

Overcome Your Fear

According to the American Dental Association, an estimated 40 million Americans avoid the dentist because of fear and anxiety.

If you fall into this category, you can probably relate to your friends and neighbors who feel this way as their dentist appointment approaches on the calendar.

Why are people so fearful of dental visits? Many people associate pain or uncertainty when thinking about their dental experiences. It doesn't have to be this way. Your dental professionals are there to ensure your comfort and wellbeing.

Instead of treating a trip to the dentist as an inconvenience, think of it as the most effective way of making sure your teeth are as

healthy as possible. If you let fear overtake your mental connection with the dentist, you may put off critical appointments or procedures. Doing so is a surefire way of opening the door for future dental health issues.

TALK ABOUT YOUR FEARS

Studies have proven that the most important factor in overcoming dental anxiety is good relationship with your dental professional and his or her staff. If you trust your dentist, you are more likely to feel at ease in the dentist's chair.

Open the lines of com-

munication with your dentist to share how you're feeling. Be honest and frank by explaining why you are anxious. Dentists are trained in easing patient fears and delivering outstanding bedside manner.

If you feel like your dentist is lacking in any of these areas, it's time to search for a new dentist.

WHAT TO DO AT THE DENTIST

There are also things you can do when the time comes to walk through your dentist's doors. Follow these tips from Delta Dental:

- Focus on breathing regularly, deeply and slowly during dental procedures. This will help facilitate the flow of oxygen throughout your body and decrease any feelings of panic.

- Ask your dentist if you're allowed to wear earbuds to listen to your favorite band or podcast during your visit. Doing so can serve as a welcome distraction from any sounds of the dentist's office that make you feel uncomfortable.

- Avoid caffeine before a dental appointment. Instead, eat

high-protein foods that produce a calming effect.

- Try to choose a time for your dental visit when you're not under a time crunch. This means avoiding tight windows such as lunch breaks or before work.

- If you are looking for a dentist, ask friends and relatives for their experiences and recommendations. A good review from a trusted source can start you off on the right foot.

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