



Beyond Fear

MAKING DENTAL PHOBIA A THING OF THE PAST

Providing information, education and support to encourage, inspire and empower you to deal with your dental anxiety, fear or phobia

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Finding the Right Dentist

The time has come, you have finally realised that the next step is the one for you.

You are ready to seek the professional help you require. This is an important time and one that you need to consider carefully.

It may have taken you years to get to this point so a little time in ensuring you make the correct choice is well spent.

You must realise that, in order to beat your fears, you will need to build a trust relationship with the dentist you choose. You will need to be able to see beyond your fears and trust in your choice of dentist. You will need to ensure the dentist you choose will be able to provide the time, patience and understanding you need.

Before you do anything else you MUST identify what you need from a dentist in order that you can make an appointment that you can cope with?

There are two important steps that need to be followed if you are to ensure that you know exactly what you need to do to make that appointment. These are:

1. Identify exactly what stops you from making an appointment.
2. Sort this list in order of importance.

Once you have done this you are able to approach a dentist and tell them what you need from them in order to make it possible for you to go through with your treatment.

Recommendation is by far the best way of making this first contact.

Ask friends, relatives or loved ones if they know of a dentist that may be able to help. If not then scan the adverts for dentists that state they deal with nervous or anxious patients. However, it is vitally important that the dentist will work with you in the way that YOU need and they are willing / able to enable you to deal with all the things that are stopping you from undergoing treatment.

When you have located what you think maybe a suitable practice the next thing to do either is telephone or write to them. Explain *exactly* how you feel, what you need in order to be able to undergo treatment and then ask them if they can help.

There is a [questionnaire available for download](#) to help you explain exactly how you fear. [Click here](#) for a step-by-step process to make it easier for you to discover what you need to be able to undergo treatment

It is important to be truthful at this point with yourself and the dentist. Do not be ashamed of your fears. Everyone is afraid of something. You are now making an effort to beat those fears and if you have the right dentist they will respect your honesty and just how big a step you are taking.

You will be able to decide from the reaction you get to this first contact if proceeding with them is the way for you. You need to feel comfortable with the dentist so don't rush at this point. It was hard to get to this point but so easy to get "kicked back" into your fears if you make a wrong choice at this point.

What techniques are available to help?

- Relaxation
- Hypnosis
- Inhalation sedation
- IV sedation

Not all of the above are suitable for all people but it is important to be aware of their existence. This is where talking to your dentist is so vital. Discussing your fears with them will make it easier to decide the best technique for you.

Your first appointment should just be for a chat.

This is where you get to meet the dentist, discuss the options available and start to build the "trust" relationship.

You may or may not have an initial examination at this point. The choice should be up to you. Proceed only when you are ready to. This won't be a problem if you have the right dentist.

The thing to remember is don't expect your dentist to do it all.

No matter how good the dentist is the only one that can overcome your fears is YOU. A good dentist will work with you and help overcome your problems one at a time. They will be able to provide the help and advice that will make the path easier.

In order to be able to work with your dentist this way it is important that you know what you need to overcome and what is available to help you do so.

As an example if a fear of needles is a problem there is a topical anaesthetic that can be applied to the gums prior to the actual injection. This will stop you feeling the injection at all. It may be that on one visit you have an injection and nothing else. This may seem unproductive but it will allow you to realise that you can handle injections. So when you have treatment you don't need to worry about the injection any more as you know that you can cope with it now.

Remember that every step you take is progress.

Learn to congratulate yourself and see the progress you are making. We are all too ready to criticise ourselves and tell ourselves that we are failures. It's those memories of failures that we all too readily remember when the doubts start to creep in..

Foster a positive attitude, even if you don't feel that you have made giant steps try and see it from an outside perspective.

If you went to the practice and the only thing you did was talk to the dentist and that was terrifying. There are two ways of looking at it.

- You were terrified, unable to handle it. It wasn't even in the surgery and look what nervous wreck it made you. You don't think you will be able to go through that again.
- You actually managed to see a dentist and talk to them. OK so it wasn't as comfortable as you might have liked it to be but you survived. If you can do it once there is no reason why you cannot do it again. The next time will be easier. You did well.

To sum up:

- Find a dentist, by recommendation if possible, that will work with you to enable you to deal with the issues identified above.
- Telephone or write to them and explain *exactly* how you feel and what you need from them
- Trust your instincts based on the response you receive from this initial contact.
- Make your first appointment an informal chat with your dentist preferable outside of the surgery.
- Take things at your own pace and face each of your fears one step at a time.

Remember every step you take is progress. Even if it doesn't go exactly as you would have wished. Learn from the experience to make things easier next time.

Related information and additional sources of help

[Click here](#) for a step-by-step process to make it easier for you to discover what you need to be able to undergo treatment

[Painfree Dentistry - By Dr Don](#)

[Phobia Coaching / Mentoring](#)

[Dental Database](#)

[British Dental Association Find a Dentist](#)

[Even if you think you can't - you can](#)

[Our bodies reaction to fear](#)

[Questionnaire and covering letter - download, complete and send to your dentist.](#) (Adobe Acrobat File)