

HEALTH AND FITNESS

25% OF PEOPLE ARE SCARED OF VISITING THE DENTIST

ACCORDING TO THE BRITISH DENTISTRY ASSOCIATION

WITH THE BEST DENTISTRY IN THE WORLD AVAILABLE TO ISLANDERS IS IT THE SAME FOR US AND HOW DO WE COPE.

MARK SHIELDS INVESTIGATES.

It's true. A Recent Survey by the British Dental Association Found that 25% of people were scared of visiting the dentist. In fact you can double that amount for people that suffer with some form of anxiety when sitting in the dentist chair.

Guernsey is renowned for excellent dental care although equally famous for the cost of the treatment in many cases.

Recently a client of mine was faced with a bill of £60,000 although she knew well in advance this was the cost of her treatment and her trust fund financed the deal accordingly.

Is it the same for Islanders?

Surprisingly the statistics are consistent with the UK in the Channel Islands with 1 in four islanders scared of visiting their dentist commonly blaming cost as the reason they don't go as frequently as they should.

Even top quality and highly reputable dental care isn't enough to stop people worrying. This proves it isn't the dentists themselves that cause the fear but the patient's perception of what is going to happen to them that is to blame.

Other people's horror stories combined with a fear of the unknown certainly don't help.

In fact it is said that 1 in 10 of us some 10% suffer with a dental phobia and can't go as a result.

What is Dental Phobia?

According to the American Psychiatric Association a phobia is described as an irrational and excessive fear of an object or situation.

In most cases the phobia involves a sense of endangerment or a fear of harm. In the case of Dental Phobia this is a fear of being trapped in a situation where they feel unsafe and may be harmed physically.



People suffering with this normally worry weeks in advance of their appointment and sometimes when it comes to it can't go or even request a general anaesthetic to avoid putting themselves the feelings of dread and fear they are so terrified of experiencing.

What are The Symptoms of Dentistry Phobia?

Common Symptoms include:

- Panic
- Anxiety
- Sweating
- Breathlessness

In some cases depending on the severity of the fear symptoms can escalate into a full blown anxiety attack. Once experiencing something like this some individuals struggle to visit the dentist again, let alone get back in the chair and may need professional help to get them through.



I think it is important to recognise like anything we can experience different levels of fear depending on our experience. For example, the patients that experience pain are far less likely to want to go again as they build up a fear of not wanting to experience the same pain again.

Some people who rarely go often experience a fear of the unknown as they often can't recall their last visit.

Common reasons behind the fear:

- Fear of needles
- Fear of the dentist drill
- Lack of control
- Feeling trapped and vulnerable

Treatment for dental phobia

Choose your dentist well. Go to a dentist that has treated friends and family successfully. This will inspire you and give you confidence which will help combat

the fear.

Share the fear and experience with others. Although a difficult discussion point, you will find some of your colleagues and friends will have the same fear. Find out which dentist they use and learn how they overcame their fear.

Participating in decisions about your treatment can give you a feeling of control that can help you to feel less anxious.

To help lower your anxiety during the appointment, ask your dentist to explain what's happening at every stage of the procedure. When you know what the dentist is about to do next, you can prepare yourself and you won't be taken by surprise.

You may feel embarrassed to discuss your fears. Remember that you are not alone. Fears are not uncommon. Once your dentist knows what the issues are, he or she will be better able to find workable solutions.

One way to reduce stress during a dental appointment is to distract yourself with something more pleasant. Some dentists provide headphones (or you can bring your own) so you can listen to music.

Learn some effective relaxation techniques. When you're tense or upset, your body releases "stress chemicals," such as adrenaline. These chemicals cause a variety of physical responses. Your muscles tighten, you breathe faster, and the pain receptors in your brain become more sensitive. These reactions themselves can make you feel more fearful and anxious.

Hypnosis is excellent when dealing with phobias of any kind. Hypnosis is simply a technique that creates a profound state of relaxation. The effects of hypnosis are similar to the effects of meditation, and you may be able to practice on your own. Some people with dental phobia sometimes ask their Hypnotherapist to accompany them to the dentist's chair and hypnotise them when they are having their treatment.

NLP is also very successful when dealing with phobias. It works by re-programming the original cause and subsequent experience of the phobia simply by implanting your desired experience and outcome into the unconscious mind.

For any further information on the article or how to deal with phobias, call Mark Shields or Hilary-Jane Evans direct on Jersey 01534 608833

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