, Annual Fund Director
Central California resident Suzie Avilla has been a loyal TLC donor for years. Recently she was able to elevate her contribution level to become a Visionary donor.

Suzie learned about TLC from her local library not long after the organization launched nearly 25 years ago. She called TLC the very next day and was inspired to join two local support groups in Bellevue and Kent, Washington, near where she was living at the time. She immediately met 15 women who were also struggling with trich, putting an end to the years of isolation she had experienced since her hair pulling emerged in childhood.

Later, when she learned to use the internet in the early 2000s, she typed in the word trichotillomania and was astounded to learn how many women like herself were online talking about their disorder and ways to deal with it. Seeking an even stronger community and more tools for recovery, she attended a TLC workshop in Palo Alto in 2004, the 2008 and 2009 TLC retreats, and the 2011 annual conference in San Francisco.

While hair pulling remains an ongoing struggle, Suzie was able to experience six years pull-free, for which she credits TLC.

Though a return of symptoms after a period of remission is disappointing, Suzie is committed to her recovery for the long haul. “TLC has absolutely, 100 percent helped me,” she says.

With her donations, Suzie contributes not only to her own health, but to the recovery of the thousands of people each month who find TLC and finally realize they are not alone. Thank you, Suzie, for your support!

Share your story!
We want to hear from you! Email info@bfrb.org or submit online at bfrb.org/share.

Christina Lang’s Tips for Managing Urges

By Corinne Lightweaver, Annual Fund Director

CELEBRATE the small victories. Because small victories lead to huge accomplishments. If you are running a marathon, you are not going to focus on the 26.2 miles you have to go. Instead, you learn to focus from mile marker to mile marker. That’s what you need to do. Instead of focusing on being pick/pull free forever, let’s start with an hour. Then two. Then a day. You can finish that marathon, but do it little by little.

MIND YOUR BREATHE. When things get REALLY tough, it helped me to find a quiet spot (I have 3 kids so that can be tough), close my eyes, and just breathe, slowly. Listen to your heartbeat. Listen to the air going in and out of your lungs. While you do this, imagine yourself pick/pulling on your lungs. You can finish that marathon, but do it little by little.

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DON’T strain for perfection. There may be a time when you pull a hair out here and there. But do you know what? No one is perfect. Instead remember how far you’ve come, and realize that you have the strength to go even further.
How has Trich affected your day-to-day life?

Dave: It affected me quite badly as a child. I was the only kid to wear a cap in class, so straight away that singled me out. As I’ve grown older I’ve learned to cope with it better. It doesn’t affect my day-to-day life too much.

Eddie: The way it affects my everyday life is that I talk about it more. I try to spread awareness. Pulling is one of the ways I relieve stress, although sometimes I try to see how long I can do without it.

JC: It keeps me insecure and full of anxiety in public, not to mention I hate mirrors and myself.

BD: I feel extremely ashamed of myself. Not only has my confidence hit an all-time low, but I can no longer maintain eye contact.

Do you believe there are significant differences between Trich affecting men vs. women?

Dave: I personally think Trich affects women more than most men, as women worry more about personal image than most men. Women seem more keen to post on the Trich Facebook page, not sure whether men are more embarrassed.

Eddie: I’m sorry to say, women have it tougher because of societal beauty standards. I’ll openly admit that when it comes to dating I have my own preferences, and I feel kinda guilty about that.

JC: I do, because females have an expectancy from society to look “perfect” and flawless. Although males are affected and deal with the low self-esteem, I don’t believe it affects them as much. Then again, females are able to cover it up much easier than males.

BD: I believe men are stigmatized as “not being a real man” for having any mental illness. Women, I feel, are stigmatized more than men. When you think about it, being a woman is more normal for a woman to wear a wig or pencil in their brows and such than it is for a man. Women can camouflage it on a level that is “normal” to others.

Many women feel they’re able to cope and/or begin to heal through acceptance, not by weighing the amount of days or years being pull-free. What’s your ultimate goal?

Dave: I don’t think I’ll ever be pull-free, and I’ve come to accept that. Since accepting Trich, I’ve noticed that I don’t pull so much, because I’m not stressing as much, which used to cause me to pull more. So I guess my goal was acceptance.

Eddie: I can’t do pull-free. If I don’t pull, I’ll deal with stress in some other way, and pulling seems like the better option (again, a benefit of being a man). My goal, for the last 1-2 years has been to spread awareness.

JC: I used to think being pull-free was the ultimate goal. I’ve had less anxiety since I’ve allowed myself to just pull and enjoy the sensation. Realistically, the ultimate goal would be to find a way to end the urges and to not have all the stress and anxiety associated with fighting the urges.

