



## **A Holistic Dental Practice, Naturally**

*By Ana Brightleaf, DMD*

Some years ago it became fashionable to call medical practices holistic. However, there was never any really rigorous definition for a holistic health practice, especially for dentists. As a result, two patients who chose holistic dentists might end up with very different experiences.

At our office, we have a very clear sense of what it means for us to practice holistically, and there are certain key factors that define a visit to our office. These encompass the work we do and the patient's overall experience of care and comfort.

We believe a dental visit begins when the patient walks in the door, not when they finally get to the dental chair. So we created our office to be relaxing, aesthetically pleasing, and comfortable. A great deal of thought went into the details, from the overall office construction and design, to the chairs in the waiting room, the music we play on our sound system, and the office colors that are soothing and peaceful.

Our staff is selected for being compassionate and understanding as well as for their competence and knowledge. My own responsibility starts with the patient's first visit when it is my task to not only establish rapport and evaluate the health of their mouth but to listen and understand what direction the patient wants to take with their oral care.

Once we are clear on the patient's objectives, our holistic practice, by definition, must be able to offer a range of options for achieving them. Our particular services range in complexity from general dentistry, though without the use of questionable materials like amalgam, to "safe" amalgam removal (which is far more involved than simply removing the amalgam fillings), to the far end of the spectrum that involves a special blood test to determine a patient's compatibility with the various dental materials. We accept the challenge of making our work a blend of know-how, technical ability, and artistry.

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Other aspects we consider are based on the fact that dental work is inherently traumatic to the body and we want to minimize that stress as much as possible. We accomplish this through, among other practices, the use of natural resources like homeopathics, Bach Flower Remedies, and aromatherapy oils, applying enough anesthetic to assure comfort (though none with epinephrine) while avoiding over-anesthetization, and prescribing medications like antibiotics and painkillers only when we believe they are truly necessary.

We also consider other key dental factors, such as gum health and how the teeth fit together, and I, personally, enjoy working with other health practitioners, so, together, we can support overall wellness.

To round out our service, we offer a range of holistic and natural products from herbal gum tonics and mouthwashes to toothpastes.

The bottom line is that we bring an awareness of the broadest range of healthful dental practices, technologies and products, and always endeavor to recognize and treat each patient as the unique individual they are. We maintain the awareness that our patients are more than a set of oral health conditions; they are people—friends in many cases—who are seeking and deserve the best dental care possible so they can feel and look their best.

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