

Building a Beautiful Bite

Function is as important as form when it comes to a patient's smile.

For years, Lisa Rose dealt with a poor bite that forced her to adapt her eating habits and made her self-conscious about her smile. She had to cut her pizza into bite-size pieces, for instance, and often had difficulty biting into sandwiches.

is to build a good dental relationship that will allow you to achieve the best oral health possible and, with proper care, maintain that level of health for a lifetime.

"I think the best part of caring for patients is really understanding what their desires and needs are with a good interview

Stephen Blank, DDS

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"I had never been happy with how my teeth looked or how they articulated," she confides. "My husband used to make fun of me because I was eating my pizza with a knife and fork."

The former dental assistant, 52, also was grinding her teeth, and consequently, several were chipped. "I didn't think my old dentist was addressing my big needs," recalls Lisa. A few years ago, Lisa finally decided to take action. "I looked at my wedding pictures, and I didn't like how my teeth looked," she admits, "so I said, *I'm going to do something about it.*"

A friend recommended Port St. Lucie dentist Stephen G. Blank, DDS. "She highly recommended him," recalls Lisa, a social worker who works with developmentally disabled children and adults. "I went for a consult. My first impression was really quite good. He looked at my teeth and completed the examination, and we both agreed on what were some problem areas. It was the first time that I felt a dentist had actually really done a full examination of my mouth and teeth."

A dental relationship

Dr. Blank gives all of his new patients a thorough examination to determine their dental needs and develop a custom treatment plan. The 1.5-hour exam includes a complete oral examination, including TMJ, bite and soft-tissue evaluations; computerized periodontal measurements, digital x-rays, an intra-oral video tour that allows the patient to see what the dentist sees, an oral hygiene fitness evaluation and more.

"It's not your typical five-minute dental exam," assures the dentist. "The foundation

at the beginning of our relationship, and then a good examination for the patient to understand his or her current conditions," adds Dr. Blank. "That allows us to discuss options and make plans for each patient."

Lisa's evaluation showed that she "had some old, worn dental fillings that were discolored and not serving her well anymore," relates Dr. Blank. "Her dental arches were very crowded and her teeth were squeezed in a bit too tight. There was even a crossbite on the right side where the bottom teeth were on the outside and the top teeth were squeezed inward so the front teeth were rotated."

Her treatment plan involved updating her old fillings, removing her wisdom teeth and then, to straighten her teeth and improve her smile, Invisalign®.

Invisalign option

Invisalign is a system that works to straighten teeth over a period of months using a series of virtually invisible, removable, plastic aligners.

It works in stages, and patients get a new set of customized aligners about every two weeks. Each set gradually moves the teeth to the specifications prescribed by the dentist, and treatment generally takes between 12 and 18 months.

Compared to other types of orthodonture, Invisalign doesn't require metal or porcelain brackets, or wires. The aligners are removable, so patients can continue to eat their favorite foods and practice proper oral hygiene.

"I had no idea that it could significantly move your teeth," admits Lisa. "I didn't think I was going to be eligible for Invisalign because of my open bite and because I was in crossbite in places, but Dr. Blank assured me that those needs could be met."

Form and function

Dr. Blank stresses that though many dental procedures help patients' smiles look better, the procedures are instrumental in improving function as well.

Left untreated, misaligned teeth can



Lisa (with Divo) is much happier with her smile following Invisalign treatment.

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lead to long-term dental deterioration. "When teeth are rotated during regular function, they bump into each other a little differently than they would if they were straight," explains Dr. Blank. "So when we're able to make the teeth fit together, then functionally, they don't cause each other to wear out. They work in harmony instead of in conflict with one another."

Aligning the teeth also works to prevent future dental problems like grinding or clenching. "Part of the reason people grind their teeth is because when the teeth don't fit in harmony with the muscles, instead of the muscles releasing and relaxing when the mouth closes, they squeeze a little extra to make the teeth fit together. And that damages teeth."

After more than a year in the aligners, Lisa's bite "feels so much better!" she exclaims. "I feel like it has relaxed my facial muscles. I don't think I even realized that I was grinding, but now I know. It has exceeded my expectations. My teeth look great."

"When she smiles now, it is a much happier, fuller smile," observes Dr. Blank. "She smiles all the time."

Customized care

Unlike some crowded, busy practices in which dentists bounce from room to room treating several patients at once, Dr. Blank, who has been practicing in Port St. Lucie for nearly 33 years, makes and takes time to deliver customized care to all of his patients.

"It's very personalized and efficient," enthuses Lisa. "I like the idea that when you walk into Dr. Blank's office, there's a plan and

you know the plan. You know Dr. Blank. You know the staff. There are no surprises.

"I was hoping to find a dentist who could do it all – finish my restoration, do the Invisalign, take care of my wisdom teeth – and I thought, *Oh no! I'm going to be running to three different dentists!*" remembers Lisa. "After learning about Dr. Blank and talking to him and discussing my treatment plan, I was comfortable that he could handle it all."

"I live about thirty-five minutes away from Dr. Blank," she continues, "and I thought to myself, *If he's a good dentist, I will definitely take the time to travel to him.* I'm glad I made that decision, because he's been on target about all of my care." **FHCN**—Melanie Casey

For more information call (772) 878-7348



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.



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Scan the QR code for Dr. Blank's contact information.

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.

Visit the office website at www.PSLDentist.com.