

Revitalize Your Smile

Leslie Adams' childhood fears kept her away from the dental chair for years.

"My bite was causing me to grind my teeth, and that was wearing them down," confides Leslie. "However, I was hesitant to do anything about it because of past experience.

which means that when she closed her mouth, her chin was coming closer to her nose than was normal for her."

Dr. Blank explains that the dynamics of worn teeth can be compared to that of candy M&M's®: "The enamel of the tooth is like the hard candy shell on the outside of the chocolate. Just

Stephen Blank, DDS

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"Visiting the dentist was a frightening and painful experience as a kid because I was always made to be the guinea pig for my brother and sister. I would have to go first to prove to them it didn't hurt. But, it did.

"My twin sister, Ruthie, also had a lot of difficulties with her teeth. She was told she needed braces, which she wore for two years. Then her dentist told her that her bite could not be aligned unless they broke her jaw, so they did that and she had her mouth wired shut for a month. She also needed gum surgery.

"Watching my sister go through so much pain was difficult, and it made me think, *No one's going to touch my teeth.*"

But Leslie finally had to admit to herself that she, too, desperately needed dental work.

"During a conversation with one of my neighbors, he recommended that I see his dentist," says Leslie. "He said he had received great service from Dr. Blank."

Stephen G. Blank, DDS, practices cosmetic and functional dentistry in Port St. Lucie.

"I scheduled an appointment with him, and he put me at ease immediately," recalls Leslie. "Dr. Blank explained in detail what it would take to restore my bite and to make my teeth look new again. He was absolutely wonderful – very professional, knowledgeable and most of all, very gentle. I was amazed."

Dynamics of worn teeth

"When Leslie first came to us, her first concerns were some broken teeth and the misalignment of her bite," remembers Dr. Blank. "Once we did her examination, we found that, because of the significant wear on her teeth, her mouth was over-closed,

like the shell protects the creamy center that melts in your mouth but not in your hands, the enamel protects the softer center of the tooth known as the *dentin*. If the enamel becomes worn down so that the dentin is exposed, the rate of wear on the teeth will become faster and faster."

Dr. Blank also discovered that Leslie had a history of clenching her teeth. "That put her in jeopardy because her teeth were already weakened from wear, and they could not tolerate the increased pressure," describes the dentist.

Fortunately for Leslie, Dr. Blank further determined that she did not require orthodontics, as had her twin, and that her gums were perfectly healthy.

"The first step we took for Leslie was to create a bite guard appliance for her in order to get her bite under control and stop some of the self-destructive patterns," observes Dr. Blank. "The bite guard is a removable, plastic appliance that is custom fit to the patient's mouth. It is not like the soft and rubbery sports guard that is made to prevent blunt trauma to the teeth. Instead, the rigid guard fits over the teeth snugly, allowing the muscles to relax, the teeth to share the bite load more evenly and the jaw to be positioned better for healing."

Dr. Blank points out that the guard can be worn any time there is no food between the teeth: "The damage does not occur at mealtimes. Instead, it can occur while the patient sleeps or at other times, depending on the individual patient. In Leslie's case, she takes her fitness training very seriously and tends to clench her teeth, so it is important that she wear her guard during her workouts."

Regaining function

Once Leslie's bite was under control and her muscles had settled down, a diagnostic visit was scheduled. Dr. Blank measured

her teeth to determine how much length needed to be replaced and what had to be done to restore her biting edges and chewing points to regain optimum function.

Dr. Blank recommended all-porcelain crowns. During her diagnostic visit, he designed the size, shape, color and position of the tooth restorations. Models of her teeth and photographs of her mouth were taken and sent to the laboratory for a wax-up.

"We then verified that Leslie's bite was comfortable and healthy by using a digital computer T-scan," explains Dr. Blank. "What we see on the monitor is comparable to what the dentist learns from the blue bite paper used to check a patient's bite, except the T-scan measures in far more detail. It shows us both the timing and the intensity of the bite as well as its placement.

"On our patient's second visit, the teeth are prepared for the new restorations, and any old, obstructing dentistry is removed," says Dr. Blank.

Impressions are made for the laboratory, and temporaries that match the wax-up are created.

Following their second visit, patients leave Dr. Blank's office with resin temporaries.

"The temporaries also give our patients the opportunity to see how their new smile will look. At this stage, changes can be made, such as adding a bit of length or a little curvature or a slight reduction. We give the laboratory instructions on coloring, translucency and

brightness." Digital images of the temporaries are sent to the laboratory technician for better results.

"The temporaries we made for Leslie looked just like her new teeth were going to look," adds Dr. Blank.

The final step for Leslie's restorations was to bond the porcelain crowns to her teeth and again verify her bite with the digital T-scan.

Leslie has continued her dental care under the careful hands of Dr. Blank for many years since her initial visit.

"I'm so pleased with the way my teeth look," relays Leslie. "I was so fortunate to find someone like Dr. Blank. He is wonderful. I'd never go to any other dentist."

FHCN staff article. Photos by Nerissa Johnson. Before image courtesy of Dr. Blank.



Leslie says she can't say enough positive things about Dr. Blank.



Stephen G. Blank, DDS, is a 1982 graduate of Northwestern University Dental School in Chicago. He has since completed intensive continuing education studies. Dr. Blank has studied TMJ under Mark Piper, MD, DMD, at the Piper Education and Research Center. He has completed the course continuum at the Dawson Center for Advanced Dental Studies. Dr. Blank was a clinical instructor with the Hornbrook Group, teaching dentists from all parts of the country in live, hands-on courses on the various aspects of smile design, occlusion, full mouth reconstruction, and complete patient care. He is a facilitator/mentor with the Dental Boot Kamp program. Dr. Blank enjoys teaching dental teams around the country.



SNAP Instant Dental Imaging

Dr. Blank and his staff look forward to meeting the readers of *Florida Health Care News*. For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call (772) 878-7348. His office is located at 184 NW Central Park Plaza in Port St. Lucie. Ask how you can see your smile enhanced with SNAP Instant Dental Imaging. You will be able to see your new smile before you make any decisions.



Gold Medal Winner

Dr. Blank was awarded gold medals by the Florida Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry (FACD) Scientific Session competition, which is designed to reward excellence in clinical cosmetic dentistry. The FACD is an organization devoted to seeking improvements in the science and art of cosmetic dentistry.



For more information, please visit the office website at www.PSLDentist.com, find them on Facebook at www.facebook.com/PSLdentist or call (772) 878-7348.