Getting Better
The most effective help
to stop hair pulling!

FINALLY FREE: How Els quickly overcame more than 10 years of hair pulling through online program

How frequently did you pull out your hair before you started with the program?

Before I started with the program I pulled out hair almost every day **all over my body**, especially my eyebrows.

I also continued fiddling with the hair stubbles and ingrown hairs and always scratched off any scabs, which actually worsened things.

Because on the one hand I was losing hair as a result, but on the other hand you also saw red spots, sores and scabs on the places I had touched.

What impact did this behavior have on your life?

Usually I pulled my hairs out in the evening, especially my eyebrows. Doing that always gave me a sense of relief at first, like I was able to pull out a splinter that had been festering for days.

Then of course I saw the havoc that I had caused again, mainly making me feel angry at myself. In the morning I tried to hide everything as much as I could with make-up, which always took me a lot of time.

During the day I also tried to hide everything as much as possible: I would let my hair hang loose so you could not see the places I had touched, avoided eye contact as much as possible and never wanted to be in any kind of picture.

Since I also had sores and scabs on my legs from the ingrown hairs that I had scratched, I never dared to wear any skirts or shorts, although I really wanted

to. Even with beautiful weather I always wore long jeans, because I was so ashamed.

When people asked any questions relating to this behavior, I could never answer them and would make up excuses or quickly tried to break off the conversation.

So many times people who found out asked me: "Why do you do that? Just stop with it. Don´t do it." But there was no one I could really talk to about this and also no one knew (even today) that my eyebrows were not the only problem.

It all made me even more insecure and I started to exclude myself more and more from social interactions. Especially activities around a pool I always avoided, because it could ruin my make-up.

During the day I always anxiously verified – through every reflective object (mirror, spoon, window, …..) – that my make-up was still OK. Always with some make-up at hand in either my handbag or (coat) pocket, and when needed I would rush into the nearest toilet to make it all look good again.

And in the few exceptional cases when I had forgotten to bring my make-up with me, I held myself back even more during the day. Out of fear that I could no longer camouflage it if something or someone would touch my face and ruin the make-up. I really was afraid to go anywhere without a supply of make-up close at hand.

In the evening before going to bed or when I was home alone, I would remove the make-up – and although I did not want it – I could not stay away from the mirror and continued pulling out hairs that were too dark, growing in the wrong direction or were just annoying to me.

I could literally spend hours doing this, and the frustration when I could not get hold of a particular hair that I had set my mind on would make me pull out other hairs even more. Often I went to bed much too late, causing me to feel tired and even more frustrated the next day.

As a result of this behavior I felt strange and misunderstood. It also seemed like a downward spiral: the more others were interfering and asking questions, the more frustrated I became, and the more hair I pulled out.

The feelings of shame and misunderstanding by others made me feel very insecure, especially during the first few years when I was exhibiting this behavior. Also I found it particularly annoying to be so inhibited by it all and to be always preoccupied with make-up.

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Besides the many scars I ended up with, I now realize I also wasted a lot of time when I add up all the hours that I was busy pulling or having to apply make-up. Time I could have spent in much more useful ways.

How did Trichotillomania start with you and how long have you struggled with it?

For more than 10 years I have pulled out my hair. It started when I was 14 as a result of the stress at school during the examination period: I started to pull out hairs from the middle part between my eyebrows.

At first I did this subconsciously and I was surprised that I suddenly had so much hair between my fingers. Then the hairs came back, with some ingrown hairs with very annoying stubbles. Causing me to scratch these as a result of the itching and finally I pulled those hairs again, usually with tweezers.

Later I did this on more places on my body, especially on my knees and lower legs; because I could easily get there while I was sitting with knees drawn up at my desk to study. The behavior was at its worst during college years, particularly during the examination period, when I spent a lot of day's ´chained to my desk´.

Nevertheless, the urge to pull out my hair did not stop after I graduated, and I continued doing it for years.

How did you discover it and what had you already tried to overcome it?

At first I thought to myself that I was 'weird', since I did not understand why I did it and felt very ashamed.

I did not dare to speak to anybody about it and was very preoccupied with hiding it from the outside world. I was also often very angry with myself because I never succeeded to "just not do it."

Over the years I constantly told myself that this time I would stop, but after a few days the urge simply became too strong.

