

## Dental Anxiety? Let Us Help!

One of the biggest compliments that we hear from our patients is that when coming here to Northwood Dental, they have years of dental anxiety removed after just one visit! Maybe the reason you are reading this article is that you too struggle with fears of the dentist. **WE CAN HELP!**

Many people worry about going to the dentist. You may be very nervous and may actually feel sick to your stomach. Some people become so nervous that they just don't go to the dentist. But this can lead to serious health problems, including infected gums and teeth, bone loss in the jaw, difficulty chewing, and lack of self-confidence because of bad teeth or bad breath.

To help get over being nervous about the dentist, it is helpful to first understand why you may be nervous. Reasons include:

- Having had a painful or bad experience at the dentist, including insensitive comments made during your visit. The smell of the office or seeing or hearing the dental tools (such as the sound of a drill) may bring this back.
- Feeling helpless or out of control. Being confined to the chair and not being able to speak and communicate may cause this. The precautions your dentist takes, such as wearing a mask and gloves, may add to this feeling.
- Being embarrassed about the condition of your teeth.
- Hearing about others' bad experiences at the dentist or being influenced by how TV, newspapers, or magazines portray them.
- Fearing the unknown, including the procedures your dentist uses.

To help feel less nervous about a dental visit, try the following:

- **Talk** about your fears. Tell your dentist that you are nervous, and try to explain why. This way your dentist can do everything possible to put you at ease. If the sound of a drill bothers you, ask your dentist if he or she has music and headphones. If not, bring your own audio player and headphones.
- **Ask** your dentist about what is going to happen and why. If you understand the steps of getting a filling, for example, you may feel less nervous about it. Ask your dentist to tell you when he or she is moving from one step in a procedure to another step. If you talk to your dentist and feel that he or she is not listening or not making an effort to help you feel at ease, ask to see another dentist.
- **Make** your dental visit at a time when you are not rushed or under pressure. An early morning, late afternoon, or Friday may be the best time, as you may not have to worry about missing school or work.
- **Agree** on hand signals to communicate pain, discomfort, or the need for a break.
- **Use** relaxation techniques. As you sit in the chair, try deep breathing or thinking about a favorite activity or place.