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HOW DO I DEAL WITH DENTAL ANXIETY? :

FOR DR. ROZE BIOHEALTH CLINICS | MONDAY April 25TH, 2022

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Dental anxiety is the condition of feeling fear, anxiety and stress when visiting the dental clinic. It can be as simple as general unease or a full-blown panic attack at even the thought of visiting your dentist or hygienist.

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In some cases, the sheer phobia of visiting your dentist could stop you from going at all, thus putting you at risk of many dental problems that can arise from not having regular check-ups and professional cleaning.



Without these regular dental visits, you increase your risk of gum disease and other dental problems which could lead to tooth loss, damaged teeth and overall poor health in general. You need to first recognise that you have a problem with dental anxiety that is causing you to avoid the clinic and reach out for help in overcoming these fears.

1/- Who is most affected by the condition of dental anxiety?

You can fall into any age group if you have a dental anxiety condition, such as children who have had a terrible experience or adults who have never been able to relax in the dental chair. Everyone has the potential to overcome these fears with the right coaching, approach and relaxing environment and techniques.

2/- How do I know if I have a case of dental anxiety?

Your dental anxiety may be only the fear of going to the dentist, but this anxiety does not stop you from visiting and carrying out your treatments. With a more severe dental phobia, you might find you regularly miss your appointments and avoid particular treatments. You might find you suffer from some of the following conditions:

- Inability to sleep 1 or 2 nights before your dental appointment
- Racing heartbeat and possible shakiness before and during appointment
- Visible distress
- Low blood pressure and possible fainting
- Trouble breathing or shortness of breath

3/- What may have caused my dental anxiety?

There are many reasons and/or combinations of causes for dental anxiety. It is good to try and understand what these causes could be so you can think upon them more rationally to help solve your anxieties.

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- Previous dental pain
- Trust issues by feeling out of control and not able to see what is going on in your mouth
- A traumatic dental or medical experience
- Trauma to your head
- General anxiety, depression or post-traumatic stress disorder
- An embarrassment of your mouth and teeth
- Other anxiety issues that are reflected in the dental situation

4/- What can I do about my dental anxiety?

Now that you realise that you have a problem with dental anxiety, you can reach out and talk to someone. You will find that you are one in many that suffer from this issue. Start with the following steps:

- Talk to your dental specialist. They are skilled at putting nervous patients at ease and will offer many solutions.
- Ask your dental specialist to explain every step of the way, showing you the equipment and materials used.
- Ask your dentist or hygienist about a tailored treatment plan that will help you with your procedures.
- Try coping techniques such as: deep breathing, meditation, a stress ball, progressive muscle relaxation, distractions (music, TV screens etc.)

5/- How can I visit the dentist if I have a more severe form of dental phobia?

Dental phobia in a more severe sense may require more serious intervention to help you through your dental visit. First talk to your dental specialist and together you can come up with the best method to help you. Some solutions may involve:

- Relative analgesia (or happy gas) - is administered through a face mask and while breathing it, you will feel relaxed but very much awake.
- Relaxing medications - can be prescribed by your doctor or dentist and taken shortly before your appointment.

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- Conscious sedation – medication that is received through an IV drip by a specialist sedationist or anaesthetist. You may drift off but will be responsive.
- General anaesthetic – medication that is administered by a specialist dentist or anaesthetist and will put you “to sleep”. You will not be aware of the procedure and will wake up when it is completed.

Whatever your level of dental anxiety, help is available to you if you are finding it difficult or want to talk about it. If severe enough to stop you from visiting the dentist, you need to seek assistance to help you get into your friendly neighbourhood dental chair and prevent any oral health issues that may become more severe if avoided.

To learn more about our anaesthesia procedures