

DAILY DENTAL REALITY

Recently an email passed around the dental community linking to a site that had a cartoon dentist trying to explain to a cartoon patient what the patient needed. Basically the dentist tried to explain the urgent problems that needed to be treated, and at the end of each explanation the patient asked another question about tooth whitening. It was a big hit among dentists because it pointed out how far our expectations are sometimes from patient expectations and how frustrating that can be. Dentists frequently fall back on the same dental dogma that they criticized after leaving dental school, and it is one of the hardest lessons learned--make the patient aware of what they need, do what they want. Everyone else is trying to give the customer what they want, and dentists were taught to give them what they need first, then maybe they can have what they want.

Then the Wall Street Journal ran a short article about the latest fashion craze: a gap in your front teeth. Apparently this is one of the desirable flaws in models today. Designers now want "character" rather than perfection. So some people are asking their dentist to move their front teeth apart, in the name of individuality. Has to make the parents feel really good about all of the money they spent on braces.

"Some say the popularity of physical flaws reflects the skepticism of today's youth..." I guess that explains why one of my younger patients refused to have his broken front tooth fixed. How far does this go? The article claims that "flawed teeth denote authenticity." Or now, apparently a remade authenticity. It does get a little confusing--where are we headed? Luckily this seems to be confined to the fashion world. How many times have you seen someone with missing, stained, and crooked teeth and thought, "wow--model material"?