



All Children and Dentistry

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Received: November 13, 2018; **Published:** December 06, 2018

It is a well-known fact that kids despise dentists and have a constant fear of visiting the Clinic. Not kids only, but most human beings have a scary image related to Dentists.

This is a sad fact, but it is not nonsensical. It comes out of the pain they endure while visiting the Dentist and their ability/patience to withstand pain and long hours of chair sitting (depending on the case). However, I found something horrible throughout my years, especially when dealing with young children. Their parents are the one who are responsible of the ongoing fear.

You see it during the waiting period where patients are waiting and how the parent converse with their kids about what is going to be done during the visit or threaten them with needles of the anesthesia to behave and be quiet. This behavior itself will force anyone not to ever visit a Dentist, because the fear was planted in their minds and will forever be stored in their subconsciousness.

We decided to make a study research at the O6U Hospital, back in 2016, where we allowed only kids to enter the clinic and be fully responsible of themselves. We also set the cases to cover a wide range of ages, starting from 4.5 yrs. to 13 yrs., for over an amount of 150 cases in total.

The research was regarding how kids deal with visiting the Dentist and what kind of influence do their parents have on them. This Almost everyone co-operated naturally, and 3 out of 150 were scared and refused to sit still on the Dental chair out of fear of pain even before the sessions started.

I have dealt with a lot of younglings; most Dentists assure the fact that kids are the most difficult of patients to deal with. On the contrary, they are the most patient, most helping during the sessions.

We found out that, if you are honest with them, and listen to the chief complain from them directly, ask them questions directly, they open up and co-operate (keep in mind that the parents were asked to either leave or keep quiet). This created a safe, trust-worthy environment that does not allow fear to be the only emotion integrated with the visits.

Another incident regarding dealing with Kids of Autism or Kids of mental illnesses, we all know these are all sensitive cases to begin with. How can a Dentist be well experienced in dealing with all kinds of patients? The answer is simple. Be present. By being present and by being empathetic, kids start trusting you. The patient's needs and comfort are above anything.

You can start by a small talk to diagnose the case, then by asking simple questions about the life of the child. Be sure you are listening attentively and carefully and never divert your focus away from them. Kids are smart and sensitive and tend to be aware of what us adults hide and know when we are lying.

Make sure to personalize the topics one discusses during the visits and if the child starts to fear anything, please explain to them what you are going to do during the visit and future visits. It is integral that the kids know everything, this will make them curious and interested, hence no space for fear.

Kids are smart, so don't hesitate in telling them what each instrument and tool does. In my clinic, I let them be my assistant, and hold for me the mirror or the suction tube. This makes them distracted from fear and builds trust.

Communication is key to all. Good Doctors and Dentists tend to be aware of what the patients' concerns are what they fear the most. It is our job to provide them with comfort and support and never ridicule their pain. Once trust is formed, it will never be broken, as long as you maintain it with dignity.

Volume 3 Issue 1 January 2019

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