

## How can we help you with your dental fear?



Thank you for downloading this guide and contacting Craigentinny Dental Care about your dental fear. As someone who is anxious about dental care I am sure that making the first move and contacting us can not have been easy for you so congratulations on this first step towards dental health. Although everyone is nervous to some extent when visiting the dentist, experience has taught us that some people are more nervous than others and require extra care and attention. This led us to develop a dedicated programme of care for nervous patients which we very much hope you will choose to benefit from.

Most nervous patients that we have met over the last twenty years (and there have been lots of them) have worried and felt that their anxieties might be laughed at or that the dentist will tell them off for the condition of their teeth. In fact it is not unusual to find that someone who is nervous actually thinks that they are the only person in the world to feel as bad as they do. In fact nothing could be further from the truth, our team actually enjoy helping people beat their dental fear.

### **Why a nervous patients programme?**

We recognised that for many, past dental experiences have led to the development of a phobia or deep seated anxiety. Although no two people have exactly the same fears there is a real need for nervous patients to be treated differently while their confidence and trust in dentistry is re built.

We do this by tailoring a programme of care specifically to your needs, fears and anxieties. As part of the Nervous Patient Programme we work with you to find out what really stresses you out about dentistry, then offer you a range of solutions to help deal with your anxieties. The team are not there to dictate to you, rather they will offer options wherever possible and allow you to choose one that feels most comfortable for you.

I have taken the liberty of enclosing a short information sheet on our nervous patients programme for your information, I hope that you find it not only informative but also that it helps you to take the next step on your journey towards dental health.

If you think you would like to become a member of our practice please give us a call on 0131 669 2114 and ask any member of our reception team for a **“Nervous New Patient Appointment.”**

If you would like to progress things but just don't feel confident enough to make an appointment yet that is ok, why not take our free on line 7 day **beat your dental fear e-course**. Just visit our dedicated website [dentalfearedinburgh.co.uk](http://dentalfearedinburgh.co.uk) and sign up....

We look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

The Craigentenny Dental Care

# Nervous Patient Programme





## **Does your fear stop you from receiving the dental care that you need?**

Do you worry that your dental health is suffering because you are too frightened to visit the dentist or that you might lose control of what happens to you once you get there?

If so then our Nervous Patient Programme may be the answer that you have been looking for. By combining our many years of experience in treating anxious and dentally phobic patients we have devised an approach that is effective at helping patients to overcome their anxieties.

At the heart of the programme sits a deep seated respect for the fact that you have decided to entrust your dental health to our team. We believe that to repay the trust that you place in us we must listen very carefully to what you tell us about your fears and past experiences. Based on this we then work together to tailor a range of specific strategies to your situation.

Every persons dental fears' are subtly different so we do not take a one size fits all approach. No matter what your concerns we have a range of proven strategies have helped people like you to overcome their dental fears in the past. Our goal is to find the right mixture for you and reach a point where you feel confident about coming to see us. For most of our patients dentistry eventually becomes something normal in your life that does not necessitate a day of work or a sleepless night beforehand..

We recognised that for many people, past dental experiences have lead to the development of a phobia or deep seated anxiety. No two people have exactly the same fears so there is a real need for nervous patients to be treated differently while their confidence and trust in dentistry are re built. This is why we emphasise an approach that is specifically tailored to your needs. Our Nervous Patient Programme allows us to work together out what really stresses you out about dentistry then offer you a range of solutions to help deal with your anxieties. The team are not there to dictate to you rather, they will offer options and information about treatments and allow you the freedom to choose the right one for you.

### **Do you use sedation?**

We believe in offering a full 360 degree service so we can help you to address your fear in many ways. We have helped many of our patients to overcome their anxieties without the use of sedation or other medications in the past. Although approaching your dental anxiety without any medication may seem daunting at first this approach will pay long term dividends in reducing your levels of anxiety. Equally we recognise that for many people this is not an option and so we are able to offer a full sedation service too.

## **Where do we begin?**

We usually suggest a first meeting where we first have a chat about your past dental experiences, your current dental situation and what you hope to achieve by becoming a member of our practice. Most importantly we don't ask you to sit in a dental chair while we do this. It is simply 2 people having a good conversation. This discussion helps us to understand your fears and anxieties and is carried out with your dentist and one of our team of sympathetic nurse.

After an initial discussion and only if you feel up to it your dentist will carry out a full examination for you. This is a detailed examination of over 100 areas of your dental health. No treatment what so ever will be carried out, and we will only look in your mouth to achieve this. Based on this examination we then try to co-diagnose a way forwards for you. This simply means that we explain any problems that we find in your mouth, explain what has caused them and then what your options are to remedy the situation. Our dental team are not there to tell you what treatment to have but to explain your choices and options to you. This then will allow you to choose the correct solution for your situation.

