Few dermatologic complaints carry as much emotional overtones as hair loss. Adding to the patient's worry may be frustrating experiences with physicians, who trivialize hair loss. A detailed patient history, physical examination, and few pertinent screening blood tests usually establish a specific diagnosis. Once the diagnosis is certain, treatment appropriate for that diagnosis is likely to control the problem. Treatment options are available, though limited, in terms of indications and efficacy. Communication is an important component of patient care. For a successful encounter at an office visit, one needs to be sure that the patient's key concerns have been addressed. Physicians should recognize that alopecia goes well beyond the simple physical aspects of hair loss. Patients' psychological reactions to hair loss are less related to physicians' ratings than to patients' own perceptions. Some patients have difficulties adjusting to hair loss. The best way to alleviate the emotional distress is to eliminate the hair disease that is causing it. Success depends both on comprehension of the underlying pathology, and on unpatronizing sympathy from the part of the physician. Ultimately, patients need to be educated about the basics of the hair cycle, and why considerable patience is required for effective cosmetic recovery. Ultimately, treatment outcome relies on patient compliance. Rather than being the patient's failure, patient non-compliance results from failure of the physician to ensure confidence and motivation. Finally, patients with hypochondriacal, body dysmorphic, somatoform, or personality disorders remain difficult to manage. The physician should be careful not to be judgmental or scolding because this may rapidly close down communication. The influence of the prescribing physician should be kept in mind, since inspiring confidence versus skepticism and fear clearly impacts the outcome of treatment. Sometimes the patient gains therapeutic benefit just from venting concerns in a safe environment with a caring physician.