

# Forehead

Every balding man has that one moment of self-discovery that changes his life forever. Mine occurred in a 7-Eleven more than twenty years ago, but I remember it like it was yesterday. I was standing at the counter waiting for the cashier when I glanced up at the little closed-circuit security TV screen. A balding man was standing in front of the counter, wearing the exact same shirt I was wearing. I looked around the store searching for that poor schlub. There must have been another counter on the other side of the store.

There weren't any other counters.

There weren't any other poor schlubs.

The only schlub was me, and holy crap, I was going bald.  
(Incidentally, that was the last time I stepped into a 7-Eleven.)

Your balding moment of discovery might have been slightly different. Maybe you heard a “thwack” sound when a raindrop hit your head. That's not a sound you can ever forget. Maybe you were asked by the DMV clerk if you wanted your hair color listed as “bald,” or maybe your friend or colleague asked you if you were related to the actor who played Uncle Fester in the Addams Family.

It doesn't matter how it happened, the point is that knowing you're going bald is just the first step. You have to learn how to deal with that painful fact.

In her bestselling book “On Death and Dying,” Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross broke down grieving into five stages: Denial and Isolation, Anger and Rage, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance. A balding man also goes through all of those stages as he grieves for his hair loss. In my many years working as a baldologist, I have adapted Kübler-Ross’ theories and techniques for the balding man, and after years of begging and pleading from my beloved baldies, I finally put pen to paper, and created “The Balding Handbook.”

What if you don’t think you’re a balding man — do you still need the help this book provides? Listen, to be totally blunt, if some mean friend gave you this, you *are* a balding man. But here’s the funny thing, even though a jerk may have given you this book to mock you, the wisdom in its pages really will help you work through each of those stages of grieving.

I won’t sugarcoat this — there will be some painful moments. But by the time you finish reading “The Balding Handbook,” you will have found your path to hair salvation. There won’t be anything those jerks can do to hurt you anymore. Come join the rest of us, the balding-self-actualized, as we slowly and methodically take over the world.

*Yours in baldness,*

**David F. Stern**

MBA (Master of Bald Advocacy), and  
BhD (Honorary Doctor of Baldology)



# STAGE ONE: Denial & Isolation

In a lot of ways, this first stage of grieving is the most tragic because many of our balding brothers never get past it. You've seen those poor suckers yourself, with their ridiculous hats, combovers, plugs, and pieces, but have you ever really thought about how other people see *you*?

Buckle up, my friend, before you turn the page. This entire section could be one big hand mirror. Don't smash it. It could give you seven years of bad luck.

## CHAPTER ONE

# Hats: The Bald Man's Crack

I wasn't even there when you "used" that first time, but tell me if this sounds familiar at all. You were about to leave for a party and you saw it lying on the coffee table. It had been lying around the house for a while and you hadn't paid much attention to it, but suddenly you were rubbing your fingers on it gently; wondering, wishing, thinking.

"Maybe if I just did it one time."

You took it into the bathroom and indulged. When you looked in the mirror, a subtle sensation of warmth coursed through your veins. You began feeling like you did when you were a kid; young, hopeful, carefree. You liked this feeling — you liked it very very much.

Most balding men tell an addiction story almost identical to your story. It started just as innocently, but before they knew it, they were hooked on "bald man's crack" and couldn't leave the house without a hat.

## 1-1 The Baseball Cap

98.7% of all balding men in Stage One have been addicted to this at one time or another, even people in countries that haven't heard of baseball. It's so common that you might not have even noticed it taking over your life. But let me ask you this, Cubs fan: Are you really addicted to the hundred plus years of losing, or are you just covering your balding scalp with the blue hat? Don't laugh,

Yankees fan. I know you've won 27 championships and all, but if I offered you an autographed Babe Ruth baseball, would you give me your Yankees cap in exchange?

I didn't think so.

If you're over twelve years old and anywhere other than the ballpark on a bright sunny day, there's only one reason to wear a baseball cap. Any woman meeting a man wearing a baseball cap doesn't think, "Oh look, a baseball fan! How youthful and precocious!" She thinks, "Who does that old guy think he's fooling? He's obviously still in Denial."

Sometimes even at a baseball game.

Even if you honestly think you can get away with it at the ballpark, let me ask you this. What are your plans during the National Anthem?

### **Tales from the Front...**

One of my first international distress calls came from an isolated mountain region of Albania. A wife was worried about her husband Agon. He refused to take off his White Sox hat. After a treacherous voyage up the Shkumbin River I finally reached his home. "Why are you wearing that hat?" I asked. "I am big White Sox fan," he said. "They score many goals." His wife looked at me, imploring me to help. "You've never even seen a baseball game, have you?" I asked Agon. He shook his head. "I wear because I am in gang," he pretended to confess. "Flashing my gang signs, bro." A single tear trickled down the cheek of his wife. "Agon," I asked as calmly as possible, "Are you a balding man?" When he broke down and cried, he was taking that first step out of Denial.

