

ASK THE THERAPIST

John Piacentini, Ph.D., is the Director of the UCLA Child OCD and Anxiety Program and a member of the TSA Professional Advisory Board.



Q Is there any research being done on biofeedback and habit reversal for people with TS? Would either or both be helpful for my eleven-year-old daughter?

A Habit Reversal Training (HRT) is a form of behavior therapy that has been used for treating TS for several years. In HRT, individuals are taught to self-monitor their tics and engage in an incompatible physical behavior each time they feel the urge to tic. For example, a youngster with an eye blinking tic might be instructed to open her eyes as wide as possible every time she feels the urge to blink.

Since stress exacerbates tics, relaxation training is often part of HRT. This further reduces the urge to tic and perform other TS-related behaviors.

Although conclusive evidence regarding the effectiveness of HRT is not yet available, several small studies suggest that it can be helpful in reducing TS symptoms. TSA is sponsoring two well-controlled studies right now—one for children and one for adults—which will clearly show how well this treatment works.

Since older children will find HRT fairly easy to learn and to use, I would recommend that your daughter give it a try.

In contrast, the use of biofeedback for the treatment of TS should still be considered experimental, and should probably not be considered a viable treatment option at this time.

Q Our ten-year-old son does not want us to tell his teacher and classmates that he has TS. He gets teased all the time, and is very embarrassed and depressed. What should I do?

A Since your son's symptoms are severe enough to be noticed by his classmates, I think it is very important that you talk to the school administration and his teacher about his TS. Although many children want to hide TS from teachers and peers, schools will not be able to help such children—socially or academically—if they do not have up-to-date information about TS and any other associated disorders.

TSA has educational materials (brochures, videos, etc.) that will help explain TS to your local school personnel. In addition, your local TSA chapter may be able to provide an on-site presentation at the school. Educating the teachers at your son's school should significantly improve his learning environment.

But before you contact the school, you need to discuss your plans with your son and address his fears about disclosing his TS. Try to make him understand that keeping TS a secret isn't necessarily the best strategy for coping with being teased by his peers. Ultimately, as parents, the decision is yours.

Q My husband and I are debating whether or not to have a child. He has TS and doesn't want to put a child through what he suffered growing up. I want to have a baby. What is the best way for us to resolve this issue?

A TS is a genetic disorder that can be passed from one generation to the next. Since your husband has TS there is approximately a 50% chance that your child would inherit the *genetic vulnerability* for TS. However, not all children with this *genetic vulnerability* actually develop tics or other symptoms.

The exact odds are dependent on other factors, including the gender of the child (males are more likely to develop symptoms). In addition, there is no way to predict the severity of your child's symptoms on the basis of your husband's tics.

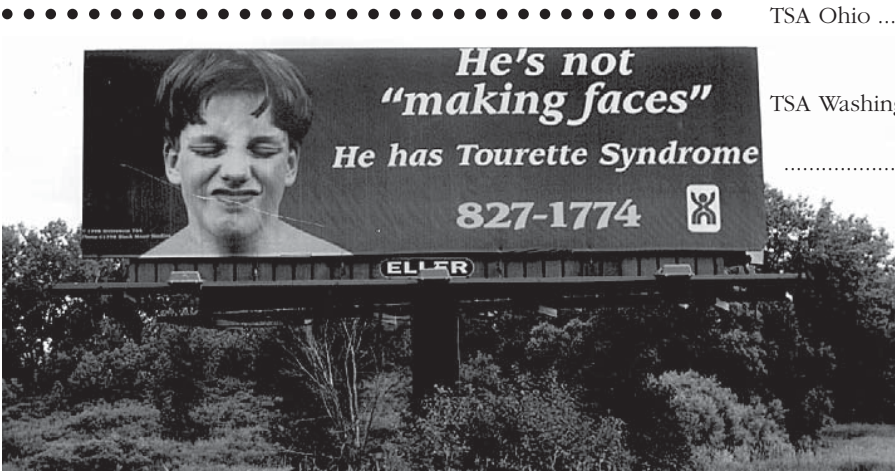
I suggest that you consult with a reputable genetic counselor. Such counseling will provide you with precise information, and help you deal with the complex emotions associated with this important decision.

CHAPTER NEWS

Chapter News on the Internet

The Internet is a great place to connect with local chapter members and find the latest information on conferences, meetings and other events. Here are a few of the chapters wired for instant communications:

- TSA Connecticut web address: www.LSDS.com/tsact
- TSA Illinois e-mail: tsa-illinois@juno.com
- TSA Indiana e-mail: tsaindianachaptr@juno.com
- TSA Maine e-mail: tsa_maine@juno.com
- TSA Metro Detroit web address: <http://members.tripod.com/~TicWithIt>
- TSA New Jersey e-mail: NJTSA@aol.com
- TSA Ohio web address: <http://www.cyberdrive.net/~tjordan/TSAHomePage%20/Pages>
- TSA Washington web address: <http://home1.gte.net/bradhawk/TSAWASH/home.htm>
..... e-mail: TSAWASH@aol.com



The Minnesota Chapter is getting attention—and raising awareness—with a public service billboard designed by chapter-member Becky Clayton and produced by Universal Outdoor (Ellen Media). The outdoor media company is generously rotating the billboard to other locations during a six-month period (a \$20,000 in-kind donation).