

# Dentist

[Psychology](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Being a nervous dental patient myself this subject is something I can relate to when describing the surroundings of a dental office. Even though I am aware that only good will come out visiting the dentist, it is still a time of relative stress for me. I am an adult and appreciate the feelings that come from visiting the dentist and the same can be felt by children, especially those whose visit is for the first time. With this in mind, the interior of a dental practice is first and foremost an aesthetically clean, crisp environment with a warm, welcoming and friendly atmosphere.

The inside of the dentist's room is designed predominantly for functionality, machinery and equipment needs to be housed to the best of its ability therefore the remainder of the decor has to be brought in and around this to accommodate everyone's needs. This can help alleviate the tension that is felt by patients when coming into the building. A separate reception area is normal practice, as this allows a patient to be slowly introduced to the rest of their experience.

Following this they will be asked to wait for their appointment in a waiting room, within this room there are seats and a certain amount of distractions for the patient to busy themselves with whilst passing the time. Magazines and papers are there for some quiet reading along with toys and puzzles to amuse the children. Information leaflets are left at hand to notify patients of the latest information or advice that they may need to be aware of. All this is intended to relax and divert the patient from anxiety, therefore making the time pass as quickly as possible.

There are many noises within the dental office that can be quite distressing for someone with a nervous disposition. The drilling and other machinery

used can be quite voluminous and whilst it is not possible to completely eradicate the noises that can be heard in the dental office, it is advisable to 'mask' these sounds as much as possible. Serving also as a distraction, music also boosts relaxation and performance. This is not only good practice for a patient but can also provide a pleasant environment for the staff.

Using wind chimes and bells also provide a gentle and ambietic atmosphere designed to evoke calmness and tranquility. The more relaxed the environment, the more relaxed the patient will feel when waiting for their appointment. Once inside the dental treatment room the same atmosphere should be practised. Gentle, relaxing music which allows the patient to feel less pressure and at ease with the dentist. The temperature should also be taken into consideration as this can also contribute to whether or not the environment feels pleasant and welcoming for the patient.

The sights, sounds and smells are possible triggers for anxiety when visiting the dentist, however, as opposed to recent years gone by, the 'smell' that could sometimes bring about the fear in some patients has now gone. Due to its principal part in unnerving a dental patient, alternative antiseptics are now used, these liquids are now odour free thus creating a much preferred pleasant and less offensive smell when entering the practice.

Dependent on the patient's feelings when visiting the dentist, all these surroundings can make them feel at ease or nervous. Even though it is more likely that the treatment itself is the thing most feared, it is also the initial setting that can also provoke a reaction of alarm. The plain, white interiors which are commonly used are clean yet clinical, this is perhaps why more and more practices are deviating away from this type of decor, still keeping

the plain nature, it is also often seen to bring in some colour to prevent it from feeling too clinical.

Hospitals very often have white interiors and this is now trying to be avoided in dentists so that they appear independent and create less of a medical feel. (Fear of Sights, Sounds and Smells in the Dental Environment) It is not exceptional to be afraid of visiting the dentist, between 9% and 15% of Americans have expressed they avoid attending dental appointments as a result of their fears. Some even experience phobic conditions which leave them panic-stricken and unable to visit at all.

They are fully aware that their fears are irrational but have little success in exercising any control over these feelings. Fear of pain, loss of control or even the injections used to cause numbness are all contributory factors within the phobia and this is why a dentist will take all these issues into consideration when designing their practice in an attempt to create the most relaxing place for their patients to enter into. (Easing Dental Phobia)

Helping to build trust and ease is not just a visual matter, talking to patients and taking an interest in them also causes them to relax and feel comfortable with their treatment. Being empathetic towards their anxiety can help to build a good relationship between patient and dentist, this in its own right can lead to less stress for the patient. All dentists are aware that their presence, their environment and their treatment are feared by many people and this often causes them to think carefully about the whole experience of 'going to the dentist'.

Creating a fun place for children enables first experiences and treatment going forward to be pleasurable and rewarding. Always advising patients what exactly is going to be carried out can also assist in putting them at ease, surprises can sometimes be unpleasant and if a patient is fully aware of what a dentist is practising, the patient is less likely to act unpredictably. Explaining what the equipment is used for and when it is necessary to be used ensures that the patient understands the treatment more clearly and knows what to expect of each procedure.

Some patients may need to bring someone else along with them for moral support, special dispensation should always be practised when this occurs, many dentists only allow one person in the treatment room at a time but when considering that support is perhaps needed, this policy should be overlooked. Many people avoid going to the dentist because of all these fears and in the long term this can have poor effects on oral hygiene and the teeth. Encouragement and support is important within the location as well as from the staff within that environment.