

# **The Top Three Factors You Must Consider When Choosing A Dentist**

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# **The Top Three Factors You Must Consider When Choosing A Dentist**

**By Charles Briscoe, DDS  
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**The year 1980 was an eventful one for me.**

I graduated Dental school at Georgetown University and moved back home to Mountain View, Ca, in the Bay Area; I met a young lady at a Stanford-USC football game I would date and then marry a couple of years later; I passed the California dental board and started working as an associate in a couple of dental offices; and I purchased a quaint 3 bedroom-2 bathroom house in Cupertino.

When I started dentistry school just over 30 years ago, gas was only \$0.36 per gallon, I was single, and dentists were putting lead and mercury in people's mouths. My how the times have changed! Now we have low-radiation digital x-rays, white porcelain fillings, my wife and I are getting ready to send our son off to college, and gas is over 3 bucks per gallon!

As a young kid growing up in the Bay Area, my father worked in finance for a company that dealt with government contracts. I never could relate to exactly what he did. His hours were terrible and he traveled a lot.

I wanted a profession, not a job, where I could control my own work schedule, my location, my travels, and my responsibilities.

**Dentistry was a perfect match!**

My experiences with the dentist while growing up had always been very favorable. He never hurt me, and I have a very tender mouth.

And my orthodontist was great. He seemed to practice effortlessly, had a beautiful office with an attractive group of assistants, and he drove a fancy little Mercedes 190 SL.

Early in my career, I had the opportunity to associate in a couple of different offices. In one, I saw how NOT to treat a patient (I didn't stay there long). In the other, I realized all the possibilities available to me as a general dentist if I treated the patients as people first, did what I said I would do in the time frame agreed upon, and did it right the first time.

**The other important point I gained from this experience is the concept of gentleness.**

**SAFE and GENTLE!**

The term is overused and abused, but there is no reason to be ripping around in people's mouths.

**As a person with a tender mouth myself, I have practiced my whole career the fine art of gentleness – during examinations, injections, and treatment.**

It became clear at that point that learning and continuing education was the key to my improvement as a clinician and a healthcare provider. I was fortunate enough to identify the premier post-graduate educational opportunity in the early '80s that would influence the direction of my practice.

My studies at the **Pankey Institute** taught me about the foundations for optimal dental health and optimal patient-doctor relationship. To date, I have taken well over a thousand hours of continuing education.

As my education continued, my skills improved and my speed and efficiency increased. My confidence grew, and I left my associateship in favor of ownership. This allowed me to bring into play all that I had learned and would continue to learn. **It also allowed me to utilize the new technologies that make dental treatment so much more comfortable and efficient.**

Along the way, Nancy and I married and have one child, a young man in high school. He swims competitively, training everyday but Sundays. And as a family, we vacation, golf, ski, bicycle and play at the beach.

Our relocation to La Jolla has allowed us a more laid back lifestyle with a great climate. I have limited the number of services we provide so as to become a specialist in the restorative, cosmetic, and implant procedures we perform. I still adhere to the philosophy of offering the optimum treatment appropriate for each person at that particular point in their life, treating patients as people first, doing what I say I will in the time frame agreed upon, and doing it right the first time.

**What's really important here is that you really need to be regularly going to a dentist.**

**ALL dentists have basic training and are able to generally take care of you and your oral health.**

**Much like finding the right 'significant other', there are a lot of differences and a lot of it comes down to personal preference.**

### ***Finding the right dentist is not an easy task.***

What's right for some people won't be right for others.

The right dentist for some will be the one closest to their home or place of work. Some may travel great distances and some want it to be within walking distance.

For others, it will be the one that is opened the latest, or works on the weekend.

Still others will pick a dentist on a list from their insurance company.

Those all are valid reasons.

**However, the top three reasons to pick a dentist involve more than hours or closeness or insurance lists. In fact, regardless of where you live, the following three factors are of critical importance.**

## **#1 – You want and need an open and honest line of communication.**

You really want to find a dentist and a dental team that listen to you and hear what you are saying.

You really want an open and honest line of communication.

The dental team needs to learn what is important to you, the patient, regarding your mouth, gums, teeth, smile, and chewing ability.

