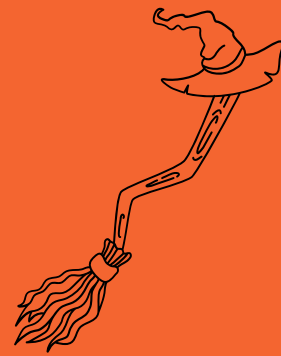




THE CHRONICLE MONTHLY

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN DENTISTS



highlights



Easing dental anxiety



doesn't have to be
anxiety inducing

you're Invited!

AAWD Member Meeting

Get updates on AAWD's activities and 2023 goals and meet the candidates for the Board of Directors election coming up in October. We can't wait to see you!

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WHY WOULDN'T THE SKELETON GO TO THE DENTIST? HE HAD NO GUTS.

Don't let dental anxiety/fear keep your patients away.
by Lindsay Abeln, a non-dentist with anxiety

On Halloween, we seek out and celebrate a little fear. From haunted houses to scary costumes to ghost stories, we revel in the creepy, heart-pounding, scream-inducing fear. But that fear is controlled, chosen, often even paid for. In every day life, that type of fear can be crippling, and it's more common than you might think.

Anxiety is the most common mental illness in the US (National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2022), with nearly 40% of people being diagnosed with an anxiety disorder over their lifetime. Many of those individuals have dental anxiety specifically, with dental anxiety being the fifth-most common cause of anxiety (Appukuttan, 2016). In fact, many studies show up to 75% of people in the US have some level of dental anxiety or fear. A whopping 10% of people in the US have a dental phobia (Appukuttan, 2016).

That's a lot for a dentist to handle on top of all her other responsibilities. It's difficult for anyone to have to be a therapist in addition to her primary profession. So what do you do to help people see you as the tooth fairy you are rather than the wicked witch? Here are a few hopefully easy-ish suggestions from me, a non-dentist with anxiety (and a tiny bit of dental anxiety):

1. Create an online appointment request form. This can be as simple as a form with name, email, and contact number for your office staff to call back (make sure he/she calls from the same number advertised on your website). A large number of us with anxiety hate making cold calls: any call where the recipient isn't expecting our call, specifically. It's much easier to answer the phone than to call a stranger.
2. Add lots of info to your website. Provide a virtual office tour. Make sure to include the parking lot, entrance, reception desk, and exam rooms. Those of us with anxiety often fear the unknown. The more you can help us "know" what to expect, the better. Also, add photos and bios of as many employees as possible. We like to know who we are going to talk to (hence #1 above). Seeing your staff and knowing a little about them (even what their dog's name is or that they like surfing) can ease our anxiety.

continued on next page



Easing dental anxiety doesn't have to be anxiety inducing



Communication is key

Eliminate the unknown by providing info on your website

Offer sensory accommodations during treatment

Show your silly, quirky, human-y side

3. Integrate mental health questions into your new patient paperwork. Ask specifically if the patient feels fear or anxiety about the visit. Give them space to explain what or why in more detail. [Check out this downloadable patient questionnaire from Dental Fear Central!](#)

4. Provide an accommodation menu. Do you have headphones, ChapStick, blankets, etc. available for patients? Advertise those options in the waiting room and/or exam room. My dentist has a large "make yourself at home" sign (pictured) that lists the options his office has available. Just knowing those options exist (even though I've never used them) puts me more at ease.

5. Offer sunglasses instead of clear safety glasses. My dentist does this, and let me tell you, I didn't even realize how helpful it would be. It not only dimmed the bright light, it dimmed my anxiety of accidentally making weird eye contact during the procedure.

6. Communication is key! Ask the patient about their preferred communication during the visit. Does the patient want to know the details of what you're going to do? For some, that helps provide a sense of control; for others that might increase anxiety. Just ask the patient directly which they'd prefer (they'll thank you for that). For the former, offer a running commentary about what you are about to do, what sensations and sounds to expect, and how long each part of the procedure will last. The latter may prefer to close their eyes and escape as much of the sensory experience as possible. And, of course, there are the unicorns who want the best of both worlds. Here's one dentaphobic patient's explanation:

"When I get treatment or even just a check-up, I have my eyes tightly shut through the whole thing. But I am told exactly what is about to happen and always asked if I would like to feel it on my hand first – which I usually do. So without having to see the "scrapey thing," I can feel it pulled along the back of my hand or have a puff of air blown onto it. So there is no surprise when I feel the same sensation a moment later on my gums or teeth" (Dental Fear Central, 2022).



Most importantly of all, be yourself and show your patients that you're a person just like them. We create monsters in our heads when anxiety attacks, so just showing patients your humanity can make all the difference. Do you have strategies or suggestions for easing patient anxiety that weren't mentioned here? [Share them with us here!](#)

References on page 4

27 Nov
5:30pm EST

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AAWD Member Meet-Up at GNYDM

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AAWD Member Meeting

AAWD is thrilled to invite you to meet with our National Board of Directors and candidates for our 2022 Member Meeting! We are happy to share what AAWD has accomplished so far in 2022 and the organization's goals for 2023.

We are also excited to introduce our candidates for the upcoming Board of Directors elections! Get to know the candidates before casting your vote! Remember that AAWD wouldn't exist without women like you, and your vote is your voice! Keep an eye out for an email with meeting details and the registration link! We can't wait to see you!



How is it almost Thanksgiving Sweet Potato Casserole

The holidays are near! Get ready for your Thanksgiving feast with this easy but delicious sweet potato casserole. This is a great make ahead option! Just assemble & refrigerate until ready to cook!

INGREDIENTS

- 3-4 sweet potatoes, peeled, cooked, & mashed
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 stick butter, softened
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup evaporated milk
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp salt
- Topping:
 - 1 cup brown sugar
 - 1/2 cup flour
 - 1/3 stick butter
 - 1 cup chopped pecans

HOW TO PREPARE

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. In a large bowl, mix sweet potato, eggs, 1/2 stick butter, granulated sugar, evaporated milk, vanilla, and cinnamon. Pour into buttered casserole dish.
3. Mix brown sugar, flour, 1/3 stick butter, and pecans until crumbly. Sprinkle on top of sweet potato mixture.
4. Bake until bubbly and golden on top, approx. 30-40 minutes

AAWD philanthropy corner

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MEMBER BENEFIT

spotlight



Hopetown Dental Lab is a state-of-the-art digital dental laboratory located in Ft. Worth, Texas. They originally partnered with AAWD in 2019 offering excellent customer service and a HIGHLY competitive fee schedule that is exclusive to AAWD members.

In their words:

"Our team of experienced technicians handle each case with full attention and care from start to finish. We use the best materials available, state-of-the-art equipment, and with our well executed systems, you are guaranteed consistency. We live for the happiness and success of our customers and we love building those relationships.

We also take a lot of pride in being "THE LAB THAT THINKS LIKE DENTISTS". Each and every day we work with and train our staff to see each case through the eyes of the clinical team, and recognize the struggles that can occur chair-side. This mantra helps us to better serve our customers and produce restorations that take the least amount of chair-time to deliver."

"We are very excited to
earn your trust and build a
relationship for years to
come!"