BD: To stop, I don’t know if I’ll ever accept it.

What advice do you have for other men with Trich?

Dave: Accept it and be happy with who you are. Try and keep yourself busy at times you feel the urge to pull, and talk to someone about it. It was a big weight off my shoulders when I told my partner, so talk to your wife, partner or friend.

Eddie: For those who are open about it, please keep being open about it. For people who aren’t open about it, do whatever you have to do to get by. Be open about it when you’re ready to be. If you want to try and pull less, fidget toys and putting moisturizer in your hair is very helpful. For little kids with parents and friends (and enemies) who just don’t get it, introduce them to the online community. We’ll talk to them on your behalf, if you want us to. For anyone who still feels alone with Trich, you are not alone at all.

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JC: You’re not alone. Don’t be ashamed. There are many others just like you who understand your struggles.

BD: Biotin and sensitive after shave gel is a must!

By Ruth Golomb, LCPC, ME4
Suzanne Mouton-Odum, PhD
Members of the TLC Scientific Advisory Board

From the Editor: While BFRBs by themselves are generally not fatal illnesses, coexisting conditions such as major depression can be. As a service to our community, we are sharing these important suicide prevention resources.

We recently lost a valuable member of our community, Eileen Bauer, to suicide. Eileen was an active and vibrant member of the BFRB family and this tragic loss is powerfully felt by all who knew her.

The purpose of this article is not to frighten our community or to suggest that BFRBs cause suicidal thoughts or actions. But we cannot ignore the presence of co-existing conditions, such as depression and anxiety, that make treatment more complex. When hope is lost, some see suicide as a viable option.

Roughly 45,000 people die by suicide every year in the US, and among young persons (ages 15-24), suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death. Depression is the psychiatric condition most linked to suicide and is present in at least 50% of all completed suicides. We know from research that there is a higher incidence of depression in adults with a BFRB. Even more linked to suicide than depression is hopelessness, a state in which one believes that the intolerable, searing pain that they are experiencing will not get better.

If you or your loved one struggle with feelings of sadness or hopelessness, crying spells, loss of appetite or energy, hear voices or have thoughts of wanting to die, it is critical to get help immediately.

While we may not have great medications for BFRBs, we do have excellent psychotherapy and medications for depression and anxiety. Sometimes a person with depression does not even realize how bad she feels, and the depression is better observed by those around her. If you have any of these feelings or suspect that your child or loved one does, call your physician, psychiatrist, or therapist and voice your concerns. People with depression often do not want to burden others, and may see suicide as a way to take the “burden” off of their loved ones. Unfortunately, the burden in the aftermath of a suicide is far greater on the family and loved ones than the burden of depression or a BFRB could ever be. For those who face grief and agony in the aftermath of the suicide of a loved one (individuals termed “survivors”), know that you too are not alone. In the United States, it is the unfortunate reality that “survivors” number well in the millions. We are too frequently faced with this devastating type of loss. A death by suicide is often shocking and unexpected, and the grief that occurs in its’ aftermath may be very intense, complex, and long lasting. Some helpful online resources for survivors include: Survivors of Suicide (survivorsofsuicide.com) and The Link Counseling Center (thelink.org).

TLC has made great progress educating the public and professionals alike about the importance of treating BFRBs and potentially severe co-existing conditions. Even with this advancement, sufferers can still struggle mightily. If you or a loved one is experiencing serious depression please contact make contact with the resources mentioned above. Even in your darkest hour, remember you are not alone.
#SeeMeStand: BFRB Week

BFRB Awareness Week is celebrated the first week of October every year. During Awareness Week, or #BFRBweek, our community comes together to help end the isolation and shame caused by BFRBs through an awareness campaign created by the Millennial Task Force.

This year’s theme is #SeeMeStand. Our goal is to demonstrate that BFRBs are common, affect people all over the world, and cause crippling isolation and shame. Throughout the month of August, BFRB community members took a photo of themselves near a local landmark, then shared the photo on social media. Prizes were awarded to a random participant each week. Mental health bloggers and vloggers have partnered up with TLC to help spread the word about this campaign. The #SeeMeStand submissions we received in August will be compiled into a video mosaic, which will be released on October 1.

Here are a few ways you can help raise BFRB awareness:

1. Order our pre-packaged Awareness Outreach Kits to distribute to therapists and cosmetologists in your area. Each kit includes 10 brochures about BFRBs, including trichotillomania and skin picking disorder information, 10 cover letters, and 10 TLC envelopes. All you have to do is address the envelopes and send them off! Get your kits at store.bfrb.org.