We had a very successful businessman come in recently that **left his previous dental office of many years because the office was not hearing what he had to say.**

His wife had sent him in and they wanted to know if we could improve the appearance of his teeth. He didn't want to hear about cavities or gums or anything else. And, he wanted it done immediately.

Once we heard him, and realized he was laser-focused on his appearance, we answered his concerns and created a new smile for him and his wife. She was happy and came in to see us for her dental care.

He then became interested in what he **needed** once we gave him what he wanted.



Based on your input, your dentist can develop and present an individual and customized treatment plan for current and long term dental health.

He or she can explain the treatment options from the most simple and least expensive to the more complex and costly: a plan of treatment just right for

your needs and your budget. And, provide all the information needed to make your informed decision.

Belinda came to see us recently as a new patient. She is a film producer and just finished another project. She has a mouth full of fillings and crowns and has some awareness of a couple of teeth in particular. We performed our complete and thorough exam with X-rays and discovered several areas of decay around old dental work. Belinda's gums also needed treatment. We discussed options for her treatment and proceeded with the option with which she is most comfortable. Belinda had a desire to start with a specific procedure and have longer appointments to minimize the number of visits.

**You may be thinking you don't "need" anything because you are not in pain.** Too often, things are happening and old dental work is breaking down, or your gums are becoming infected, before you feel pain.

Jerry is also a new patient for our office. His wife has been with us for a while. They had moved to La Jolla a year or so prior, and he had been visiting his dentist of 20+ years while back East on his business travels.

Now, he wanted to establish a local dental home for his care. Jerry has had nice treatment over the years, with some porcelain crowns replacing old silver fillings. Other areas of his mouth have fillings in need of replacement and gums in need of attention.

Jerry did not feel he "needed" anything as he was not in pain and no teeth were broken. But, after our exam and discussions, he came to understand our concerns with his current dental condition and the options available to him.



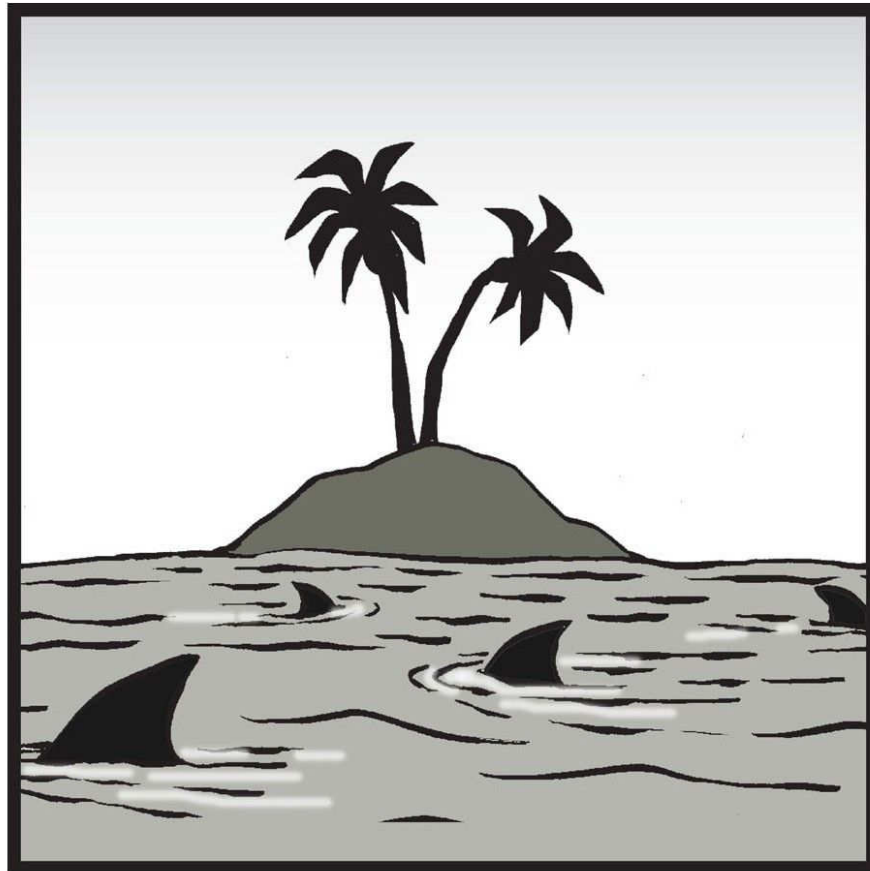
***Keeping this open and honest line of communication is the most critical factor in making sure you feel comfortable with your dentist.***

## **#2 – You want a gentle and caring dentist and dental team.**

A gentle, caring dentist and dental team are another top priority you should consider when selecting a new dental home.

