

Dear Patient,

I hope this letter finds you well fed from Thanksgiving!

With Christmas on the way it's always an ideal time to count one's blessings. Which brings me to how I feel about the job done in our office by Connie, Nancy, Beth, Ashley and our hygienists Sue, Sandy and Kim. I suspect Santa has them way up there on the "Nice" list.

In conversation not long ago, the topic of career satisfaction came up. I have a friend who builds homes and he says he loves the sense of accomplishment and pride he has felt when working with a great crew. I consider myself blessed to be a part of a crack team of professionals providing a service that is so critical to so many people.

In 1995, Tom Osborne was coming off yet another win on the road said of his team that he wouldn't hesitate to take them anywhere. I feel the same way about the staff in our office. Not that we plan on stomping the Buffalo's in Boulder (I like our chances, by the way) any time soon, but I can't think of any higher praise than to say that no matter the challenge I'm always confident in the attitude and capabilities of our team. For example, I wish everyone could see the tenacity with which Connie battles an inhuman PPO's computerized automated telephone system/virtual torture chamber on behalf of a patient.

Switching gears a bit I want to remind those of you scheduling appointments for kids on school break to call as soon as possible so that we can accommodate everyone. Crunch time is right around the corner.

Next on the slate, I'd like to mention a few things about children's visits to the dentist. Children tend to absorb feelings and attitudes about dental visits (and darn near everything else) from parents and older siblings. If that feeling is positive (hopefully, but realistically not always the case) then children will often look forward to a visit to the dentist. I've seen this to be the case even when a youngster is coming in for a filling or an extraction. It is not at all unusual for youngsters to be far more tolerant of invasive dental procedures many adults for a couple of reasons. Firstly, children don't schedule things or look ahead to an appointment sometime down the road. They don't worry or even think about an appointment that an adult would feel looming in the future. Also, children usually spend less time worrying about what could go wrong or how bad an experience might be. They lack the worldly experience of adulthood. That is a good thing. Anticipation often creates unneeded anxiety with adults. Children don't have this problem. I have heard it said that fear is this: False Expectations Appearing Real. This

can be crippling for those who spend considerable time awfulizing about something that they'd rather avoid. Are you getting the sense that adults could have better experiences if they occasionally looked at something with a child's eyes? In any event, we can transfer a lot of stress to children or we can create enthusiasm or at the very least tolerance for a necessary dental procedure.

Have you ever seen a youngster fall down and unsurely look to the parent to see if they should be upset? Have you ever seen a parent pick a child up, brush them off and try to put a bright spin on things? You know that that bit of child psychology and behavior management works most of the time.

If your child has a dental appointment I suggest maintaining a positive tone. If you make it sound fun, *they'll think it will be fun*. Another good tip: do not give older siblings any opportunity to scare a younger child with wild tales. When I was a kid my cousin told me before getting a haircut that the barber would sometimes eat kids. I couldn't believe that my parents would put me in that kind of danger. Needless to say, I kept a very close eye on the barber. It turned out the barber was not hungry that day; my cousin got the liar-liar pants on fire treatment and was forced to kiss a one-eyed, neighborhood dog. Justice was served on William Street that day.

When a child is coming in for that crucial first time visit we call that a "happy visit" and we really want to build a child's confidence with a fun experience. We try not to overly challenge a first-timer (when kids reach age 3 that is about when they are ready for a visit). Kids that start off on the right foot will be better equipped to handle any future visits!

In conclusion, I hope this letter has been helpful to you in some way even if only to line the bottom of a hamster cage. And in the spirit of the Holiday Season I wish you a hearty "Happy Shoveling!" of the snow surely to come.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Chris Foix