Often I would put my tweezers far away and once I even threw them away but eventually I kept getting them back, because I realized I continued to tinker with my fingernails and only caused the wounds to become larger.

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A few years later I started to look for explanations for my strange behavior and I assumed that it was because of stress. I was searching the Internet for more information and soon came up with 'Chronic Stress'. Suddenly I found a reference to 'Trichotillomania. My mouth dropped open in surprise: this was exactly what happened to me.

The entire night I kept on reading everything I could find about it. **For the first time I knew what it was and was** keen to do something about it. However, I had no transport and no financial means and because of my shame I refused to ask anybody for help. So nothing really happened in terms of treatment.

I also thought the problem would automatically cease when I had less stress, once I had graduated. Later on I decided to go to a beautician for permanent hair removal. This seemed like the ideal solution: hairs that were no longer there I could no longer pull out and could therefore no longer hinder me.

I also considered wearing permanent make-up later on as a solution to the problem. A **beauty salon** was located along the bus route allowing me to visit them occasionally without others noticing. It took all my courage to make an appointment, but I did. Thank God the beautician did not ask too many annoying questions and was willing to help me, I trusted her.

Slowly the problem improved a little: I made an appointment and tried not to pull out any more hair until then, so she could remove them permanently. I made less nicks and everything looked a little better.

I succeeded with difficulty, but with time I realized that this was not a real solution to the problem in general. The problem just shifted and I started to pull out more hairs in other places. Suddenly I started to focus on lightly colored hairs which I had ignored before.

I also realized I would not be able to wear permanent make-up as long as I kept picking on ingrown hairs. My skin would need several months to completely heal itself before I could consider such a step.

Around that time I also looked for help from a **psychologist**, but this became more of an analysis of the problem. For several weeks I had to write down when I was pulling out hair, where, in what way, how many hairs, at what moments and the feelings I had before, during and after each hair pulling session.

But I already knew upfront that I had Trichotillomania and what and when this happened, but they told me I had to follow the procedure. I also had to focus on the pros and cons of my behavior and try to find new beliefs for wanting to stop with it. No concrete solution was being offered and I simply had to show my willpower in not wanting to do it anymore. After a couple of sessions I decided to stop, since I did not feel understood at all.

Later on I looked for help from a **hypnotherapist**, hoping this would allow me to find something concrete for my hair pulling problem. The first couple of weeks after such an appointment these techniques helped a little, but sooner or later the urge to pull out hair came back so intensely that I had to give in, "just that one hair … ".

The appointments constantly worked as a kind of deadline – showing good behavior by that date – but afterwards I always succumbed again for a little while. It was a bit like postponing the behavior. Eventually after a dozen sessions the therapist indicated that he was at the end of his capabilities, and that just persisting in the techniques he had explained would be of help.

After that experience I was deeply disappointed and assumed that I had to learn to live with this problem. So for a couple of years I simply accepted Trichotillomania as part of my life, without any further efforts to do something about it.

What motivated you to find a solution to overcome Trichotillomania?

I have often waited far too long to take action for myself, always assuming in some way that I first had to overcome something before I could find inner rest and overcome the problem. First graduate, first move, first getting accustomed to my new job', …….

But the hair pulling behavior did not reduce and there were always new moments of stress. Trichotillomania is simply a problem that will not resolve itself and this became very clear to me when I reached the moment in my life of which I had always thought that once I reached that (graduated, steady job, married, home, …) I wouldn't have so much stress anymore and the behavior would probably stop.

This was a very painful realization. If it did not stop now, would it ever stop? Would I continue damaging myself for the rest of my life? Would I need to wear make-up for the rest of my life? And what scared me most: what if we wanted children? Would I have to hide this behavior from them?

What if they would invade my room at night after a nightmare? Would I have to teach them the difference between mommy with and without make-up? How would I hold myself back in my behavior in their presence? My husband knew that he could not touch my face in the presence of others or splash water in my face, but what about children?

Would they never be able to jump at me in a carefree manner to hug me or play with me in the swimming pool? No, that was definitely not what I wanted.

And the thought that scared me even more was that they would accept Trichotillomania as normal, or would even imitate the behavior.

Because how could I help them if I was not even able solve my own problem? No, that could not be the case, this had to stop and at that moment I decided to make one last attempt to get rid of this behavior and so I ended up on the website of Getting Better.

How quickly were you able to overcome Trichotillomania with the program?

