

Here is an excerpt from our free report, “Trichotillomania and Skin Picking Disorder: Top Twelve Roadblocks to Recovery”. For your free copy of the entire report, [click here](#).



# **Trichotillomania and Skin Picking Disorder: Top 12 Roadblocks to Recovery**

**(...and some tips for how to deal with them)**

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## **Trichotillomania and Skin Picking Disorder: Top 12 Roadblocks to Recovery**

**(...and some tips for how to deal with them)**

What would you call a condition that nobody talks about...*except for the millions of people who have it*, each of whom thinks that they're the only person in the world who has it? If you repeatedly pull out your hair, this condition is called **Trichotillomania**. If you compulsively pick your skin, this condition is sometimes called Dermatillomania, but is more formally known as **Skin Picking Disorder** or Excoriation.

Anyone who has suffered with or [Trichotillomania](#) or [Skin Picking Disorder](#) knows the silent shame that accompanies these conditions every day. Part of that shame is rooted in the belief that a “normal” person doesn't tear into their skin or pull out their hair – that a “normal” person doesn't “lose control” of their behavior to the point of causing so much damage to themselves. And part comes from the fact that most psychologists and therapists are absolutely clueless about these conditions and how to effectively treat them.

Since 1999, the therapists at the [OCD Center of Los Angeles](#) have treated hundreds of people with Skin Picking Disorder and Trichotillomania. There is no one “type” of person who suffers with these conditions. Our clients come from every walk of life - women, men, teens, college students, waitresses, professionals, stay-at-home-moms, and grandparents. Treatment isn’t quick or easy, but it is effective for those who are willing to commit to taking the steps needed to learn how to manage the powerful urge to pick or pull that is at the core of these conditions.

This short e-book won’t attempt to provide you with a full course of treatment for Trichotillomania or [Skin Picking Disorder](#). But it will give you some easy to understand tips on the steps you will need to take in order to start down the road to freeing yourself from these often devastating conditions. Here are the top twelve things you ***don’t*** want to do if you are serious about overcoming your skin picking or hair pulling.

**1. Expecting an instant “cure.”** You didn’t get to this level of skin picking or hair pulling overnight, and neither of these issues will just magically go away overnight. So don’t set yourself up for failure and disappointment with this big go-nowhere expectation. Progress takes time and effort, and is often an up-and-down process. Slip-ups are normal – picking or pulling less, and then more, and then less, is a predictable and expected part of the process. Think two steps forward, one step back. Also, progress may alternate between internal and external changes. So learning to better express your internal emotions

may coincide with a temporary increase in picking or pulling. There may be some down days, but as long as the overall trend is towards less picking or pulling, then you are on the road to success. It may sound like a cliché, but it is important to remember that this is marathon, not a sprint.

**2. Thinking that the “right” medication will stop your skin picking or hair pulling.** We are licensed psychotherapists, not psychiatrists, so we don’t give “medical” advice. But we can say that we have never seen any medication *by itself* stop a person from skin picking or hair pulling. Numerous research studies have found that the key to effective treatment for Skin Picking Disorder and Trichotillomania is [Cognitive Behavioral Therapy \(CBT\)](#) combined with [mindfulness](#) strategies. That said, there are lots of medications that are used for the treatment of these conditions, and the correct medication for you may be helpful if you combine it with CBT and mindfulness. But be aware that for many people, medication may be accompanied by side effects that are uncomfortable – agitation, insomnia, exhaustion, weight gain, dry mouth. If you decide to augment CBT with medication, be consistent and be realistic.

**3. Not dealing with everyday stress.** Everyone experiences stress. But how you manage and respond to the stress in your life is up to you. Individuals with [Skin Picking Disorder](#) and Trichotillomania are often more sensitive than others to over-stimulation from their surroundings. Basic stress management practices can make a world of difference in

helping you better manage your urges to pick your skin. Some simple stress management tips include:

- Maintain a healthy, balanced diet
- Don't smoke
- Don't drink to excess
- Don't use recreational drugs
- Get regular exercise
- Get plenty of sleep
- Manage school and work so that you aren't overwhelmed
- Take up meditation, or yoga, or some other form of relaxation

Stress management is imperative as a foundation to support you in stopping your skin picking or hair pulling. What are you doing to effectively manage your stress? What is one thing that you could do today – ***right now*** – that would help you to manage your stress?

**4. Trying to stop skin picking or hair pulling without dealing with your feelings.** Lasting recovery takes into account healing on the emotional level. Not exploring and expressing your feelings often leads to picking or pulling as a distraction from feelings, and as a substitute way to “get things out.” The result is that your picking or pulling continues or gets worse, and you reinforce the belief that you're unable to deal with your feelings because they're overwhelming. You come to believe that picking your skin or pulling your hair is the best way to deal with (that is, *avoid* dealing with) uncomfortable feelings. But,

think about it: doesn't picking or pulling inevitably lead you to feel worse afterwards? So, are there other ways to get your feelings out? Perhaps journaling, talking with a friend, [joining a support group](#), or seeking the support of a professional therapist. Any (or all) of these things may make you think "ugh...no way", but one way or another, you need to find a way to deal with your feelings that doesn't involve picking at your skin or pulling out your hair.

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