



Emotional Dentistry

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Abstract:

Smile is the best feature that we can give to our fellow beings. Smile is also said to be a facial expression indicating pleasure, favour or amusement. But, unfortunately, people are fearing to smile because of their problems like deformed jaw, misaligned and crooked teeth, or gummy appearance. This kind of people struggle to smile and show different emotions that effect their own well-being. What is an emotion? What are the emotions that are stopping people to smile? What is Emotional Dentistry? How are emotions connected to Dentistry? How are dentists going to deal with these emotions? What kind of intelligence and knowledge is required for a dentist to help patients overcome these fears?

Introduction

Emotional Dentistry focuses on establishing effective and beneficial communication for both patient and the dentist, which results in greater patient satisfaction. It deals with one's appearance most importantly their smile. Smile has a number of positive effects on our body. In this modern era people are giving their time to exercise to maintain good health and to be fit. One such exercise is smiling and laughing. One of my experiences is, during my schooling there was a park next to my hostel. Every morning I used to look at group of people intentionally smile and laugh together. When I asked my warden about that

situation she replied “peace begins with a smile and laughing out loud reduces stress and hypertension”. Besides health benefits, smiling also has social and psychological advantages. Smile reduces stress, enhances positive emotions, helps people to overcome both personal and professional problems by building good relationships. Smile plays a crucial role in our well-being. So now,

1. How do you feel about your smile?
2. How do you feel about your appearance?
3. Are you shy? Embarrassed?
4. Do you hate or avoid taking pictures of yourself because of your smile? This article will help you overcome the fear regarding the appearance.

What is an Emotion?

Lexico defined it as “a strong feeling deriving from one’s circumstances, mood or relationships with others. The American Psychological Association (APA) states that the type of emotion a person experiences is determined by the circumstance that triggers the emotion. It is said by the experts that Paul Ekman’s theory of six basic emotions are the best.

Paul Ekman’s Theory



What emotions are stopping people to smile?

Emotions such as sadness, fear, resentment, frustration, anxiety, anger, low self-esteem, negativity and most importantly depression are showing a lot of impact on individuals to stop smiling. The world health organisation (WHO) estimates that almost 265 million people around the world have depression.

What is Emotional Dentistry?

Emotions serve a wide range of purposes. They determine our outlook on life based on the events that are occurring around us. When a continuous stream of negative emotions hijacks our frontal lobes, our brain's architecture changes, leaving us in a heightened stress-response state where fear, anger, anxiety, frustration and sadness take over our thinking. What if these emotions get affected in childhood? Can children handle them? How hard will it be for a child to overcome such negative emotions? Will this emotions not affect their mental growth? Will it not affect their parents and family? I had an experience where one of my friends suffered from early childhood caries. She was bullied by all our classmates. She underwent the worst emotions that affected her mental well being at her early age. She was at a beautiful phase in her life where she could enjoy, grow and be happy. Instead she was depressed and embarrassed because of her teeth condition. She used to avoid taking pictures and sit in a room with the lights turned off. She is one strong example of how our teeth, smile and appearance affect an individual. It is not just her but also her parents who are concerned about that situation and faced lot of emotional trauma. I've seen many children of age 3-12 walking into my clinic along with their parents, narrating their situations about how much their child's condition is showing an impact in their daily life.



How are emotions connected with dentistry?

Dentistry today has changed a lot. It is not just restoring cavities, replacing missing teeth or extractions but, dentistry has evolved to modern dentistry where it is also deals with aesthetics and emotions. It is no secret that the right drug can cure the disease. Likewise, for most of the people, problems with aesthetics and emotions can be cured in dentistry. Emotional dentistry in other terms can also be called as aesthetic dentistry. When patient has good aesthetics it will automatically drive out their emotions such as inferiority, stress, depression. Aesthetics are one of the most impactful tools to help human beings in making them beautiful and confident. Aesthetics play a major role in creating a peaceful environment in individuals.

One such example is, a 23 year old male patient walked into my hospital with a history of road accident and lost his upper front teeth. When I examined his oral cavity I saw that he almost lost his upper front and back teeth. Only second molars are remained in the upper arch after his broken and avulsed teeth are extracted. I noticed that the patient is very much depressed that he has to be teeth less until he gets his final prosthesis. So, I provided him temporary crowns which eased his mind and helped him overcome the stress, fear, inferiority and depression.



How are dentists and dental students identifying patients' emotions?

For dentists and dental students' emotional intelligence plays a crucial role. Emotional intelligence is defined as the capacity for a person to recognise and to identify the diverse needs and expectations of people and own feelings and those of others for effective management of emotions. Emotional Intelligence is described by existence of 4 dominant behavioural traits such as Self-awareness, Social-awareness, Self-management and the ability to manage relationships. Emotional intelligence is a trait of a capable

and efficient doctor. A dentist should manage their professional and personal emotions along with what their patient is undergoing.

Dental education is one of the most challenging and stressful fields of study as dental students are expected to acquire diverse competencies such as academic and clinical along with the interpersonal skills. So, dental students should be taught about managing emotions both their own and also patients'. They should be able to identify their patients' emotions while interacting with them and deal accordingly. This will increase the rapport between the patient and the doctor/ student which creates a healthy environment.

Conclusion

Emotions play a crucial role in leading one's life. Emotional dentistry is the chief cornerstone to achieve a healthy relationship between the patient and the doctor. Understanding patient's emotions will help the dentist to take wise and correct dental decisions which create happiness for both the parties. Dentistry has changed a lot and evolved into modern dentistry. It offers wide range of treatments such as Dental Implants, Laser treatments, Immediate dentures, temporary crowns, CAD CAM technologies in oral surgeries and prosthodontics, Orthognathic Surgeries, cosmetic dentistry, bleaching, Orthodontic treatments, smile designing, smile corrections, which help patients to overcome negative emotions about their smile, appearance and teeth.

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