



Parent's Guide

How to

Learn and Practice for Habit Reversal
Training for Trichotillomania (Hair
Pulling)



MindWeal

Parent's Guide:

Habit Reversal Training for Trichotillomania (Hair Pulling) – Helping Your Child

Introduction

Trichotillomania, also known as hair-pulling disorder, is a condition where children feel an irresistible urge to pull out their hair, leading to noticeable hair loss and distress. Habit Reversal Training (HRT) is an effective therapeutic approach for managing and reducing hair-pulling behaviors. This guide will help you, as a parent, support your child in implementing HRT with a focus on developing and using a competing response to manage trichotillomania.



Step-by-Step Guide

Step 1: Identify the Habit

- **Observation:** Spend a few days observing your child's hair-pulling behavior. Note when and where it occurs, what they are doing, and how they are feeling at the time.
- **Record Keeping:** Help your child keep a journal to document each instance of hair pulling. Include details such as the time, place, situation, and any associated thoughts or feelings.
 - Example "Monday, 3 PM, watching TV, felt bored and anxious, pulled hair from the scalp." Example

Step 2: Increase Awareness

- **Mindful Practice:** Before your child can change the habit, they need to be fully aware of when it happens. Practice mindfulness techniques together to increase their awareness of hair pulling as it occurs.
 - **Exercise:** Spend a few minutes each day practicing deep breathing or meditation with your child to help them stay present and aware of their urges.
- **Trigger Identification:** Help your child identify specific triggers or situations that lead to hair pulling. This could be stress, boredom, certain environments, or specific times of day.
 - **Worksheet:** Create a list of common triggers and rank them from most to least frequent.

Step 3: Choose a Competing Response

- **Characteristics of a Good Competing Response:**
 - It should be physically incompatible with hair pulling (e.g., if the habit is hair pulling, the competing response might be clenching their fists or holding a stress ball).
 - It should be socially acceptable.
 - It should be something they can do easily and discreetly.
- **Examples of Competing Responses:**
 - Clenching their fists or keeping their hands in their pockets.
 - Holding a small object such as a stress ball, smooth stone, or fidget toy.
 - Engaging in a different activity with their hands, such as knitting or doodling.
 - Example: If your child pulls hair while watching TV, they can hold a stress ball instead.

Step 4: Practice the Competing Response

- **Rehearsal:** Encourage your child to practice the competing response frequently throughout the day, even when they are not feeling the urge to pull their hair. This helps to make the response automatic.
 - **Activity:** Set a timer for practice sessions where your child uses the competing response every hour for a few minutes.
- **Implementation:** Whenever your child feels the urge to pull their hair, remind them to use the competing response immediately. Have them hold the competing response for at least one minute or until the urge passes.
 - **Reminder Tools:** Use visual reminders like sticky notes or a bracelet to remind your child to use the competing response.

Step 5: Reward Your Child

- **Positive Reinforcement:** Reward your child for successfully using the competing response and avoiding hair pulling. This could be a small treat, extra playtime, or any other form of positive reinforcement.
 - **Reward Chart:** Create a reward chart where your child earns a star for each successful use of the competing response. After earning a certain number of stars, they receive a reward.
- **Track Progress:** Help your child keep a log of their successes. Seeing their progress over time can be very motivating.
 - **Progress Tracker:** Use a visual tracker like a bar graph to show the reduction in hair-pulling episodes over time.

Step 6: Evaluate and Adjust

- **Review:** Regularly review your child's journal and progress together. Note any patterns or changes in the frequency and intensity of hair pulling.
 - **Weekly Review:** Set aside time each week to discuss progress, challenges, and any adjustments needed.
- **Adjust:** If the competing response is not working as well as you hoped, consider trying a different response or adjusting your approach. You might need to refine your strategies based on your child's experiences.
 - **Problem-Solving:** Brainstorm with your child to find alternative competing responses or additional strategies.



Tips for Success

- **Consistency is Key:** Consistently practicing the competing response is crucial for success.
- **Be Patient:** Changing a habit takes time and effort. Be patient with your child and recognize that setbacks are a natural part of the process.
- **Provide Support:** Offer ongoing encouragement and support, and involve a family member or friend if additional support and accountability are needed.
- **Emotional Support:** Address your child's emotional needs by providing a safe space to talk about their feelings and experiences.
- **Professional Help:** If you find it challenging to implement HRT on your own, seek guidance from a mental health professional who specializes in behavioral therapy.

Conclusion

Habit Reversal Training with a focus on competing responses is a powerful tool for managing trichotillomania. By following this DIY guide, you can support your child in increasing their awareness, choosing effective competing responses, and gradually reducing or eliminating hair-pulling behavior. Remember, persistence and consistency are essential for making lasting changes.