

## The Best Dentist...

“Dude, you’re going to be a dentist? Don’t you know that everyone hates dentists?”

This was the sage advice given to me by one of my best college friends on the night we celebrated my acceptance into dental school. This advice was given early in the night, by 2:00 am, after paying our tab, I was dubbed a genius. Fortunately, I was smart enough to know that any advice that started with the word “dude” could probably be disregarded. Personally, I never had any ill-will toward my family dentist. Truth be told, he was a mentor and friend. For most patients, their relationship with a dentist falls somewhere in between those two extremes of love and hate. For us dentists, every day is a chance to make people comfortable, healthy, and happy and to overcome years of stereotyping.

At least once a week, I get an email or phone call from a friend or patient looking for a new dentist. Generally, it goes something like this, “I’m moving in a couple of months and will be looking for a new dentist in (*insert city or state here.*)”

Dentistry, like many professions, tends to be a small world after all. Quite often, I will actually know a great dentist near the area of relocation. Other times, I will launch into my tips on finding a good dentist near you. I’m sorry, but they are more philosophical than practical...but handy, nonetheless.

One cannot be all things to all people. This holds true for dentists, just as it does for doctors, barbers, lawyers, nurses, politicians, and anyone else who deals with the public in general. First and foremost, you should find a dentist whom you can talk to and trust. You should be comfortable asking questions and taking an active role in the care of you and your family.

The support team matters. Unfortunately, dental offices, like any other business, turn over employees. That great hygienist or receptionist may not be there six months from now. As frustrating as it might be for you, it is doubly so for us doctors. The best you can do is look for a recurring theme and “feel” of an office staff. Is the team friendly? Does the staff laugh and smile and appear to appreciate their patients? Certainly, we can all have a bad day, but a good team will try to make your dental visits as pleasant as possible, every time.

Finally, the actual dental office facility can tell (usually subliminally) a lot about a doctor. Are efforts made to make patients comfortable in seating areas? Does the office appear clean and orderly? Does the office have modern technology like computers and low radiation digital x-rays? If a dental team puts forth the effort to provide aromatherapy candles, holiday décor, and up to date reading material, then patient comfort is probably important in other areas, as well.

There is no such thing as the “best” dentist, only the dentist who is right for you. Until next week, keep smiling.

-Please send comments to Drs. Parrish at [www.ParrishDental.com](http://www.ParrishDental.com).