

HOLISTIC DENTISTRY

Jane Egginton discovers how dedicated dentists
can help you find your inner smile

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I realise I've made a big mistake as soon as I get to David the holistic dentist. I just wanted my mercury fillings out in a safe, painless way and nothing toxic to replace them. I hadn't realised that holistic dentistry really does do what it says on the tin: it treats the whole you, inside and out.

After examining my teeth and gums, the affable David announces, “you have a tendency to inflammation, which is a precursor to all sorts of degenerative diseases.” Afterwards I tell him that I had no idea that the consultation would be so comprehensive. David smiles and kindly says, “Yes, that's what holistic dentistry is, it is pretty amazing.”

He is more low-key about the possible effects of the removal of my mercury fillings. I don't know if I believe the person who told me it will make me feel like I've had lead shoes removed, but I do know I want the toxic metal out of my mouth. David can, and does remove them quickly and easily, replacing them painlessly with a white, non-toxic filler.

It is a surprise to be given X-rays – at my regular dentist I always refuse them, but these have reduced radiation exposure. David finds some work that needs doing that my own national health dentist hadn't. I am shocked, although apparently it happens all the time. Private dentistry certainly doesn't come cheap, but it is worth weighing up the cost of missed or wrong diagnoses and what exactly you get for your money.

David packs me off with a little pack of homeopathic pills, made of arnica and some other non-chemical ingredients to help with the shock and the pain. From here I go straight to my next appointment at the centre, with the lovely and committed Lynn Rae. I am going to have an internal face massage, which is a first for me. I am a bit surprised to be asked to take off my dress and also whether I have scoliosis (I do – it was only diagnosed late in life in a yoga class), but these are just further indications of the comprehensive approach of the practice.

“We spend so much time looking in the mirror, but pay so little attention to our thoughts and expressions and how they create an imprint in our muscles”, Lynn tells me. She sees it as her role to educate her clients so that they can both learn from and inform their own bodies and create ‘muscle memories’.

I am told how to create and visualise an inner smile in my mouth, imagining it spreading outwards and upwards. Tests have been done to show that hormones are produced when we smile and this inner version also creates space and relaxation in our mouths and our whole head, which is then felt in the rest of the body.

I once broke three teeth through clenching during a particularly stressful time in my life. At the time I didn't even realise that I did clench or grind my teeth. “Dentists sometimes say you can't stop clenching, particularly at night. I say that you can do anything you want”, says Lynn as she breaks into a beautiful, light smile.

It feels strange to have someone massaging the inside of your mouth and under your tongue, and it's incredibly intimate. After all, most of us have never been touched there, but Lynn's touch is assured, intuitive and very gentle. "Is that ok?" she asks at one point and I wonder why, until I realise that I had thought about a document I had lost on my laptop that she was able to pick up on the anxiety from feeling a physical response in my mouth.

Afterwards there feels as if there is more space in my mouth and it certainly feels more relaxed. Lynn is a Pilates teacher, massage therapist and ex makeup artist whose whole face glows. She gives me some tongue exercises to do at home, which will create a muscle memory. I decide the whole experience is a bit like a facial and a natural face-lift combined with Yin yoga for the mouth. As I leave London Holistic Dental I practise my inner smile or 'meditation face' as Lynn calls it and it almost seems as if the crowds in Oxford Street smile back at me.

I had just returned from the Sayan Aesthetic Institute in Bali where I had experienced a whitening treatment for US\$ 345. Tooth tourism is big here and the Institute has won awards for the best medical spa in the country and is Australian developed and managed. It also has the advantage of having The Mansion Resort Hotel and Spa in its grounds, so visitors to the clinic can stay on site. The treatment I experienced was efficient and conscientious, and the price I paid was a fraction of the cost of treatment at home, but it really only makes sense if you happen to be visiting the country anyway.

Cleaning and whitening is very much part of any holistic approach to dentistry. The good health of the area around the teeth is vital for not only the wellbeing of your mouth but recent research shows it is also closely linked to cardiovascular health. Air-flow cleansing is non chemical but is very effective at tooth cleaning Dr. Richard Marquez from the Wimpole Dental Practice tells me.

All the dentists I speak to recommend Philips Sonic toothbrush for its ability to deep clean and massage without damaging sensitive teeth or gums. For those who don't like to floss, the Sonicare rechargeable AirFloss cleans between teeth in 30 seconds at the press of a button.

The state of our smile can very easily affect our self-confidence, so while teeth whitening may seem to some to be a pure act of vanity, many have found that it can greatly improve the way they feel about themselves. Dr. David Marques from Wimpole suggests choosing a dentist with whom you feel comfortable and who offers an all round service. If they pride themselves on treating nervous patients, as he does, this suggests a real commitment to care.

Wimpole Street Dental offers whitening procedures that are highly personalised and might include in-clinic laser treatment, or home whitening using dental grade gel at home. At his practice Richard may suggest a crown to completely cover and restore a tooth to its original look. Here, they offer everything ranging from gum massage to snore control which really is a holistic service.

For more information visit:

London Holistic Dental
londonholisticdental.com

Lynn Rae
lynnrae.co.uk

Sonicare
philips.co.uk

Sayan Aesthetic Institute
aestheticbali.com

Wimpole Street Dental
wimpolestreetdental.com

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