A caring chairside manner is a must for most of us.

**The mouth is a tender area, but dental procedures don't have to be painful or unpleasant.**



***A VISIT TO THE DENTIST  
SHOULD BE EASY***

Let me say that again because its important...

**Dental Procedures Don't Have to be Painful or Unpleasant**

*This is often news to those who may have had a bad experience in the past!*

You want an office whose top priority is you and the management of your comfort and your fears. Your experience in the office has to be one of the utmost importance to the dental team.

If you are just a mouth to the dentist and his staff, you'll never experience all that gentle and caring dentistry can be. You want to be treated by "people persons" that enjoy what they do, not an office that is judgmental, scolds and lectures.

Rob and his wife, Judy, joined our office about five years ago. She is quite comfortable in the dental office and had been for some time. **Rob, on the other hand, is a white knuckler.**

His gums were a mess, and he held on to the chair so tight, I thought he might pull the chair arms off. We used nitrous-oxide (laughing gas) to relax him, just so we could clean his teeth. That took several visits.

Then the cavities. Each step of the way we took our time, were very gentle in our treatment (even the injections) and treated Rob with TLC. Over the years, we don't need nitrous anymore, Rob takes good care of his mouth so that we are dealing mainly with maintenance, and he laughs and jokes with us when he is in the office.

**Rob knows we are not going to hurt him, we take good care of him, and when he does his dental homework and comes in regularly to see us, his visits are easy.**

Some people stay away so long and only seek treatment when something hurts. Even then, the right dental office can manage the situation.

Rob showed up to our office recently after not seeing a dentist for twenty-five years. **At sixty years of age, he had not been to a dentist since the mid 1980s.**

Needless to say things were starting to hurt, or he might have stayed away for another twenty-five years (he jokes that now that we are finished with his immediate treatment, he won't be back until 2035).

We discussed his concerns at his initial visit, and decided to use Oral Conscious Sedation to make him comfortable and relaxed. The added benefit with OCS is that he can sleep through his appointments and have no recollection of the procedures.

Bob wanted his broken down fillings that were hurting replaced with the “white stuff”, and he wanted a cosmetic enhancement done on his front teeth.

We have spent several visits together cleaning up the gums and the teeth and **creating a new smile for Bob that is years younger than his age.**



And, he doesn't remember all the time he had spent in the office with us. An added benefit, which I anticipated, is that Bob is feeling more comfortable with his mouth and more confident in us and the dentistry, so I'm sure we'll be able to have Bob in for maintenance cleanings without sedating him.

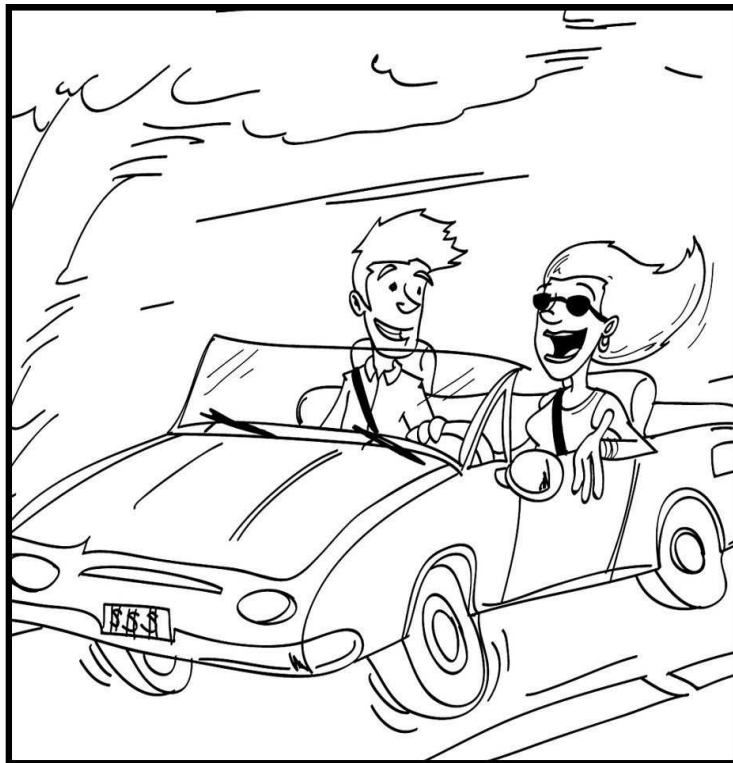
***The right dental staff never makes you feel poorly if you haven't been to the dentist in 20 days or 20 years.***

