



## Put An End to Nail Biting with Hypnotherapy by Peter Field

Nail biting is a habit or compulsive behaviour that affects many people from children to adults. Its medical name is onychophagia.

Often, the individual experiencing the frustrating and compulsive habit of biting nails has an intense and burning desire to stop biting nails and will have tried various means in an attempt to do so.

Usually though, will power and other strategies such as painting the fingers with unpleasant tasting concoctions seem to have very limited effect when it comes to permanently putting an end to this undesirable habit.

Very often, the nail biter is acutely self-conscious of the habit, yet feels powerless to control it.

Left untreated and unresolved, the individual may well feel its effects in various areas of life since it can really affect self-esteem and social interaction.

Though it has been postulated that nail biting may be caused by genetics, in my clinical experience I have not found this to be the case. In my experience, biting nails is almost always a behaviour caused by underlying psychological drivers and unresolved emotional conditions.

Usually, there is an underlying tension, anxiety, stress or insecurity which remains unresolved at the deeper level.

Occasionally, though, the individual may have learned nail biting by copying another family member or 'relevant other' that he or she has seen biting nails. Children, after all, are wonderful imitators and can easily mimic others' behaviour.

In children, nail biting often starts around the age of 5 or so, coinciding with dental development. Research has shown that somewhere in the region of 30% of all children aged between 7 and 10, and 45% of all teenagers engage in biting nails at one time or another.

Many, of course, simply and automatically 'grow out of' and stop biting nails as they mature, but many others continue to bite nails, despite their best attempts to quit biting nails.

In extreme cases, compulsive nail biting can result in bleeding and may even lead on to infection and/or damage to the gums in the mouth - gingival injury.

Although this is an under-researched area, it is thought that in such severe cases onychophagia may be a form of self-mutilation (Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 1998, vol. 32).

Traditional treatments for nail biting include dabbing the nails and fingers with bitter tasting liquids, wearing rubber finger protectors, cognitive behavioural therapy, and medication.

Unfortunately, all of these treatments focus entirely on treating the symptom - the nail biting - while leaving the reason and underlying drivers for this behaviour wholly untouched.

And, in my experience, as long as the reasons for the existence of the onychophagia remain untreated, there is a definite chance that they will find a way to re-surface, if not through nail biting, then through some other troubling symptom.

Fortunately real help is available.

With correctly applied transformational hypnotherapy, we can uncover the underlying reasons for this behaviour and neutralise the drivers.

Once this is done, the individual is guided into re-programming his or her subconscious mind in order to handle stress, anxiety etc in a far less harmful and much more positive manner.

The length of treatment differs, of course, from individual to individual, with the majority of people taking somewhere in the region of 4 to 6 sessions in order to rid themselves of this truly inconvenient and embarrassing behaviour.

If you, or someone you care about suffers from the compulsion of nail biting or the habit of biting nails, you really can stop biting nails and put an end to nail biting with fast and effective transformational hypnotherapy.

The good news is that with advanced hypnotherapy you really can quit biting nails for good.

*Peter Field*

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