## **Extra Help... every step of the way**

Every nervous patient who joins our practice also receives free unlimited access to our dental fear support service. This means you can chat direct to one of our most experienced care Nurses about any aspect of your treatment or your dental fear. This service allows you to chat about your fears or worries in advance of a visit or ask about anything that is on your mind. This approach has proved very successful for many of our more anxious patients who appreciate a named person they can turn to within our practice who is not a dentist.

## **What happens next?**

After your initial visit we can agree a way forward, you will be cared for by your own specific dentist and hygienist both of whom are experienced in treating patients who are anxious. To allow treatment to proceed at your pace we will allocate longer appointments as necessary to ensure a stress free journey through your treatment.

Our whole team use a number of techniques to assist anxious patients. Just one simple example is the universal "STOP Signal" if you raise your hand at any time during treatment then the dentist or hygienist caring for you will stop immediately and address whatever concerns that you may have.

## **The Place**

room full of dental equipment is a known factor in increasing patients stress levels so when we moved to our current location in 2004 we created our surgeries to be as minimalist as possible and avoid the look of a traditional dental practice. Although we have a comprehensive range of the most up to date dental technology from laser decay scanners to ozone, we believe that there is no need for it to be on full display when it is not actually in use. This feature of our practice has been favourably commented on by many of our more anxious patients.

## **The costs**

For most patients there is a standard time that a dentist takes to carry out an item of treatment. We recognise that for an anxious patient that time requirement may (or may not) be greater. Our first goal is

to help you to overcome your dental anxieties so that you are able to cope with any necessary treatment. For this reason we simply allocate time slots between 30 minutes and an hours duration (you can choose.) You pay only for the time slot, we will always agree in advance what we both hope to happen at the visit but we are more interested in making sure that you have a pain free and stress less visit than rushing to complete a treatment.

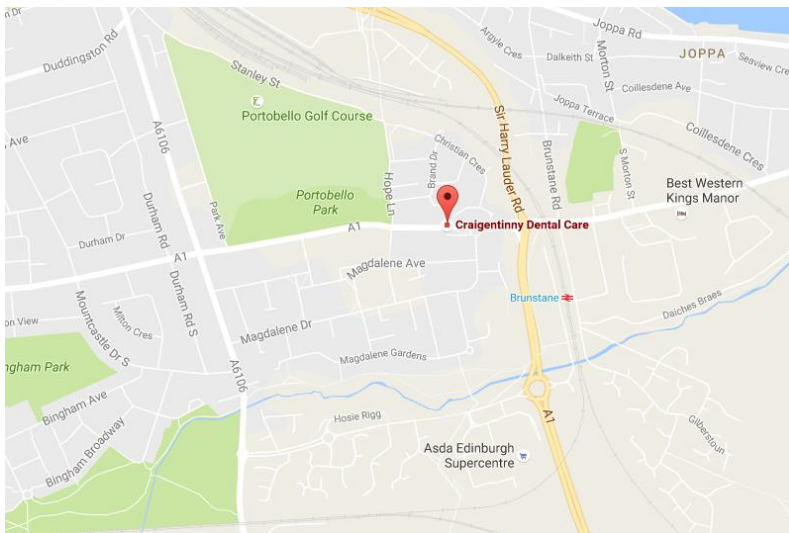
For up to date fees please consult our website or contact our reception team. In the first instance the charge is for a new patient examination.

## The Advantages

Our approach means that you are recognised as an anxious patient by our entire professional team. We have configured our computer systems so that any team member who is involved in your direct care will know about your anxieties and participation in our nervous patient programme. With dedicated fixed length appointments we can remove just a little of the uncertainty that many patients feel when attending. No one will ever force or coerce you into treatment on a given day, our goal is your long term success. We simply work together dealing with just one problem at a time at your pace, until you have been returned to your best possible level of dental health.

## Lets get Started

If you think you would like to become a member of our practice please give us a call on 0131 669 2114 and ask any member of our reception team for a "Nervous New Patient Appointment."



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## A Little Help To Get You Started

We don't pretend that this will cure your anxiety but it does contain some advice and assistance to help you prepare in a positive manner for your first visit to see us. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to get in touch by phone or e-mail.



The stress response that you many people experience it a deeply unpleasant one. A racing heart, sweaty palms, a dry mouth or a feeling of nausea.....any of this sound familiar? If so the following page and a half might jus be worth a few minutes of your time.

