



## **Habit Reversal Training**

Habit reversal training is a method used to help people deal with their habits. This method has been used to help with habits such as hair pulling, nail biting, thumbsucking, and certain kinds of tics. Usually, your healthcare provider or psychologist will show you how to use the procedures. These tips will help you practice at home.

### **Make Your Child More Aware of the Habit**

1. Have your child look in a mirror while performing the habit on purpose. Do this every day. Help your child to become aware of how his body moves and what muscles are being used when he performs the habit.
2. Teach your child to raise his hand or say "that was one," each time the habit occurs. If you see your child doing the habit and your child does not notice, signal him with a gesture or word that you both have agreed to use.
3. Your child should record each time he does the habit on a 3x5 index card. Keep track of how often the habit happens. This way you and your child can tell when progress is being made.

### **Practice the Competing Response Every Day**

A competing response is an action your child does in place of his habit. The muscles used to do the new action make it impossible to perform the old habit. For example, instead of doing an eye blink tic, the child would very gently close his eyelids and hold them closed for 10 seconds.

Your child's competing response is:

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Have your child practice his competing response in the mirror. This helps him get comfortable with the response and shows him that it is not obvious to other people. Encourage your child to use the competing response:

- when he feels the urge to start the habit
- in situations where he is likely to start his habit
- for 1 minute after each time he does the habit

### **Help Your Child**

- **Feedback:** Work with your child to help him be aware of his habit by helping him identify the habit when it occurs.
- **Support and Encouragement:** Encourage your child to use the competing response and praise him when he does. Praise your child when you notice the habit is starting to go away.
- **Effort:** Many children and teens will notice a decrease in their habit within a couple of days. However, the greatest change from habit reversal training takes place after 2 or 3 months. Don't give up after only a couple of days or weeks.