the smile owner's manual

A SIMPLE GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING AND IMPROVING YOUR SMILE



Shane Sykes

They are best dentist I have ever had, definitely life changing. they took me as emergency and couldn't have asked for a better experience, I am now in the process of a smile makeover and they are always willing to make things work best for me and my life. Is it weird to have a new found love for going to the dentist? I am not scared anymore! Highly recommend for anyone who is struggling with getting themselves to go to the dentist, you will be comfortable here!

Google Review from S. T.

I am blown away each appointment I have. EVERYONE is so friendly and helpful. Everything has been so wonderful. What a great environment!

Google Review from K. A.

First time I can say I went to a dentist and had a good experience. Amazing staff.

Google Review from K.

Love this place. Everyone from the front desk to the hygienist to the doctors are incredibly kind and professional. I don't mind the long drive from home at all- the experience is worth the time. Thank you guys!

Google Review from J. A.

I have never had a more caring, compassionate dentist in my life. Dr Sykes is an amazing dentist that I would recommend over and over. Not only has he and his whole office make me feel comfortable (I hated dentists before this), but he remembers each of his patients and truly CARES about them. I am beyond grateful for finding this office.

Google Review from C. R.

Let me start off by saying, my dental anxiety is pretty bad. So bad that I've avoided the dentist for a little over ten years... My first visit I walked in crying due to being in a lot of pain, everyone was super nice and caring and eased my worries. Dr. Sykes was very kind and talked me through everything including different treatment plans/costs. After that Emergency visit I felt very comfortable and taken care of by everyone at The Reno Dentist so much that I decided to make them my home base for dentistry and started with a dental plan to get on track with my oral health. I've gone back to the Reno Dentist since my first Emergency visit and as soon as I walked in they remembered my name, little things about my life that we talked about and it was the same happy, genuine welcome from everyone who worked there. I highly recommend The Reno Dentist for all your dental care! They are Great!

Google Review from C. J.

Dr Sykes and his staff are the friendliest and best dentist place I have ever been to in my 50 years of getting dental work. They really care and are sincerely concerned about you and whatever problem you might be going through at the time. If you ever change your dentist, you won't be sorry for going to see Dr Sykes. Thank you for taking care of me.

Google Review from M.

First time in the office and had a great experience. All the needed treatments were explained very well. Was also given all the information needed to continue all my dental needs.

Google Review from G. B.

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Shane Sykes, DMD

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DISCLAIMER

Regardless of how close to your face you are holding this book, I can't see your teeth and I cannot give you advice tailored to your specific needs--but I can share two decades of experience in helping my patients smile confidently

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Reader,

This book is written as an informational tool to help you make educated and informed decisions improving your smile. The chapters of this book are designed to give you the information you need to understand the options available in dentistry today and the real-world pros and cons of each of those options. We start with the assumption that you have a basically healthy mouth and that you're considering cosmetic enhancement. Health comes first and cosmetics build upon that. I suggest that you read Part One of the book first and then browse through the book learning about solutions to your specific concerns. The chapters are arranged from less invasive to more invasive dental treatments. I prefer conservative treatments, but sometimes invasive treatment is a more appropriate option. Scattered throughout the book are stories from my clinical experience. All these stories are true (but the names and identifying details have been changed to protect individuals' privacy).

Use the following table to focus your reading on the treatments that are most likely to resolve your concerns.

At the end of the book there is bonus content about:

- How to choose a dentist,
- How to maximize your dental insurance,
- Seeking dental care abroad.

Dental Concern	Chapters to Read
Crooked teeth	8, 11, 12, 13, 15, 19
Gaps between teeth	8, 11, 13, 15
Broken teeth	8, 12, 13, 15, 19, 20
Yellow or discolored teeth	9, 13, 14, 15
Missing teeth	8, 17, 18, 19, 20
"Buck teeth"	11, 12, 15, 19, 20
Misshapen teeth	10, 12, 13, 15, 19
Ugly teeth	1-21
Puffy gums or bad breath	10
Gummy smile	10
My teeth don't show when I smile	8, 11, 13, 15, 19
I want some bling!	21
Old, ugly fillings	9, 13, 14, 15
Black teeth	9, 14, 15
Worn or chipped teeth	19

Part 1

Science

1 -- WHY DO WE SMILE?

One day during my bicycle commute to work I felt particularly happy--so I smiled at all the oncoming cars, joggers, and people out working in their yards. Surprisingly, most of them looked around sheepishly, then smiled and waved at me. Without any verbal communication we had made an emotional connection in just milli-seconds of interaction. We silently said to each other "I see you and recognize your value. Thanks for being you!"

As the days went by and I continued my smiley commute, I began to develop friendships with strangers I've never met--the security guard outside the bank; the older cyclist on 4th street that I can never keep up with; the woman with the cute white dog and the immaculate rose garden. We made a bond and looked forward to seeing each other. We created a connection--simply by smiling.

I'm not the first to recognize the power of our smiles. In addition to his famous Theory of Evolution, Charles Darwin developed a complex theory about

how smiling and laughing influences the physiology of our minds and bodies. He advanced the *Facial Feedback Response Theory*, which suggests that the act of smiling can make us feel better when we're down, instead of being something that we do when we *already* feel good.

Centuries later, an intriguing 30-yearlong study at UC Berkeley[1] examined the smiles of students in an old yearbook and measured their well-being and success throughout their lives. By measuring the relative size of smiles in the photographs the researchers successfully predicted--how fulfilling and long lasting their marriages would be; how highly they would score on standardized tests of well-being and general happiness; and how inspiring they would be to others. The widest smilers consistently ranked highest in all three areas.