2. Visit bfrb.org on October 1st to view and share the #SeeMeStand video.

3. Buy a 2017 BFRB Awareness week Tshirt. Designed by Millennial Task Force Member, Nick Santamorena, proceeds support outreach and awareness campaigns all year long! Get yours at bfrb.org/seemestand.

4. Attend a Facebook Live Chat during Awareness Week: Tune to facebook.com/tlcbfrb for live chats with members of the Millennial Task Force.

5. Share Your Story
Inspire others and give hope by sharing your personal BFRB story. Have an awareness moment you’d like to share? Is there something you want others with BFRBs to know? Tell us at bfrb.org/share.

6. Fundraise for the Cause
The BFRB community needs your help to continue funding critical research, education, and outreach programs! Start a crowdfunding campaign on Facebook or Firstgiving.com.

Questions? Contact corinne@bfrb.org. It’s easy and your efforts will make a difference!

7. Give a Presentation at Your School or for a Community Group
You can make a difference in your own town! Give a presentation at your school or for a community group and contact school counselors, therapists, physicians, and dermatologists in your area. Your efforts could result in a new support group, educating and training local treatment providers and cosmetologists, or educating school personnel. Local outreach brings people together and breaks the stigma surrounding BFRBs. Get the Speaker’s Kit at bfrb.org/ambassadors.

Here are just a few of the #SeeMeStand submissions sent in by members of the BFRB community. Visit bfrb.org on October 1 to view a video mosaic of all the submissions!
2018 Conference: Be a Presenter

April 20-22, San Francisco, CA

Clinicians, researchers, and community leaders: you are invited to submit proposals for a workshop, panel, or poster presentation at the 25th Annual Conference on BFRBs!

The TLC Conference is the only event of its kind: uniting clinicians, researchers, patients, and their loved ones for a weekend of education, resources, and inspiration. Conference presenters enjoy opportunities to network with colleagues, peers, and leading experts in this field, and waived event registration.

Types of Presentations Accepted

We specifically seek workshop proposals that:

- Demonstrate evidence-based treatment approaches for body-focused repetitive behaviors and related or comorbid disorders
- Outline the outcome and effects of current research programs
- Address common comorbid issues such as shame, stress, anxiety, self-esteem, recovery processes, or otherwise enhancing psychological and physical well-being as applicable to BFRB recovery
- Specific sessions on any of these topics for kids, teens, adults, parents, clinicians, and researchers, or behavior-specific sessions, such as skin picking, nail biting, etc.
- Research poster presentations are also accepted

Audience and Program Tracks

One thing that makes this conference special: our audience includes all ages of people affected by or interested in BFRBs. You can tailor your workshop for kids under 11 or those in middle school, teens, and adults with BFRBs, parents, spouses, and supporters, as well as researchers or clinicians who treat these disorders.

Early Career Development Programs & Conference Grants

Thanks to support from our donors, TLC now offers a special program for early career clinicians and researchers. This mentorship and career development opportunity is designed to foster interest in a career serving the body-focused repetitive behaviors community and support early career investigators and clinicians on this path. Small travel stipends are offered to facilitate conference attendance. Learn more at bfrb.org/ecdp.

Conference poster sessions are offered to encourage information exchange regarding research that is directly or indirectly related to trichotillomania, skin picking, and other BFRBs. Two grant awards are available, offering up to $1,000 each to fund transportation, hotel, and conference registration fees. Details on this program are also outlined at bfrb.org/ecdp.

Read the submission guidelines and our tips for getting your proposal accepted at bfrb.org/forpresenters.

2018 Conference: Sponsors Needed

Your support helps TLC do what we do best—bring people together to make life-changing connections with peers, support networks, services, and treatment providers.

“Sponsoring the 2014 TLC conference in Los Angeles was an absolutely wonderful experience. The TLC team worked tirelessly to create a superb program and to promote our sponsorship. I wholeheartedly recommend sponsoring the Conference to any clinician or organization that wants to broaden their reach to the TLC community.”

Tom Corboy, MFT
Executive Director, OCD Center of Los Angeles
2014 Conference Patron Sponsor

• Patron Sponsor: $10,000
• Breakfast Sponsor: $5,000
• Program Track Sponsor: $5,000
• Poster Session Sponsor: $3,000
• Tote Bag Sponsor: $1,000 (2 available)
• Exhibitor: $700 / $450 for nonprofit
• Exhibits and Brochure Display

Friend of TLC: This special partnership level is perfect for any corporation or business that cares about this cause. Your contribution in support of TLC provides you print recognition in conference promotional materials, and a charitable contribution donation receipt for your business.

Call 831-457-1004 x2 or email leslie@bfrb.org for more information.

