

Dental Hygiene

Focus:



Holistic Dental Hygiene

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The Big Picture of Holistic Dental Hygiene

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When you look up the meaning of “holistic,” you’ll see that, in a medical context, it refers to addressing the whole person, taking into account mental and social factors, rather than simply the symptoms of a disease...in other words, looking at the big picture. In school we are highly focused on the mouth with the understanding that good oral health leads to good overall health, which is important when you are learning new skills. On my 23-year journey in dental hygiene practice, I have found that there are so many more things to consider.

I have found that it is important to connect with clients emotionally, to get to know what is happening in their lives and where they are psychologically. If a client arrives and has just suffered a trauma, instructions about flossing won’t be heard. That day, they might just need a gentle scaling and someone to listen to them. If they are stressed about being in the dental office, their chances of healing are less likely. When your body is in distress, it is not capable of healing as it is using all of its energy in fight or flight mode. I want to take the time to get to know and understand everything that is happening in my client’s life that could be affecting their overall health.

Opening my own dental hygiene care centre called The Happy Hygienist was the only way I could be fully aligned with my philosophy. I found that working in a busy dental clinic didn’t allow me to give my clients the time they deserved to get the best treatment, which would result in the best outcome. I have taken great care in creating an environment that is welcoming and calm, where people feel relaxed. Many of my clients have told me that it does not feel like a clinic, “it feels like I’m visiting your home.” I have chosen calming essential oils in a diffuser so the clinic does not smell like a dental office, serene music, and a beautiful



view of the ocean, all of which contribute to a pleasant experience for the whole body. When a body is relaxed, it is in the best state for healing.

In our profession, as we gather information about what is happening in our clients’ lives, we are also collecting details on what is going on physically. Whether someone is struggling psychologically or has a physical ailment in their mouth or body, we may find ourselves as the first line of contact. I have found it important to collaborate with other health professionals whom I trust to give my clients excellent treatment, and I make sure I have personal experience with each practitioner before I recommend them. From dentists to naturopaths, from chiropractors to counsellors, creating a health team that looks after every part of your well-being is imperative for living your best life.

A gentle touch and respectful communication go a long way towards creating a good connection with my clients. Their personal experience of dental hygiene treatment will affect their healing, their decisions, and their willingness to come back. I want them to feel empowered, educated, and at peace, not scolded and in pain. As dental hygienists, we want to impart our knowledge, but it is so important to express it in a way that makes the client feel respected, not lectured. In the same way, most people want to feel that their dental hygiene treatment was thorough but not painful. I have had a rare few who have felt my treatment was too gentle and, in those cases, it is important to find out what the client needs so that they feel they have received personalized service.

Products that support a holistic approach take greater effort to find. I feel it's important to choose products that are healthy for the WHOLE body, not just the teeth. For my own health, I avoid dyes, pesticides, perfumes, sodium

lauryl sulfate (SLS), triclosan, and unnecessary chemicals. I would rather choose options that are organic and have no toxic risks. I respect people's choices regarding fluoride use and it is an option in my office. As a practitioner on Canada's west coast, I am aware that a large number of people here are very conscious of what they put in and on their body. They spend time researching in order to choose products that they feel are right for them, and I appreciate this level of commitment to health.

Holistically, I am the happiest I have ever been in my dental hygiene career. I feel grateful to have a profession I love and an opportunity to connect with people in a way that empowers and improves their overall health...it's NOT just cleaning teeth.