In a fascinating study[2] two professors looked back at the 1952 baseball cards photos of Major League players. The professors found that the span of a player's smile could predict the span of his life! Players who didn't smile in their pictures lived an average of 72.9 years, while players with beaming smiles lived an average of 79.9 years.

Perhaps not surprisingly, we're *born* smiling. 3-D ultrasound technology shows that developing babies appear to smile even in the womb. After they're born, babies continue to smile (initially mostly in their sleep) and even blind babies[3] smile in response to the sound of the human voice.

Smiles are one of the most basic, biologically uniform expressions of all humans. Paul Ekman (the world's leading expert on facial expressions) documented[4] that smiles are cross-cultural and have the same meaning in different societies. In studies he conducted in Papua New Guinea, Ekman found that

members of the Fore tribe--who were completely disconnected from outside cultures and were known for their unusual cannibalistic rituals--used smiles the same way you and I would. A smile means the same thing to all of us!

Smiling is not just a universal means of communicating, it's also a frequent one. Many of us smile more than 20 times a day and few people smile less than 5 times a day. Have you ever wondered why being around children makes you smile more often? Those with the greatest smiling superpowers are actually children--who smile and laugh[5] as many as 300 times per day!

Several studies in Sweden[6] confirmed that other people's smiles suppress the control we usually have over our own facial muscles, compelling us to smile. Our Swedish friends also showed that it's very difficult to frown when looking at someone who smiles. Why? Because smiling is evolutionarily contagious, and we have a subconscious innate drive to smile when we see someone smiling. This occurs even among strangers when we have no intention to connect or affiliate with the other person, like I experienced on my smiley bike commutes. In fact, I bet you're smiling right now just reading this--or at least you are now! Mimicking a smile and experiencing it physically helps us interpret how genuine a smile is. This helps us understand the real emotional state of the smile giver, and also positively influences our own emotional state.

In a very clever experiment[7] people were asked to evaluate real vs. fake smiles while holding a pencil in their mouths to block the muscles that help us smile. Without the pencils in their mouths, people were excellent judges of others' emotions, but with the

pencils clenched between their teeth--thus preventing them from mimicking the smiles they saw--they were not very good judges of others emotions.

Smiling even has an influence on our brain chemistry. Scientists have used fMRI testing[8] to measure brain activity after injecting Botox to suppress mouth muscle and showed that facial feedback (such as imitating a smile) changes how our brain sees emotions. This demonstrates that our brain's happiness-wiring is switched on when we smile!

Additionally, smiling has many therapeutic effects[9] and has been associated with--reducing harmful stress hormones, increasing health-enhancing hormones, and lowering blood pressure.

If all these benefits are still not enough, smiling also makes us look good in the eyes of others. One Penn State University study confirmed that when we smile, we not only appear more likeable and courteous, but we're actually perceived to be more competent. My own personal experiments have also revealed that people who smile get better customer service and have shorter wait-times in line. Once I was traveling back to the USA with my wife and six children. As we stood in the seemingly endless queue of travelers snaking back and forth while waiting to clear customs, I happened to make eye contact with a customs employee. Out of conscious habit I smiled at her and she smiled back. She looked around briefly and then walked over to me. To my surprise she lifted the retractable fabric barrier off the post near us, set it aside and invited us to step out of line. After closing the barrier, she said, "Welcome home, please follow me," and escorted us directly to an available customs agent--bypassing the

agonizing 45-minute wait to get through customs. All thanks to a simple smile!

So far, we have only discussed the benefits of *using* your smile. Note that none of the above research evaluated the cosmetic *quality* of smiles, just the fact of smiling vs. not smiling. Now let's look briefly at the benefits of *improving* your smile. While studying at the University of Kentucky I conducted a study in which we measured the self-esteem of patients before and after undergoing major cosmetic dental treatment, or "smile makeovers." Past research[10] has shown that the single greatest predictor of self-esteem is how we feel about our appearance, and the most significant contributor to that is how we feel about our mouth, eyes, and hair. I found a statistically significant improvement in people's overall self-esteem after improving just their smile. Changing our smiles *can* change our lives.

Unfortunately, with the ever-increasing pressure of social media we can also fall prey to great unhappiness in the pursuit of perfection. In my practice I have helped patients who were unhappy because they didn't like their smile. After extensive work to give them a gorgeous smile, sometimes I was sad to see that although they were now happy with their smile, they had become unhappy with their nose, or their eyes, or some other aspect of their appearance. There is an addiction in the pursuit of perfection that can never be satisfied. This is called Body Dysmorphic Disorder. It is important that as a society we acknowledge and discuss this problem. We must learn to recognize our own beauty and value regardless of any imperfections we may view within ourselves. I love the message of Madilyn Paige's song "Perfect"--

"Take a picture, dress it up
Keep the best and crop it out
All she wants to be
Is something to see
Hide the scars and hide the flaws
Fitting in is all she wants
She needs to be
More than she sees
Oh, the games we think we have to play
To make us feel a certain way
We'll never win with all of this
Obsession with perfect,
Lost in misdirection
Obsession with perfect,
Twisted our reflections
We're already worth it,
'Cause worth is not a prize you can win or lose
You're already worth it
Let go, let go
Let go of perfect"

It is also important to consider the difference between genuine and forced smiles. We know that when you genuinely smile you look and feel good, and our smiles are contagious and can make others feel good too. But it is important to note that this primarily applies to *genuine* smiles. While some research suggests positive emotional benefits with fake or forced smiles, a 2019 study[11] found significant negative consequences (like increased alcohol consumption) among people who fake a smile too much.

So, if you want to feel rich, live longer, reduce stress or wait less in line--begin connecting with those around you by sharing a big, genuine smile. Smile regardless of

how perfect or quirky your teeth are. You'll feel better and you'll bless others. Perhaps this is why Mother Teresa said, "I will never understand all the good that a simple smile can accomplish."