

HABIT REVERSAL TRAINING (HRT) HANDOUT

3 BASIC COMPONENTS:

1. Increased awareness

Become Aware of the Behavior:

- ❖ Look in a mirror while performing the scratching, picking behavior and describe all parts of the behavior:
 - ✓ Thoughts, body movement, muscles during behavior
 - ✓ Goal: Child/adolescent is aware when behavior occurs
- ❖ Parents help their child/adolescent identify the early signs of scratching/ picking behavior:
 - ✓ Nonverbal signals (secret codes/cues/gestures/expressions) can be used.

Identify Environmental Triggers of the Behavior:

- ❖ Keep track of the trigger, behavior, and consequences of scratching/picking behavior
- ❖ Use an index card to record how often the:
 - ✓ Scratching/picking behavior occurs
 - ✓ When it occurs (where you were, what was happening)
 - ✓ Consequences (positive/negative)

2. Developing and practicing a competing response

- ❖ Competing response is an action that the child/adolescent does in place of the scratching/picking behavior.
 - ✓ Use different/same muscles used during scratching/picking behavior to perform a different behavior (e.g., occupy your hands during urges to pick your skin)
 - ✓ Use something external (e.g., gloves, put rubber bands on your finger)
 - ✓ Note: The competing response should not draw attention to the child/adolescent
- ❖ Use the competing response for as long as necessary but use it for **at least 1 minute**.
- ❖ The response can be practiced in the mirror so it becomes more natural.
- ❖ Encourage child/adolescent to use the response when they feel an urge, sensation, and/or thought, when the scratching/picking behavior is beginning.
- ❖ The competing response also should be used in situations where the habit/behavior is likely to occur (even if it has not yet occurred).
- ❖ **The competing response should be practiced approximately 5 times per day in front of the parent or caregiver!**

3. Contingency Management

- ❖ **Motivation is the key to successful treatment! It generally takes 40 weeks to break a habit!**
- ❖ Patients should be praised by parents and caregivers for every time they see the child/adolescent using the competing response behavior.
- ❖ The child could receive a reward (e.g., token) for each competing response practice.
- ❖ AVOID nagging the child/adolescent to practice the competing response.
- ❖ Successes should be celebrated!

Follow-Up: _____