

Healthier
Smiles
Calmer
Minds
Brighter
Tomorrows



A CALMER YOU

A HEALTHIER YOU

YOU CAN DO THIS

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF GOING TO THE DENTIST:

Why the Chair Scares Us, and How to Sit In It

Getting Through the Dentist: A Practical Guide

Use this guide to understand why the dentist scares us, why avoiding it backfires, and how to hand some control back to yourself.



1

WHY IT SCARES US

Understand the real roots of the fear.



Anticipated pain

The brain treats the anticipation of pain as almost as threatening as pain itself.



The high, whining drill pitch

An unfamiliar sound that the nervous system reads as an alarm.



The intimacy

A stranger's hands and tools in one of the body's most defended spaces.



A past experience

A single painful visit, often in childhood, can teach the body a lasting lesson.

*It makes sense that it feels hard.
Your brain is trying to protect you.*

2

WHY AVOIDING BACKFIRES

See the trap for what it is.



Fear makes us avoid

Avoidance feels like relief in the moment, and relief makes the avoidance grow.



Teeth do not wait

The quick, painless filling can turn into a bigger, more uncomfortable procedure.



A tricky cycle

The behavior that feels protective quietly guarantees the scarier outcome.



The brave move

The brave move and the healthy move are the same move: going in before you have to.

*Avoidance feels good now,
but usually leads to a harder road later.*

3

HAND CONTROL BACK

Almost everything that helps returns control to you.



Choose the right dentist

Find a dentist who is known for working with anxious patients, explains what they are doing, and goes slowly.



Use a stop signal

Agree on a signal, usually a raised hand, so you can pause anything at any time.



Ask for narration

Have them tell you what they are doing. The unknown is scarier than the known.



Bring headphones

Listen to calming music, a podcast, or something you enjoy to cover the drill's pitch.

Small steps can make a big difference.

4

CALM THE BODY, KEEP GOING

Teach your nervous system a truer story.



Practice slow breathing

Breathe in gently, and breathe out a little longer. A longer exhale tells your body it is not in danger.



Consider sedation

For genuine dental phobia, ask about options, from nitrous oxide to other choices. There is no shame in it.



Keep the regular cleanings

Go even when nothing hurts. Routine visits help prevent bigger problems and build confidence.



A new and truer story

Each calm, uneventful visit gently teaches your nervous system: this is survivable, and mostly, it is fine.

You can do this, one visit at a time.

DR. Z TAKEAWAY



You do not have to conquer the fear to get good care. You just have to make the chair more bearable, and small things that hand control back help a lot.



*A calmer mind
can still sit in the chair.*



DR. MICHAEL ZAKALIK, PSY.D.

Psychologist for Parenting | Z Psychology

Connection heals. Conversations help.