Event Attendee Breakdown

||
| Parents/Family Members/Supporters | 33% |
| Adults w/ BFRBs | 33% |
| Kids & Teens | 25% |
| Clinicians | 15% |

45,000
WEB VISITS MONTHLY
81% OF ATTENDEES USE THE EVENT WEB PORTAL
14% EMAIL OPEN RATE
16,000 SOCIAL MEDIA FANS

20% increase in web visitors during Conference promotional period. 21% are returning users.

to create their schedules, learn about presenters and sponsors, and engage with friends.

10% click-through active links from 6 conference promotional emails, sent to 20K subscribers.

TLC posts engage an average of 10,000 Facebook users.
Letter from the Executive Director

Dear friends,

We did it! We raised $2.8 Million for BFRB Research!

With your generous response to our “Time Is Now” campaign this spring, we have reached our funding goal for the first phase of the historic BFRB Precision Medicine Initiative. This outpouring of support demonstrates just how big an impact BFRBs have on our lives – how seriously we want better treatments.

Thanks to you, our teams at UCLA, University of Chicago and Massachusetts General will be hard at work through 2019. As of this writing, they’ve already completed research with 90 subjects and we are now on track for 300. The knowledge we will gain from this work will be unprecedented, and will have far-reaching impact for all our families.

We launched fundraising for this initiative in spring of 2014. Since that time many of you stepped forward with gifts ranging from $10 to $1.0 million, with every gift being an important step toward the success of the campaign! My husband and I stretch every year to give as much as we can to TLC, and I know that many of you really had to dig deep to make these special gifts. I thank you deeply.

Everyone reading this newsletter has contributed to this important moment. Your memberships and donations have enabled this organization to survive and grow since 1991. You have chosen to be part of the solution.

As we announced in July, we will no longer be labeling your support “membership.” We all know that having a BFRB, or caring for someone who does, is all it takes to be a part of this community. It is my hope that by making our information and programs more easily accessible to all BFRB families, we will grow our TLC family and increase the number of people who, like you, decide to contribute financially to make our work possible.

We will continue our Professional and Service Provider Member program as it contributes importantly to our referral listings by ensuring that everyone on our lists is receiving the most current information about BFRB research, treatment and resources on a regular basis.

We have updated the website so that our entire archive of articles, videos and webinars is now easily available with a free log-in. If you haven’t explored our website recently, you should check it out. Lost an issue of InTouch? You can now find an archive at bfrb.org.

Need help “Talking to a Loved One with a BFRB”? The Millennial Task Force has a video for you! Couldn’t attend Fred Penzel’s recent webinar “Application of the ComB Model to the Treatment of Compulsive Skin-Picking”? Or Jon Grant’s webinar “Pharmacological Treatment of BFRBs”? You can find these – and dozens of other great presentations by the top clinicians in this field – at bfrb.org.

Join the Sustainers Circle: TLC’s Monthly Giving Program!

As a member of the Sustainers Circle, TLC’s Monthly Giving program, you can ensure that the Foundation’s programs and services are available to everyone in need. The Sustainers Circle allows donors the convenience of supporting TLC through an automatic monthly gift by credit card or by transfer from their bank account. Signing up is both safe and easy. Kindly fill out the appropriate section of the attached response envelope or sign up on the TLC website. Questions? Contact Corinne Lightweaver, Annual Fund Director, at 831-457-1004 or corinne@bfrb.org.

Your support for TLC has made all this possible, so I hope you’ll take advantage of all the help we have to offer. And please share this news with your friends and family who might benefit from the extensive library of resources that you’ve created!

With love and gratitude,

Jennifer

To access the full archive of articles, videos, and webinars on bfrb.org, click the “LOGIN” button at the top the homepage. From there, follow the instructions to create your online account!
Have you considered including a gift to TLC in your will?

Naming TLC as a beneficiary in your estate is a surprisingly simple process. It is, however, a decision that can have a lasting impact on future generations of family members and millions of people around the world who suffer from BFRBs.

If you (or a parent or grandparent) are preparing a will or working with a financial advisor on your estate plans, please contact us about the possibility of a planned gift in support of the important work of TLC. We will be glad to provide sample language, discuss options for designating your gift and answer any questions you may have. Contact Corinne Lightweaver at Corinne@bfrb.org.

Support TLC When You Shop

Are you an Amazon.com shopper? If so, visit smile.amazon.com and select The TLC Foundation for BFRBs as your preferred charity. Then, every time you use Amazon, shop from smile.amazon.com -- a percentage of your purchase will be donated right back to TLC!

Volunteer for Research

Researchers need YOU! Help advance the understanding of body-focused repetitive behaviors by participating in a research study. Volunteer by completing an online survey, or participating at one of the research centers in the US -- 18 different studies are currently seeking participants. Learn more @ bfrb.org/researchvolunteer.