

# NORTH COAST DENTAL GROUP



A child's experience in the dental office today is very different from when we were young. Most of the time, children have a very fun, positive experience! Still, some children may be anxious and/or nervous depending on their age, past experiences, the procedure being done, or if they are already in pain. My team and I try to create a relaxed environment by using our words carefully.

In an effort to try to help, parents may say things which actually make it more difficult for their child. Here is a list of phrases we would like to avoid:

***“Don’t worry—They’re not going to do anything today,” or, “Don’t worry, it won’t hurt.”***

- Until they hear these phrases, it may never have occurred to your child that he/she should worry.
- It implies that if we ever have to actually “do something,” it would be a legitimate cause for very real worry.

***“She/he wants you to open your mouth.” or “Put your head back.”***

- A child can only focus on one person at a given time. If the doctor and parent are both giving directions, your child may find it difficult to concentrate on what he or she needs to do to help.

***“Are you giving him/her a shot?”***

- When we tell your child that we are putting “your tooth to sleep”, we are not trying to be silly.
- We choose our words carefully because we know that the spoken word has a powerful effect.
- When we say we clean (not “drill”), or wiggle (not “pull out”) a tooth, we do so in order to accurately describe the procedure without adding words that elicit fear.

***“I told you not to eat candy! Now you have a cavity and this is going to hurt you!”***

- This will not help to relax your child. We do not want him/her to feel that our treatment is a punishment.

***“Honey, are you alright?” or “Do you want me to stay in the room with you?”***

- This can actually make patients of any age more nervous. It is similar to if a toddler falls down while running but gets right back up; if somebody asks the child if he’s ok, he starts crying. It’s the same idea.
- We will always make sure your child is ok. We can tell from their eyes and facial expressions, even if they don’t say anything. Occasionally, a child may cry even if it isn’t hurting, merely because they have been told it will. Crying may also simply be related to the unfamiliarity of the place, people, or noises.

***“Oh, I hate going to the dentist.” or scary stories from siblings/family***

- Don’t let older siblings or family members scare a child before the appointment.
- Phrases like this unnecessarily lead to anxiety.

Just as one is not allowed in the operating room in the hospital, we ask parents to have a seat in the waiting room while we take care of your child. It may take a few visits for your child to become comfortable but our goal is for them to be able to come in to the treatment area independently. We will always come get you if they need you. Research has proven that children do better when they are by themselves. Additionally, allowing a child to come back alone allows him or her to develop a relationship with the dental team. This relationship of trust and teamwork enables the child to have a great appointment!

**Here's how you can help:**

- If your child seems to be affected by the dental “noises”, feel free to bring music with headphones.
- Help us to establish a positive rapport between your child and our team. Don't make going to the dentist scary.
- Younger children do much better with morning appointments, so let's schedule accordingly.
- If your child has questions about upcoming treatment, encourage them to ask Dr. Shah or Dr. Sipior at the time of the appointment. We have specific ways of explaining procedures to children.

**Sit back and relax, we will take excellent care of your child!**

