

Ways to Get From Point A to Point B...

It is very common for patients to present to our office with a common chief complaint. “I haven’t kept up with my dental care over the years and I am now ready to get everything fixed.”

Sometimes, perception is worse than reality and we can get back to optimal oral health in a few short visits. Other times, the path to dental peace and happiness can be more complicated and take years to get to optimal conditions. In an ideal world, we’d accomplish all needed treatment as quickly as possible. In the real world, dentistry has to fit your life, your expectations, your budget, and your time frame. There are a lot of ways to get from point A to point B.

Any doctor will tell you that every patient that walks through the door is special. There is no “ideal” patient that fits into what the textbooks in school describe. No patient responds to every treatment just as studies show they should. To that end, almost every doctor will have a different way of going about getting patients to optimal health. There is no “right” or “wrong” way of doing things, just different. To that end, here’s a generic outline of how a dentist might treat a comprehensive patient from start to finish.

The first order of business in “getting it all fixed,” is to remove pain and infection. This normally includes an initial dental debridement (above gum cleaning) to reduce the plaque and bacteria in the mouth. Teeth that cannot be fixed should be removed to allow for healing and to reduce the risk of treatment complications and future abscesses. Old, failing silver-mercury fillings and new cavities may also be corrected at this point in time. The goal is to remove infection and start towards a healthy mouth.

Stage two usually consists of treating any active gum disease and bone loss. This may be as simple as a second, more thorough cleaning or as extensive as full mouth gum surgery. Treating the gums stops the bone destroying effects of gum disease. It is quite common for patients to comment on how much better their overall health feels after the first two stages of treatment are complete.

The third stage of treatment is where cosmetic dentistry and tooth replacement come into play. After the mouth is healthy, we can then discuss straightening, whitening, improving, and replacing teeth. A beautiful smile must always start with a healthy mouth.

The final goal, after all treatment has been accomplished, is to move into a routine maintenance stage of dentistry. Regular check-ups, great home care, and routine dental cleanings will help to make everything last.

Until next week, keep smiling.

-Please send input to Drs. Parrish through www.ParrishDental.com.