I happened to have two days off and used these to fully concentrate on the program.

After the first day I had already finished the first 3 modules and had not pulled out any hair during that day. I assumed it was because I was highly concentrated during the whole day and was also very tired.

However, the next day I noticed that I still had no urge to pull out my hair. So this was after 2 days.

I never had a kind of ´eureka´ feeling, the feeling of "yes, now – in this moment – I am free". It was just a slow realization that the urge to pull was no longer there.

What did you notice as you went through the program?

My hands were quiet. I did not have the constant urge to ´search for hairs´ or to fiddle with something.

The first time I realized this, I really spent 10 minutes at the table, just looked outside, with my head resting on my hands. My hands on my cheeks without that anxiety or urge to search coming up. I could not remember the last time that happened.

I also noticed that I was no longer interested in looking in the mirror and I realized the ridiculous amount of time I had been tinkering with hairs in the past. Hairs that you can´t even see from a normal distance when looking in the mirror.

How have you tested and convinced yourself that you have overcome this?

The first time I took a bath after I had gone through most of the modules I was afraid that – without my make-up – the urge would come when I was confronted with ingrown hairs and stubbles.

But I noticed that my hands were no longer searching, I was calm and no longer interested in those hairs. Also when I was in front of the mirror at night, at moments that I normally would pull out a lot of hair, I noticed I did not feel like pulling and had no interest in staying in front of the mirror for too long.

Also in the evening, when we were watching TV, my hands remained quiet, whereas before I was constantly scratching or fiddling or was fighting the urge to not do it.

After a few days a lot of hairs came back, many of which were really undesirable (I think almost every 'normal' woman depilates hair to take care of her face) or growing in the wrong direction.

At first I was afraid for a relapse if I pulled these out, but of course you cannot run to the beautician for every unwelcome hair. So I pulled out those unwanted hairs myself, but always at times when I felt relaxed and was not preoccupied with the question 'why should this hair be gone? Later I did go to the beautician and I have noticed I no longer worry about unwanted hairs till the next appointment.

Also, after a few weeks I went swimming again. That was a wonderful experience and I noticed that my legs started to look normal again as the scars started to heal. I look forward to the summertime because I have a lot of skirts and shorts that I actually will be able to wear this time without any shame, but full of pride.

A couple of weeks ago we also went away for a whole weekend and when I was packing up my toilet bag, I realized that it was totally unnecessary to take my tweezers with me. And so I left them at home for the very first time in years.

How do you think your life has improved as a result?

After all these years when I believed that there was nothing I could do about Trichotillomania, this feels like an incredible relief.

On the one hand I feel sorry for all the years and time that I literally wasted with this behavior and its consequences, but on the other hand I am so grateful that it is finally over and I can leave it behind me.

It's a fresh start and although I still have to put on a little make-up daily, I notice I spend a lot less time in front of the mirror. My skin is healing every day and also the desired hairs are coming back. I am also grateful that the damage after all these years of this destructive behavior is not that bad after all, now everything starts to heal and look normal again.

Before I went through the program I also thought that the only option for me was to wear permanent make-up for the rest of my life. But now a lot of hair is growing back it seems that this is actually not necessary at all.

Also I now have much more time to do other things that I love to do, instead of facing the mirror. And above all: I can finally go to bed on time and have more hours of sleep, so I'm much more rested.

I also feel more confident now I have overcome this major obstacle. My life (and that of my future family) is simply much more pleasant.

What is your verdict of the program to overcome Trichotillomania?

I am very satisfied with the results and can highly recommend this program to anybody who needs help.

The program is very easy to use, the modules are explained very well and when you follow them step by step, I think everything should be obvious to everyone.

Also you can go through the program in complete privacy and at your own pace. But also people who still have trouble with the shame surrounding Trichotillomania can now do something about their problem without others noticing.

Furthermore I found it particularly useful that I did not have to travel for long periods of time, because for a session with a therapist I would be traveling for at least 2 to 3 hours, one way.

You can also take a break when it suits you best, stop for a while when you're tired or lose concentration, and revisit the material later on.

Or refresh your memory if needed. Because I can imagine that after a session with a therapist, it may be difficult to remember everything he or she said

after a couple of days. But with this program you can simply go through the module once more if you want to.

Of the modules themselves I was particularly impressed with module no. 3, 5 and 9 and I believe these helped me most to finally free myself from this behavior after all these years.

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