

# Psychological treatments for Trichotillomania

## Hannah's story

Hannah is 26 years old and lives at home with her parents - Mary and Phil. Hannah has two younger siblings - Matthew (24) and Emily (21). Hannah was diagnosed with anxiety and depression when she was 14 years old. During her high school years she began hair pulling when she became stressed and this often escalated around exam times.

Hannah had a stable boyfriend for five years until 12 months ago. When Hannah's mum enquired into why she split up with her boyfriend, Hannah said there was no apparent reason. The relationship breakdown has left Hannah feeling very anxious and depressed and less confident with herself. She is still feeling quite heart broken and reluctant to accept offers of going out with other young men.

When Hannah started pulling her hair out, it was usually from around the back and side of her neck. The hair loss had been easy to hide under her long hair. However, with the recent relationship breakdown her hair pulling has become more intense and she has pulled so much out you can see bald patches.

Hannah is feeling more anxious when going out with friends and it is becoming harder to hide when she is at work serving her customers in her bank teller job. This has resulted in her feeling increasingly anxious and depressed, sleeping poorly and refusing to go out with her friends and work colleagues.

Hannah decided to get a wig but still feels this is making it more obvious and her friends have been saying "what is going on with your hair?" She usually tells them she is trying a new funky style, however having attention drawn to the baldness tends to make her pull her hair out even more.

Hannah feels she is in a vicious cycle and is becoming more depressed. Her mum and dad have noticed how withdrawn she has become and have insisted she visits the family GP. Hannah keeps responding that there is no point – they'll just give me more medication and it always makes me feel so tired. After at least a month of her parents pushing, Hannah agrees to see the GP.

When Hannah visits her GP, the GP tells her to continue her current anxiety and depression medication and refers her to a psychologist. Hannah told the GP that she isn't keen to see a psychologist because she saw one when she was 16 and it didn't help. The GP insists that she gives it another go and asks Hannah to come back after a few sessions for a review. Hannah agrees and makes the necessary appointments with the psychologist.