

# Tales From The Dental Chair

Local Dentists Share Humorous Anecdotes To Get Patients To Smile



Robert McBride, DDS, wears tape over his mouth during a consultation with a new patient. This tactic, he says, is to show the patient that he's listening. (Photograph courtesy of Dental Wellness Center)



Doug Emery, DDS, and a patient are all smiles during a regular cleaning. Emery says he's had some funny moments in the office, like dealing with a fellow dentist's garlicky breath before performing a root canal. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Thomas McConville)

■ By **TIFFANY RIDER**  
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We all know the dentist can help you have a beautiful smile, but what about getting you to chuckle and flash those pearly whites?

Though some might think going to the dentist's office is no joke, several Long Beach dentists shared their sense of humor with "tales from the dental chair."

Take Robert McBride, DDS, of The Dental Wellness Center, who has a fun icebreaker tactic he uses during initial consultations with his patients.

It is known that 50 percent of the population stays away from the dentist mainly

out of fear, according to McBride. He says he believes this fear can be countered through genuine interest and effective communication skills during initial consultations. It has been said communication is the universal solvent, and that the ability to listen is more important than speaking.

McBride says we have two ears and one mouth for a good reason, and he makes his point quickly when, in order to adhere to this wisdom, he opens a drawer and pulls out a roll of duct tape and applies it appropriately so as not to be tempted to veer from his beliefs. He says anything worthwhile takes training and if you doubt its effectiveness, try it sometime – it's a real icebreaker, and – it definitely works.

Sometimes the jokes come from the dental chair. Stephen Coates, DDS, had an older patient moving to the East Coast and told her he could find her a great dentist where she was moving. "Her response to me was, 'I can find a gynecologist anywhere but I only have one dentist I trust!' She still flies in to this day," he says.

Maybe it's with age that the more one laughs. Coates, who purchased his dental practice in its current location on Broadway when he was 28, said he looked about 21. "I had a number of patients leave because they thought I was too young. After about 3 years the majority started to drift back into the practice because, as a couple stated to me, 'I've tried the rest, but you

are the best!' Also they could now see a few gray hairs sprouting on my head," Coates jokes.

Doug Emery, DDS, of Emery & Emery in Long Beach, shared an embarrassing story from eight years ago involving a dentist colleague that to this day keeps him laughing. He took course training on a new style of veneers at the Las Vegas Institute for Advanced Dental Studies in Nevada, and his friend and colleague happened to be the perfect patient for the live test case.

She was missing her two front lateral teeth from birth, and had her teeth moved forward in an orthodontic procedure so her canine were where her lateral

teeth should be.

"As much as they were filed down, they never looked right," he says. The test case included preparations, cementing veneers and a picture, and case presentation in front of about 250 dentists. The word got around about this particular case, so Emery had quite a crowd as he was working on her. "That started to make her very nervous," he says. "She was bouncing around in the chair and kept saying, 'I don't know if I have enough anesthetics.' So I kept giving her more."

Although Emery says other dentists kept reassuring her by saying he was doing a great job, she continued to bounce around until the presentation was over. Afterward,

once the temporary was in place, Emery offered to buy her dinner, grab a drink and do a little gambling. "She wanted to gamble right away, and when she got to the table she ordered a red wine sangria thing. The next thing I know, I look over and she's dribbling the drink all down her blouse and all over the blackjack table," he says, cracking up. "She couldn't feel her face she was so numb." ■