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### Hope for Trich Sufferers

#### **A Portrait of Trichotillomania (Trich) and Its Affects on Hair and Self Image**, By Charlene Blacer.

Many Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and Anxiety related symptoms can have a negative effect on one's everyday life and restrict social activities. When a person has to "wear" their disorder in their physical appearance, it can make working and socializing unbearable. Many women wear their hair like a fanciful prop to be twirled and tossed and fluffed to perfection to enhance one's sensuality and beauty. For sufferers of Trichotillomania, they often have to face the world with terribly thinning hair, stubble and bald patches. The uncontrollable impulse to pull their hair out from the root is too overbearing to ignore, and their actions lead to an unappealing visual appearance and a damaged self image. For this reason, many Trich sufferers hide themselves and/or their condition from even those closest to them. Hats, bandanas, bad wigs, combovers... these are the makeshift tools of a Trich sufferer.

The majority of Trichotillomania sufferers are women, and a woman's self image and confidence are heavily tied in with her hair. Is it shiny, is it bouncy, is it manageable, is it thick, is it... you get the point. For many, the worst part of having Trich is feeling alone. Because many Trich sufferers are "in the closet" about their condition, there is little camaraderie and support to be found.

According to one Trich sufferer and client of mine, Melissa, "I had never met anyone who had this. I thought I was the only one in the universe, and I thought I was crazy. When I was at school, I wore bandanas to the point where I once shaved it all off just to end the hair pulling."

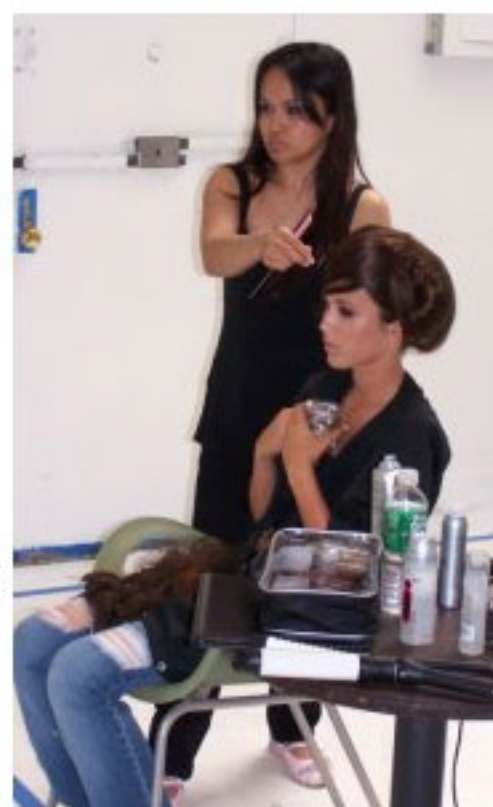
Melissa found the solace and support she was seeking through my salon which deals with many Trich sufferers, and to her advantage, finally realized that she was not alone. What can often exacerbate the hair pulling is the loneliness and shame associated with this obsessive compulsive disorder. It forms what I would refer to as a pain cycle. The Trich sufferer feels overly compelled to pull at their hair and cannot seem to resist this overwhelming urge. He or she will pull out their hair and then suffer the unappealing results in the mirror, thereby causing grief, shame and loss of self esteem. Those emotions tend to lead to more self destructive and compulsive behavior, resulting in more hair pulling.

At my salon and through my non-profit organization, HelpMe2Stop.org, we attempt to break this cycle with the use of hair pieces, gluing down hair to prevent pulling, hair vitamins, and eventually we transition into hair extensions. This feeling of community also tends to lift spirits and create hope. Hope, emotional support and validation are all just as essential as the hair work that I do. Both are important ingredients for recovery from an acute state of Trichotillomania.

As a member since 2005, I can attest that another great source is the Trichotillomania Learning Center ([www.trich.org](http://www.trich.org)) which provides workshops, treatment methods, resources, and does continuous research on this elusive disorder. My non-profit organization HelpMe2Stop, raises money for those who cannot independently afford hair restoration treatments that I offer at my salon. It is for those who require additional financial assistance.

Charlene Blacer is a hair health and growth expert and the founder and sole proprietor of the Mane For A Year (MFAY) Program, through which she repairs and restores hair that has been damaged by Trichotillomania. The Mane For A Year Program is offered exclusively at The Secret Mane Salon - [www.thesecondmane.com](http://www.thesecondmane.com)

Charlene also raises money for people in need of her program through her non-profit organization - [www.helpme2stop.org](http://www.helpme2stop.org)



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