***We all sometimes procrastinate but with a gentle and caring dentist AND dental team, you don't need to procrastinate any longer.***

### **#3 – You want a comprehensive approach to your overall health, not just “teeth”.**

This final and important factor when selecting a new dental home involves competence, expertise, speed, efficiency, techniques and technologies.

Top dental offices will take a comprehensive view of you and your dental health through a thorough evaluation and exam of the soft tissues and muscles, the jaw joints, the gums, the bite, the esthetics and the teeth. This will involve digital X-rays (with up to 90% less radiation than normal X-rays), laser cavity detection, intra-oral photographs (so you can see what the dentist sees), and smile pictures to evaluate how your smile looks.



*DR. BRISCOE AND HIS STAFF  
HAD ME ON THE ROAD AGAIN  
IN NO TIME!*

The dentist's experience and expertise are crucial to a great outcome. You don't want to have your whole mouth redone or your smile enhanced by a dentist that usually treats one tooth at a time.

Vanessa came to see us about her bite – she could not find a comfortable position in which to close her teeth together. A patient of ours on whom we had adjusted her bite referred Vanessa for evaluation.

We were the sixth office to consult with her about her bite and the fourth one to do actual treatment. Several teeth had crowns placed and then replaced by these dentists. One of the teeth needed a root canal.

Each doctor proclaimed their treatment would solve her bite problems. Having completed all the course work at the Pankey Institute years ago, and having utilized that knowledge with my patients, I found Vanessa's situation to be straight forward. We adjusted her bite, in relation to her jaw joints, replaced several crowns in to the proper bite, and Vanessa is now comfortable, able to relax her facial muscles, and can focus again on living her life.

Mary is another patient that had been through much dental trauma prior to finding us. Our lab man knew her and referred her to our office. She had been treated by a couple of dentists and was quite distressed when we met.

She had eight new crowns that didn't fit well or work well. One crown was loose and one was out, and it needed a root canal. Someone calling himself a cosmetic dentist had tried to create a new smile for Mary and didn't seem to have a clue how to do that, or how to please Mary.

**The most important time Mary and I spent together was learning what Mary wanted to look like and feel like.** I learned about her dreams and aspirations and we mapped out a course to accomplish all that for her in as few visits as possible.



Using state of the art techniques and technologies goes a long ways toward ensuring a comfortable and positive conclusion to your dental care.

And since your time is of the utmost importance, a well organized dental office can operate with speed and efficiency to minimize your time in the chair and the number of visits you need to make.

We have a retired MD who is comfortable sitting in our dental chair for only 45-60 minutes at a time. We schedule all his procedures (cleanings, X-rays, cavities) to begin when he arrives and end within his time frame. The whole office is alert to his requirements and we keep him constantly updated each step of the way through completion of his procedure. Our efficiency is the key.

Every age group has its own special dental concerns. Whether it's the mature dental patient working to save their teeth for the rest of their journey, or the very young dental patient discovering what going to the dentist can mean, and all those in between, the right dental team can make all the difference to you.

**This article is by Dr. Charles Briscoe DDS, of La Jolla Dental. He sees patients from around the world and San Diego in his practice located in the heart of the La Jolla Village.**

**He is offering a free consultation if you contact his office at 858-454-3221 but only for a limited time so call and schedule your appointment today or visit [www.LaJollaDental.com](http://www.LaJollaDental.com)**