



## **Compulsive Hair-Pulling & Stress** (Trichotillomania) by award-winning author / stress-relief expert **Susie Mantell**

Q: I have a problem compulsively pulling out my hair. It's like an addiction, and I hardly have any lashes left. Help please?

A: What you are describing is not as uncommon as one might think. It could be a widely misunderstood condition that involves habitually pulling out hair, and it can include eyelashes, brows or any body hair. This syndrome has a long name that will sound very impressive: Trichotillomania. Also known as T.T.M., Trichotillomania sounds scarier than it is.

If what you are referring to is Trichotillomania, a combined medical/behavioral therapy approach is often beneficial. I once taught a six-year-old who habitually twirled and pulled out the hair at the crown of his head, and knew a woman who had pulled out all of her lashes. Both were otherwise normal, well-adjusted, high-functioning people. Trichotillomania may be caused by several things, possibly including a recently discovered gene. Medication has helped some people to resist the urge to pull, suggesting there may be a biochemical and/or neurological component, as in other compulsive behaviors. While I can suggest stress management tips, I am not a medical professional. Based on what you are describing, it sounds like you would be best-advised to seek some short-term counseling with a skilled, compassionate physician and therapist, who could assess and help you to explore the best options for you and help you move past your frustration. It would be wise for you to talk with a professional with expertise in compulsive behaviors, who can sit face-to-face with you, assess your history and concerns to determine how best to proceed. The habit of compulsively pulling out hair can be unsettling so stress-reduction techniques can be most beneficial in relieving associated anxiety.

(See [www.relaxintuit.com](http://www.relaxintuit.com) )

Not unlike foot-tapping, compulsive eating, smoking, nail-biting and a whole continuum of behaviors, there is often a wish to resist acting on an impulse, but difficulty in doing so. Curiously, some people seem to pull more when they are under-stimulated (relaxed) and others, when they are over-stimulated (anxious). Many also benefit from cognitive/behavioral approaches.

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CONTINUED



**Hair-Pulling Q: I have a problem compulsively pulling out my hair.**  
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You don't have to deal with this alone. There is excellent help available to explore both the cause of your habit and the best approaches to help you to rediscover the happiest, healthiest and most satisfying quality of life possible. *NOTE: I did a quick online search. The following are not endorsements. I offer them simply as a starting place as you do your own research to discover what might be credible and of value for you to explore with a health care professional.*

Gene found at the root of hair-pulling disorder  
<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/15063018/from/RS.5>

TTM Treatment & Resources  
<http://www.trich.org>

Hair Today Gone Tomorrow  
[http://www.vachss.com/help\\_text/archive/hair\\_today.html](http://www.vachss.com/help_text/archive/hair_today.html)

Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment of Trichotillomania  
[http://www.homestead.com/westsuffolkpsych/trich\\_cbt.html](http://www.homestead.com/westsuffolkpsych/trich_cbt.html)

Trichotillomania: Out of the Closet  
<http://www.psychiatrictimes.com/trichotillomania/content/article/10168/54156?pageNumber=3>

The Hair Pulling Habit  
<http://www.hairpullinghabit.com>

The Hair-Pulling Problem  
<http://www.oup-usa.org/isbn/0195149424.html>

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## END OF THIS TIP##