When you are stressed or anxious, your body produces what is called a fight or flight response. It releases chemicals to heighten your anxieties and awareness. Beyond a certain point these chemicals feed your anxiety dramatically rapidly increasing your heart rate further, drying up your mouth and generally making you feel wretched.

This response is something that most people can't control easily once it takes a good hold and is often why phobic or nervous patients feel that they can't control their fear. It is almost like a roller coaster ride where once the response starts you may simply feel as though you are along for the ride. There is however another way

If you can catch the anxiety response before it reaches its critical point you can stop it. Self relaxation can hold the key and help you to take back control. The aim of relaxation exercises is to make it difficult for your body to produce the chemicals that make you feel anxiety. It is impossible to be nervous and relaxed at the same time so if you can induce a state of relaxation at will, then your body will not be able do the things that make you feel fear or anxiety. When used in a dental setting, if you induce a state of relaxation on the run up to your appointment every time you feel worried about it, in time your feelings of anxiety on thinking about a visit will ease or at least come under some degree of control. If you become skilled at this technique you will be able to induce a state of relaxation quite fast and thus prevent uncontrollable fear taking over.

### How To Use This Idea

Read through the exercise described below several times before you actually try it. Work on this exercise 2 or 3 times per day at home in preparation for your visit in the weeks running up to your appointment ideally at appoint in the day where you are generally less stressed. The more you try this the better at it you will become. Over time you will discover that it takes less and less time for you to become very relaxed using this technique. It is important to practice as regularly as you can. One good time is last thing at night before you go to sleep. Once you can achieve a state of complete relaxation in 5-10 minutes, you know that even when you are feeling stressed, you will be able to take control of your anxiety at some level.

## Self Relaxation

**Sit down in a quiet room** where you are unlikely to be disturbed and take a few deep breaths. Get comfortable. Start by taking long slow deep breaths, each time you breath out try to relax your body as much as possible, concentrate on your stomach rising and then falling as you breath out. After 10 or 20 breaths start to work through stage 2 of this exercise.

**Starting from your toes** each time you breathe in tense one group of muscles and then let them relax and feel totally heavy and tired as you breathe out. Imagine that they have gone to sleep and are unable to move again. Next breath in tense the next set of muscles eg your calves and then relax them as you breathe out. For each breath out imagine that you are blowing streams of bubbles in front of you. As you proceed you may feel your eyelids getting heavy it is ok to close them at any time. Again concentrating on each muscle group becoming totally heavy and tired as you breath out. Work up your body like this covering the thighs the stomach muscles shoulders, arms then fingers. Each time tensing on the slow breath in then relaxing as you breathe out. Finally do this with your facial muscles, make a really tense face then relax it. At any time as your eyes feel heavy just let them close. You can take as long with this stage as you want.

Your body should be feeling limp and relaxed almost sleepy in some ways. Keeping your eyes closed, imagine looking down on a busy scene and seeing yourself. I often imagine somewhere like a busy shopping centre with lost of noise and people rushing everywhere. Now imagine walking towards and in to a nice quiet plush elevator and listen to the swish of the glass doors closing smoothly and quietly behind you and shutting out the noise. You can still see the busy scene but now in your elevator all is calm and quiet the noise and stress of the shopping centre is totally shut out. This lift goes down 10 floors, so see yourself slowly pressing the ground floor button and feel the lift smoothly almost imperceptibly starting to descend. Imagine it descending 10 floors and as it goes down each floor take one deep breath in then relax and let all the air in your lungs out for each floor that you descend. Try to imagine the light for each floor coming on as you finish breathing out each time. Count down the floors 10, 9, 8 etc each time you breathe out count down one more floor. Until you reach ground floor.

**Imagine** the doors opening to reveal a beautiful scene of tranquillity and calm. You can imagine this scene for yourself, a nice quiet room with soft music, a beach it doesn't really matter but anywhere that you can picture in minute detail. Something based on your own personal experience is best. Walk into the scene that you are imagining and have a seat look around and focus on how peaceful it all is. Look at the colours, feel the textures of things and hear the sounds of your relaxed place.

By this point you should be feeling very relaxed. Don't worry if the first few times you try this it doesn't seem to work for you. Keep practising and really concentrate on your mental pictures after a few trys you will start to feel it working.

This is a really good technique for zapping anxiety because as you become an expert at using it you will be able to just jump into the relaxation exercises wherever you feel most appropriate without going right through from start to finish. So you can relax yourself quickly almost anywhere. Please persevere with this for the first few times and you will start to feel the benefits.