

My, What *Small* Teeth You Have

Excessive tooth wear is not a part of natural aging; it is related to a problematic bite, and once the teeth are worn down, they have no mechanism for re-growth. However, there is a solution.

Dr. Susan McClure's teeth ached constantly!
 "I was grinding my teeth at night and between meals for years, which was causing a myriad of problems," remembers the veterinarian. "The enamel was cracking off of my teeth. They were not only painful but they were also getting shorter and shorter while my gums were looking longer and the roots of my teeth were becoming more exposed. I had even cracked my front two teeth, which were continuing to shed pieces of enamel. I had a general dentist who had provided me with mouth guards to

wear continues faster and faster.
 "Susan's upper teeth were experiencing the same dynamic. Although normal, healthy front teeth are typically between ten-and-a-half and eleven-and-a-half millimeters tall, Susan's upper two front teeth were only seven millimeters tall. Additionally, because her teeth on the upper front had worn away significantly, the entire section of gum and teeth had moved downward to meet her lower teeth in order to stay in function, resulting in what is often referred to as a *gummy* smile."

STEPHEN G. BLANK, DDS

wear night and day but it wasn't helping. Finally my teeth hurt so much that I asked my children's dentist Dr. Arias if he could recommend someone and he referred me to Dr. Blank."

Stephen G. Blank, DDS, practices cosmetic and functional dentistry in Port St. Lucie. Considering each patient's expectations, Dr. Blank chooses his cosmetic dentistry procedures and methods carefully. He takes his time in evaluating both the patient's dental condition and how the new smile will fit with other facial features.

"Susan's pain was caused by root exposure, and the roots were exposed because she was grinding her teeth," explains Dr. Blank. "When patients grind their teeth between meals or during sleep, you might expect that the biting surface would be worn down because that is the area of the teeth that is absorbing the friction. But what is not so obvious is that teeth are imbedded in living bone that moves and responds to the patients' muscles. The same dynamic that enables an orthodontist to move teeth by choice also allows teeth to move out of alignment when they are bended back and forth at the gum line during teeth grinding, causing enamel to break off.

"Simultaneously, the enamel can be worn away and cracked off the tooth. As significant wear occurs, teeth rise up from the gum. As a tooth super-erupts, the patient's root surface is exposed above the gum line. This can not only cause pain, but also creates a worn and aged appearance. Further, as enamel is worn off, the dentin layer is revealed."

Dentin is the yellow-brown substance that lies under the enamel and makes up the bulk of the tooth. "This is like an M&M where the candy coating is gone," observes Dr. Blank, "exposing the softer chocolate center. Once the dentin is exposed, the

The treatment

"My first consultation with Dr. Blank was excellent," recalls Dr. McClure. "After explaining to me exactly what was going on, and learning that I did have financial concerns, he went over different treatment plans that could be used to alleviate my pain from chewing, improve my gummy smile, and restore a healthy bite. Using computer images, he showed me my smile and how it could look better."

This consultation is where Dr. McClure's desires were addressed. Dr. Blank's smile makeovers include in-depth discussions, choosing the right materials, designing the length of the new teeth, ideal proportions, desired morphology or shape of the teeth, color, and any other aesthetic and functional concerns.

"We decided on using laser therapy to raise Susan's gum line and boney tissue to compensate for the excessive eruption of her teeth," describes Dr. Blank. "We determined where the biting edge needed to be for good aesthetics and then raised her gum line. For Susan, laser crown lengthening meant no stitches and a very comfortable healing period."

Mindful of his patients' expectations, Dr. Blank chooses his cosmetic dentistry procedures and methods carefully. Following her laser crown lengthening, he would apply all-porcelain crowns to most of her teeth, with veneers for her two bottom front teeth.

During Dr. McClure's diagnostic visit, study models and photographs of her mouth were taken and then sent to the laboratory for a wax-up.

Preparation day

A wax-up, or a wax model of how the enhanced or repaired teeth will look, is completed by the laboratory following Dr. Blank's prescription. It simulates the new teeth and is used to make any necessary changes before the lab proceeds to make the patient's new porcelain veneers or crowns.

The patient's teeth are prepared for the new restorations and any old dentistry



FHCN PHOTO BY BRIAN GLENN

Thanks to her new smile, Dr. McClure feels far more comfortable working with her patients and their owners at Animal Planet Veterinary Hospital.

is removed. Impressions are made for the laboratory, and temporaries that match the wax-up are placed. For Dr. McClure, Dr. Blank placed her upper crowns first, fitted to the ideal lower temporaries.

"The temporaries give our patients a second opportunity to see the appearance of their new restorations," observes Dr. Blank. "At this stage changes can still be made, such as adding a bit of length or a little curvature or a slight reduction."

"Additionally, we perform a T-Scan which enables us to digitally record our patient's bite so that both my patient and I can view the bite on a computer monitor.

"From the time people begin to close their teeth until their mouths are completely closed might take only half of a second, but in that time we make a movie that is hundreds of frames long. We can observe which tooth touched first, second, third, and so on.

"Our goal is to have them all meet evenly at the same time.

"The laboratory made Susan's upper crowns to match the dental work I prepared. Once they were perfected, we bonded her upper arch of all-porcelain crowns.

"Once I placed her upper crowns, then we prepared her lower teeth to match her new and improved upper teeth. A few weeks later, the porcelain lower teeth were bonded into place."

The results

"I was very pleased working with Dr. Blank and his staff," offers Dr. McClure. "It has resolved all of my pain issues; I can eat whatever I want. And my smile looks great. I have received so many compliments on my new appearance, and yet it is subtle enough that none of my clients can pinpoint the difference. I get comments like, *You look so rested, You look thinner, You look good, and You look so much happier.* No one has said, *Oh, you had major dental work done.*

"And Dr. Blank and his staff were always available to answer any questions I had. Dr. Blank even took the extra time to call me at night, which was completely unexpected.

"I'm extremely happy with the results."

FHCN—Kris Kline



PHOTO COURTESY OF DR. BLANK

Dr. Blank invites you to visit his website at www.PSLDENTIST.com

Gold Medal Winner

On September 29, 2007, Dr. Blank was awarded four gold medals at the Florida Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry (FACD) Annual Scientific Session competition, which is designed to determine the best of the best in clinical cosmetic dentistry. The FACD is an organization devoted to seeking improvements in the science and art of cosmetic dentistry.



Stephen G. Blank, DDS, is a graduate of Northwestern University Dental School in Chicago. He has since completed intensive continuing education studies, and he and his dental team have completed the Dental Organization for Conscious Sedation program. Dr. Blank is 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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To view your own Virtual Smile Makeover by Dr. Blank, go to www.PSLDENTIST.com and follow the instructions.

For that healthy smile

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.