

Finding the Right Color...

Recently, I was inspecting a paint job on my new tailgate. Why I had to buy a new tailgate is a whole other article, but let's just agree that round hay bales sometimes exceed the maximum load limits of factory equipment. Come to find out, there's no insurance that covers my lapse in common sense. The longer I live, the more I learn.

Anyways, back to the subject of color. My tailgate matches great and I learned a lot about the process of matching paint colors, the process of paint application, and so forth. All very interesting stuff. Ironically, it was a bit similar to what we do every day when we perform "cosmetic" dentistry. You see, matching tooth colors and matching paint have quite a bit in common.

It all starts with a clean fresh palette - In the absence of pain, we try to recommend some sort of tooth whitening before starting any kind of work on someone's front teeth. This is simply to remove the years of stain that we all accumulate through a life well lived. Whether we are doing fillings, crowns, or veneers, a set of freshly whitened teeth usually get better long-term results. Plus, tooth colored fillings and ceramic restorations do not bleach, so it is generally best to whiten before cosmetic work is completed.

Light really matters - Whether you are looking at a truck or a set of teeth, different types of light can make the colors look different. Most dentists have large windows in their offices to get as much natural light in as possible. Interior light bulbs are color corrected to the wavelengths of natural sunlight. Special shade matching devices, intraoral cameras, and color adjusted digital cameras can all be used to communicate subtle tooth shades to dental laboratories. The more tools we use the better results we can get.

Go dark in the back - Most people care very little what color a back tooth is. We dentists on the other hand, look at our handiwork every six months for years. I like my back tooth work to look just as natural as my front tooth work. In the dark, shady areas of the back of the mouth, it is always safer to have a little darker shaded restoration. Bleach white back teeth really stand out.

Women have better taste than men - Yes, this is a given in life, but I'm talking about teeth here. I do not ever pick out tooth shades and rarely my own clothing combinations. Why? Women have more color receptors in their eyes than we men do; therefore, women actually see subtle tooth shade differences better. If you are having a hard time picking a tooth color (or a tie for that matter), get a woman's opinion. Just one more thing my wife gets to be right about.

Until next week, keep smiling.

-Questions or comments can be sent to Dr. Parrish through their new website, www.ParrishDental.com.