## 1-2 The Harder Stuff

The baseball cap is bad enough, but there are some hats that might as well be laced with Denial PCP. If you ever went through a stage when the baseball cap simply wasn't good enough anymore, did you dabble in the hard stuff?

This won't be easy, but go look in your closet right now. If you find a foam cheese head, an oversized sombrero, a jaunty golf cap, a fruit salad fedora, a Gilligan hat, a cheap straw hat, a Steak & Shake paper hat, a Jughead cap, a dunce cap, and/or a Jack Sparrow pirate hat, there's a very good chance you have a pretty serious Denial problem.

If you've ever said the following sentence: "My collection of Brimwood Toppers is my own personal Sebastian Cabot tribute," stay right where you are. I'm sending my intervention crew over to your house immediately.

*"I had no idea that it had gotten so out of hand until the first time I saw a photograph of myself wearing that ridiculously large top hat. In retrospect; classic Denial."*

— Abe L.

## 1-3 Paid with Crack

Have you ever wondered why you chose your current profession? Did you choose it for the work you do, the money it pays, or did you choose it for the headgear?

I'm looking at you, cowboy. You too, rodeo clown. Mr. Beef-eater (or any other guard employed by the Queen of England), take a good hard look at yourself. Mall security guard — you too.

Not to mention you, Village People tribute band member. And if you think you're fooling me, Salvation Army bell ringer, you have no idea who you're dealing with.

Take a moment and think about what led you down this career path. Be honest with yourself. You may have based your entire life on Stage One Denial.

### **Tales from the Front...**

I once got a call from the family of Andy A. They were in a panic. "Please come help, Mr. Stern. Our Andy has one of the worst cases of balding Denial ever recorded." I told them to calm down, that I had seen it all. "No one is unsave-able," I said. "Where can I find him?" They sent me a plane ticket. Andy had moved to Switzerland to become an alphorn blower for Ricola.



## CHAPTER TWO

# The Combover

The official origins of the combover can be traced back to May 10, 1977. Frank Smith, an Orlando police officer, was issued United States Patent #4,022,227 for the creation recommended by his son Donald. Donald advised his father to grow his hair longer on one side, and comb it over his gigantic bald spot. Frank agreed, and became the first one to proudly put his name to the “Combover.”

Needless to say, he wasn’t the last.

Are you one of Frank’s followers? If so, you need to know something very important. All Stage One balding men in the midst of Denial face ridicule, but it’s hard to find one that is ridiculed more than you are.

No offense.

### 2-1 Combover Varieties

“But Dave,” you might say, “I definitely do not have a combover.”

Are you 100% sure about that? Combovers come in all shapes and sizes. Here are just a few different types, and it’s not even an all-inclusive list.

The original combover trademarked by Frank Smith is commonly referred to as *The Flip* at our balding conventions. (It’s also quite commonly used at another convention held every four years.) If you’re spending an hour after every shower flipping your hair from one side to the other, you may not be a Republican, but

you're most definitely sporting the Republican Party's combover of choice ever since former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani "flipped" his way into the hearts of voters nationwide after 9/11.

The *Frontal Tuft Fluff Up* is probably the most sophisticated combover. A FTFU wearer takes the few remaining hairs on his frontal scalp, and teases them, or "fluffs them up" above the forehead to disguise the vast wasteland behind the tuft. The Frontal Tuft Fluff Up became the Democratic Party's combover of choice when former Vice President Gore used a tiny little tuft of frontal hair to create the magical illusion of a full head of hair. Unlike most FTFUers, Gore managed to pull it off by never allowing photographs to be taken from behind, and employing round-the-clock hair magicians to make his trees look like a forest. Unless you've got the Secret Service protecting you from rogue photographers (which you don't), invented the internet (which you didn't), you've got millions to waste on hair magicians (which you don't), or you're planning on participating in thousands of police line ups, the only thing your FTFU will create is a maximum amount of snickering behind your back. After all, anyone looking at you from that angle can see how ridiculous you look.

*The Taliban*, also known as *The Swirl* and *The Soft Serve Ice Cream*, is one of the more creative combovers. The hair is grown especially long on one side, just like *The Flip*, but instead of simply flipping the hair, the Talibaner swirls his hair into a hair mat on top of his head. Former University of Illinois and New Mexico State basketball coach Lou Henson was probably the most famous devotee of this technique. He was also widely mocked. On the other hand, the Taliban has been around for hundreds of years in the Middle East. Some historians believe it was the original inspiration for the turban.