

# DENTAL PHOBIA

**MEMBER  
FEATURE**  
PEER-TO-PEER ARTICLE

# OR

# ANXIETY

MEMBER ARTICLE | BY VERONICA LA CHAPPELLE, MAADOM

Dental phobia or anxiety can be a deal breaker in whether or not a patient will receive treatment for their dental problem(s), or even become a recurring patient. How many times have you heard, “I hate...” or “I am afraid of the dentist”? As you try to calm the patient, you notice that they are shaking or sweating or both.

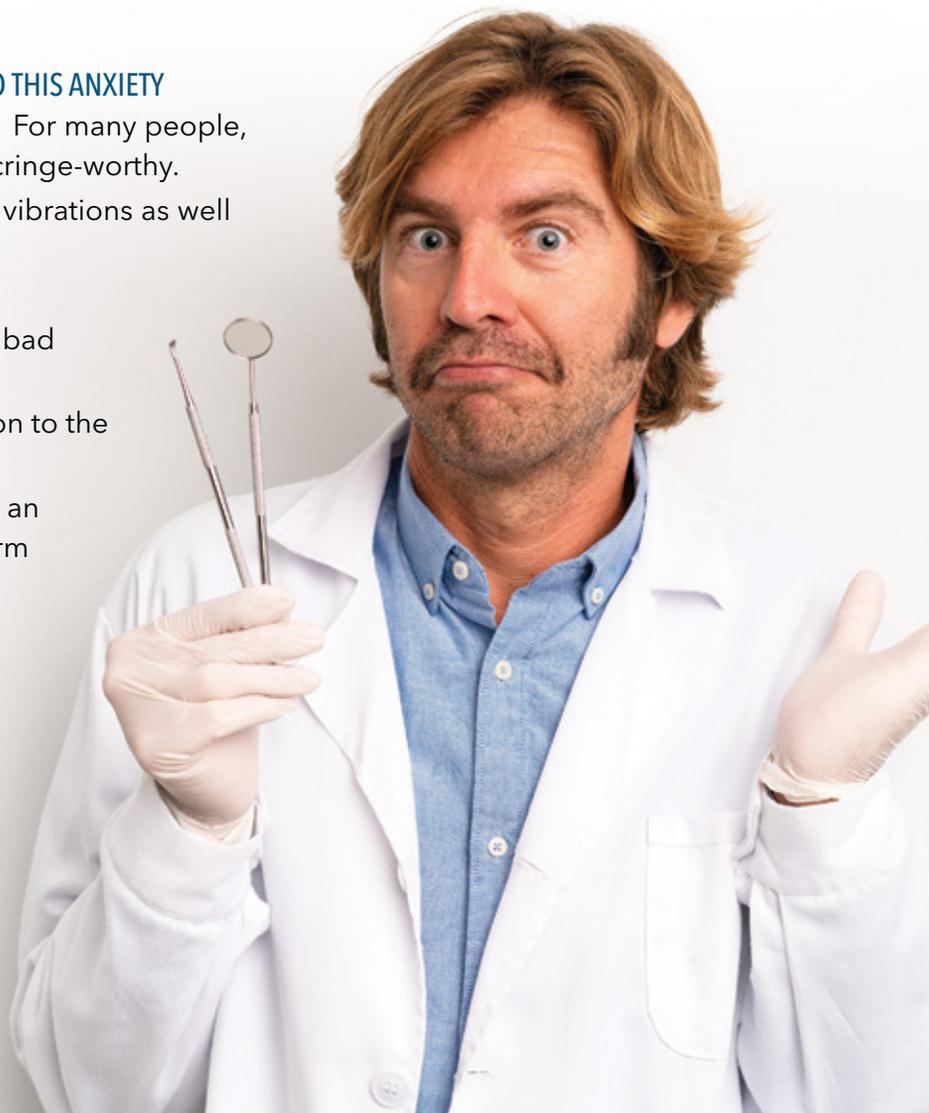
Their fear is real and you need to help settle them down. First, try to understand why they are so nervous. Ask about any past experiences that may have inspired this fear.

## THERE ARE MANY FACTORS THAT CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THIS ANXIETY

- Needles are the biggest trigger of them all. For many people, the thought of an injection in their gums is cringe-worthy.
- Drills can cause a dislike of the sounds and vibrations as well as the fear of pain.
- Pain
- Embarrassment from decayed teeth and/or bad overall hygiene
- Sedation fears. Am I going to have a reaction to the sedation?
- A very bad dental experience as a child or an adult. This experience can cause long-term psychological trauma.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP EASE THEIR FEARS.

- First, welcome the patient. A friendly atmosphere is comforting.
- Go over the patient’s medical conditions and discuss any concerns they may have.
- Discuss all procedures that will be performed today. If anxiety is expressed, then have the patient discuss exactly what their fear is.



PHOBIA CONTINUED | PAGE 38



## MEET THE MEMBER

Veronica La Chapelle, FAADOM began her career in dentistry after retiring from a municipal government position she had held for 27 years. Of course dentistry was a new industry for her, but is happy to have learned so much, and continues to learn every day. Today, Veronica is the Assistant Manager for Advanced Premier Dental and Implant Dentistry in The Woodlands, TX.

She is a lifetime member of the American Association of Dental Office Management, (AADOM), since joining the association in 2009. Veronica received her Fellowship, (FAADOM) in 2013 and was inducted as an AADOM Master, (MAADOM) in September 2022.

### ...PHOBIA CONTINUED

- Listen attentively and discuss any anxiety treatment your office might offer. If sedation is requested a reschedule might be needed so someone can drive them home.
- Give the patient as much attention as you can. A simple touch on the arm can be calming and signals safety and trust. No one wants to feel like they are in an assembly line.
- The dentist can explain the treatment again and let the patient know what exactly will be done. Sometimes this can ease patient fears.
- If an injection is given, try and talk to the patient about anything that might take their mind off of the needle.
- You can also explain that once numb, they will not be able to feel the drilling.
- If their procedure can be done with a laser and your office has one, you can assure them there will be no needles.
- Playing soothing music in the room can be comforting.
- Letting the patient wear headphones to listen to their choice of music can be calming and also help to drown out the sound of any drills.
- Massaging dental chairs are another great calming tool.
- The dentist or assistant should follow up with the patient the next day. Expressing concern for their wellbeing and answering any questions they may have will not only let you know how they are doing, it also expresses and forges patient relationships, creating trust and the likelihood of less anxiety in the future.

Dental fear is real and anything you can do to help ease that fear is welcoming.

What else is real? Friends and family sharing their experiences with others, and that good experiences lead to repeat business, future referrals, as well as a positive office atmosphere. The key is to make each patient feel as relaxed as possible so they can have the positive experience that's so important for their daily and long term health. ■

DENTAL SPOUSE BUSINESS NETWORK

RESOURCES FROM SPOUSES, FOR SPOUSES

ARE YOU IN THIS TOGETHER?

WWW.DENTALMANAGERS.COM/DSBN

AADOM  
LEARN • CONNECT • GROW