

Tips for Trichsters

By Claudia Miles, M.A., MFT, Copyright 2002

1. **THE ONE MINUTE METHOD:** If you find yourself in the middle of pulling or feel a strong urge to pull, decide that you will stop (or not pull) for one minute. (Look at a clock.) Tell yourself you will allow yourself to continue pulling after this minute break. Let yourself do so. The point is, you will eventually start to feel some power over trich (if you can stop for one minute, why not longer?) After you've mastered one minute (this could take from 4 days to 3 months), move on to two minutes. Master this (same time frame) and move on to three minutes and so on. By the time you get to 10 or 15 minutes (or sooner) the urge to pull may be gone by the time you've completed this. (Claudia Miles, 2000.)

2. **STRESS RELIEF:** If you feel stressed (and/or like pulling), put a cold compress or cold pack wrapped in a towel behind your neck for 10 minutes. This increases the flow of oxygen to the brain and according to some MDs, the presence of serotonin, the feel-good chemical in your brain. (From Self Magazine, Nov. 2001)

3. **BREATH WORK:** If you are aware of the urge to pull (or are pulling), breathe deeply into that desire. Stop for a moment and breathe, using the breath to "push" the urge out of your body. Keep trying. You may end up feeling very energized and good, as well as diminishing the urge to pull. (From Christina Pearson at TLC.)

4. **EVERY TIME** you are aware that you are pulling, ask yourself, "Do I really want to be doing this?" It's FINE if the answer is yes (and, the answer IS yes if you do continue). The point is, the idea that you do have some choice and are not a VICTIM of trich will start to become ingrained in your psyche. After a while (the time frame is individual) you will start to be able to say, "no," and mean it and actually stop. If it takes 6 months to get there, fine; if it takes longer, that's OK too. The point is to start viewing trich as something possible to recover from, not something you "CAN'T" stop. It's not at all easy, but it is possible. (Claudia Miles, 2000.)

5. Get as much **AEROBIC EXERCISE** as realistically possible and healthy.

6. **READ "MIRACLE OF MINDFULNESS"** by Thich Nhat Hanh and practice mindfulness meditation at any time of day (driving, dishes, pulling) so you have tools to become more aware BEFORE you start pulling.

7. **START APPRECIATING YOURSELF.** Even if it feels fake, compliment yourself each day on the things you've done right. If you accomplished 10 out of 15 things on your To Do list, hurray!!!! Your list is very likely WAY too long.

8. PUT YOURSELF FIRST sometimes. You don't have to be "selfish" to give to yourself. Consider massages, baths, pedicures, walks, breaks, movies, time with friends, weekends away, journaling. Putting yourself first means learning to say NO sometimes to others and YES to yourself. (As Martin Buber said, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me," and "If I am only for myself, what am I?")

9. ANCHORING: Stand up, close your eyes, and remember a time when you felt loved and appreciated. It doesn't matter if it was yesterday or 20 years ago. It could have been time you were spending with a friend, a sibling, alone, with a spouse or partner, an employer, or even a stranger. The important thing was, it was a time, however brief, when you felt Loved and Appreciated. Once you really feel that feeling throughout your body, make a fist and "anchor" the feeling. (What you are doing is associating that "loved" feeling with making a fist.) Then intensify the feeling, and, again, make a fist. If you like, you can associate a color with this feeling. Intensify the feeling one last time, until you can imagine feeling truly loved and appreciated. Again, make a fist. Do this every day for 10 to 30 days. Once the feeling is "anchored," you will be able to make a fist and instantly feel that good feeling. Then, whenever you go into a situation in which you usually pull (watching TV, talking on the phone, driving, reading, going to sleep, etc.), remember to make a fist beforehand and anchor that feeling of being "Loved and Appreciated." Should you notice an urge before pulling, or even during pulling, again, make the fist, and allow yourself to feel loved and appreciated. It will be difficult to continue pulling if you feel this way.

10. URGE REDUCTION: First, practice this when you have no urge. Later you will use it when you do have an urge. OK. First, sit comfortably, and take a few deep breaths. Then, imagine that you have a MILD urge to pull out your hair. Try to imagine the feeling in your body and any thoughts or feelings that might accompany the urge. Maybe an activity or a location where you usually pull. Give yourself as long as it takes, until you feel a MILD urge to pull. Next, increase that urge until it is a MODERATE urge. Use your mind and your breath to increase that urge, to tighten, to tense, until you feel a MODERATE urge to pull. Next, increase the urge once again until you feel a STRONG urge to pull. Now, you will go in reverse. Using your breath, your exhalations, and your mind, feel that STRONG urge diminish until it becomes a MODERATE urge once again. Take your time. Do this again until the MODERATE urge becomes a MILD urge. Then, repeat this process until the MILD urge becomes NO URGE. Once you realize you can do this, practice it when you have an actual urge. The important thing is that you do not try to FIGHT your urges, but slowly reduce them, using your breath, one level at a time, from strong to moderate to mild to no urge. Going from Strong to No Urge is MUCH harder than going from Strong to Moderate.