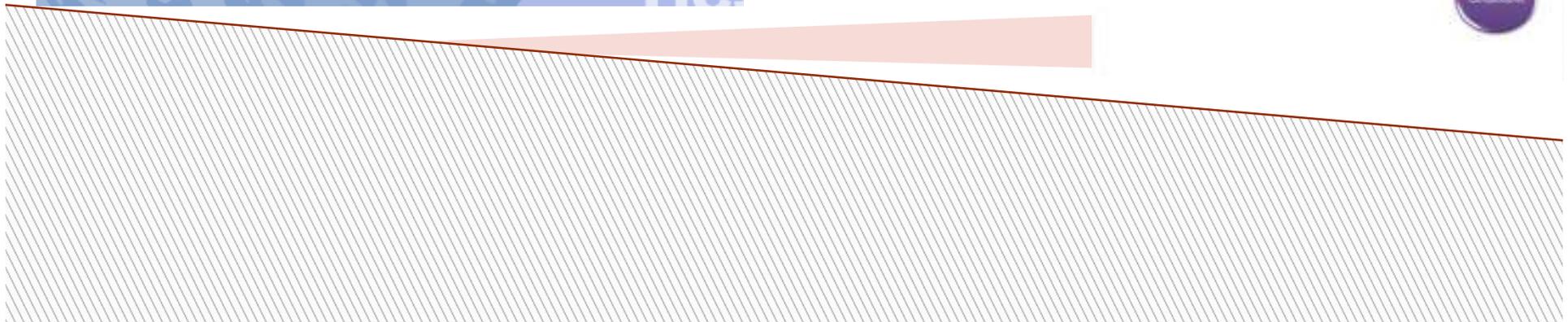


# Understanding Tourette Syndrome





My name is Ewan, I have Tourette Syndrome (TS). You may notice that I blink a lot and have a compulsion to nod my head. Sometimes I make a growling noise in my throat. These are called tics

When people with TS are good at concentrating on things they like doing, this helps them overcome the tics. It is very hard to make the brain forget to tic and this can be very tiring for the Tourette sufferer. When a TS sufferer is not interested in something, their tics can become worse, using up all their concentration and energy. This causes great frustration and can cause feelings of anger.





Sometimes children ask me why I do my tics. I have to explain that they just come on for no reason and sometimes change to different ones. It's great when people accept me as I am.

Some tics are called compulsive tics, which means that you feel an urge to do something, it's a bit like having to scratch an itch. Many people lose their tics when they get older.

It can be difficult in school for children to make friends when they have strange tics, as others can find this off putting. It is useful if the school can explain the condition to children to help them understand and help to accept people with TS for who they are.





When I am relaxed my tics decrease. Being active and using up some energy can also help. If I get anxious for example going somewhere new, my tics can also get worse.

Having TS can cause problems in school. It is best when parents and the school work together. Things that can be tricky in school are: catching, throwing or kicking a ball as tics can cause jerks, reading due to head or neck tics and vocal tics interfere with reading aloud, writing due to jerky hand or eye movements.

It is important that supply teachers know and understand TS so that they can understand how to deal with situations in class that might otherwise be interpreted as low level disruption or naughty behaviour. A fidget toy can be useful as it helps people concentrate and keep better control of their tics.



Children are born with TS, but parents don't usually find out about this until their children are older. Some people think that tics are just bad habits. My doctor explained TS to me.

Doctors will work out how badly affected people are with TS using a TS scale. There are support groups to help people with TS. Support groups are useful as it allows people with the same condition to meet up, often in fun surroundings. Some people with TS have other conditions too like Asperger Syndrome (AS) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or Autism.

TS is caused by a problem in that part of the brain which controls movement. Research is being done to understand TS better. Medication can sometimes help people with severe tics.



Some things help me, I love stroking my dog as it makes me feel peaceful. My good friends also help me and my hobbies.

## Do's and Don'ts for TS

### Do

- Try out different hobbies to help escape your tics for a while.
- Try to be as friendly as possible and spend time with friends who accept you for who you are.
- Get regular exercise
- Learn how to relax
- Be hopeful that you may lose TS

### Don't

- Blame yourself, it's not your fault
- Don't blame your parents
- Don't tolerate teasing or bullying, good schools have a whistle-blowing policy, or tell your parents
- Don't think you are the only one, lots of people have TS



If you don't have TS but want to help people who have, then here are some Do's and Don'ts

### Do

- Try and understand that tics are not performed deliberately
- Remember people with TS have feelings too
- Be friendly and kind
- Try to imagine what it is like to have tics

### Don't

- Don't copy tics from people who have TS
- Don't tease or name call
- Don't keep talking to people with TS about their tics, it just makes them more anxious

## Where to find out more about TS

### National Tourette Syndrome Association (TSA)

Tourette Syndrome Association, inc  
42-40 Bell Boulevard, Bayside, NY 11361, USA

### Tourettes Action

Tourette Syndrome (UK) Association

Help desk, Tourettes Action, King's Court. 91-93 High Street,  
Camberley, Surrey, GU15 3RN

Phone: 0300 777 8427 E-mail: [help@tourettes-action.org.uk](mailto:help@tourettes-action.org.uk)

Website: [www.tourettes-action.org.uk](http://www.tourettes-action.org.uk)

### Books for children & teens

- Welcome to Biscuit Land, A year in the life of Touretteshero, London: Souvenir Press
- Why do you do that? London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

