



Finding the right dentist for you

Workbook One

Finding out how to make that first contact with a dentist



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If you have any problems with any of the steps within this workbook please contact me and I will work through it with you. This document is offered with free support either:

online at: <http://www.mentoring.solets.com>

via email: makeithappen@solets.com

via telephone: 0845 345 6961



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What needs to happen / not happen in order for you to be able to make an appointment?

You overcome your fears by changing the way you think about them, by identifying exactly what your fears are and then finding ways to deal with those fears.

There are certain criteria that when fulfilled will enable you to overcome your fears. If you are willing to work, take whatever steps are necessary to beat your fear, intend to beat your fears and believe that it is possible you will be able to do so.

One way to do this is identify exactly what you want from the dentist that will make it possible for you to attend the appointment. Therefore, the questions you need to answer are "What do I need to know will / will not be done in order that I would be able to attend for treatment" There may be many things but that is fine, just add it onto the list. An example could be:

- 1) I would need to know that they would not say anything about the state of my teeth.
- 2) I would need to know that the injection would not hurt
- 3) I would need to know that if I wanted them to stop, when I raised my finger, they would do so
- 4) I would need to know that they would work at my pace and not push me into doing anything I am not ready to do.

As you discover each item, answer the question:

"If I knew 100% that the dentist wouldNot say anything about the state of my teeth, how do I now feel about making the appointment?"

If you were to answer the question after discovering point one your answer may be something like "I would feel better, but I would need to know that the injection wouldn't hurt" etc.

Use this process to build your list of things that you need to know will / will not be done in order that you would be able to attend for treatment. Either select an item from the list or enter a reason in the free text area.

The steps are simple but if you have any problems please feel free to contact me and I will talk you through the process.



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Step 1

Question: What is it that stops you from visiting the dentist?

What we are doing in this step is starting to identify *everything* that will stop you from making that appointment and when we have done that we will start to look at how to overcome the things we discover.

Ask yourself the question above and then scan the list on the next page and tick the ones that are appropriate to you. If you have reasons that are not on the list then write them in the spaces provided.

When you have completed that go to Step 2 (Page 3)

If thinking about what stops you triggers the reactive fear response you may feel the fear almost as badly as if you were actually facing the dentist. So please do not proceed with this process as it will be difficult or even impossible to continue. Please contact me via the website or call me on 0845 345 6961 and I will teach you a technique that will enable you to stop the reactive response.



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| Reasons | Tick |
|--|-------------|
| You would not see any of the implements used | |
| You would not hear the drill | |
| You would not feel the injection | |
| You would not be laid back in the chair | |
| You would feel no pain | |
| You were told what they are going to do | |
| You raised your hand the dentist would stop what they were doing | |
| You felt that you could trust them completely | |
| You could trust them to stop when you asked them to. | |
| You could make the first appointment for just a chat and know there would be no work done | |
| You could feel no pain from the injection | |
| You could deal with your fear of medications | |
| You could be sedated | |
| That the dentist would not use dental dams | |
| That the dentist would not react in a negative way if you got upset | |
| That the dentist would listen to you and would know what was happening inside your head | |
| That the dentist understood your fear of having a panic attack & losing control | |
| They would try to find ways to help you that did not involve drugs | |
| The first appointment would just be a chat | |
| The dentist would work at your pace | |
| The dentist would realise why you were phobic | |
| The dentist would not make you feel small or dirty over the way you had let your teeth deteriorate | |
| The dentist would not know your name. | |
| The dentist would not force you into doing anything you are not ready to do | |
| The dentist would explain things to you in a way that you understood | |
| The dentist would understand your fears | |
| The dentist will be understanding | |
| The dentist was male | |
| The dentist was female | |
| The dentist was cheerful and optimistic about the outcome of your teeth, not too serious | |
| That the dentist would not try to make you do things you were not ready for. | |
| That the dentist specialises with people with extreme fears | |
| That the dentist not judge me for bad teeth | |
| If you knew you wouldn't have to loose all of your teeth | |
| You would feel no pain | |
| Other Reasons not included in the above list | Tick |
| | |
| | |
| | |



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Step 2

When you have completed the list and ticked all the items appropriate to you, answer the following question.

Now, I know at this point the fear part of you will probably not allow you to accept that these things will happen. You may also not believe that these things could even happen but at this point just accept that they will.

Question: On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is no way and 10 is I know 100% I could make that appointment where would you score yourself, knowing those things to be true. Again the how we will talk of later so just KNOW that the above things will be true.

If your score is anything less than an 8 or 9 go back to Step 1. You WILL feel differently about the whole thing when you have discovered everything that would stop you. It might be an idea to leave the list around for a couple of days as working through this triggers what I call the “green light thinking process” ideas and reasons will just pop into your head. So leaving it for a few days will help.

When your score is an 8 or 9 go to Step 3.



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Step 3

At this point you will have a list of things that will / will not need to happen in order for you to make an appointment. Some of these things will obviously be more important to you than others. Look at it this way. If you have 10 things and the dentist can only help you with 8 of them that is fine provided it is the top 8. However if it is the bottom 8 then that is a totally different story.

This part of the process is easier if you cut out squares of paper, or use post cards. You will need as many of these as you have reasons.

What this part of the process does is very repetitive but it is a key stage.

Now, let's get started.

- 1. Write each of your reasons on a separate piece of paper**
- 2. Put them into a pile**
- 3. Take the top two reasons off the pile and place them face up in front of you**

Question: Out of the two reasons in front of you, which is the most important?

As an example if your reasons were:

- A. The dentist would not make me feel dirty about the state of my teeth
- B. I would not hear the drill

Which one of those is the most important to you? Again remember that all of the things you have chosen will happen, it is just a matter of working out which is more important.

If A is the more important to you, take reason B and turn it face down on a new pile. If B is the more important to you, take reason A and turn it face down on a new pile.

- 4. Take the next reason off your list.**

Question: Out of the two reasons in front of you, which is the most important?

As an example if your reasons were, assuming that answer A was the most important

- A. The dentist would not make me feel dirty about the state of my teeth
- B. This is a new reason

Which one of those is the most important to you? Again remember that all of the things you have chosen will happen, it is just a matter of working out which is more important.

If A is the more important to you take reason B and turn it face down on a new pile. If B is the more important to you take reason A and turn it face down on a new pile.

- 5. Repeat the process with all of the questions in your initial pile**
- 6. When you have reached the bottom of you first pile write the reason that is face up in the first blank position in sheet one.**
- 7. Go back to 1 and repeat the process until you have compared all the reasons**
- 8. Go to Step 4**



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Sheet one:

Things that need to happen / not happen in order that I can make an appointment

| Reasons | Ranking |
|---------|---------|
| | 1 |
| | 2 |
| | 3 |
| | 4 |
| | 5 |
| | 6 |
| | 7 |
| | 8 |
| | 9 |
| | 10 |
| | 11 |
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| | 25 |



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Step 4

You will now have a list of things that if fulfilled will enable you to make that appointment. Congratulations.

Now you need to work out how to make each one of those things possible. Some of the reasons may be things you need to know and others things that you need to be able to handle. What you need to do is to work out how to make those things possible.

The next thing you need to do is to take the first reason off your list, write it in box A in the sheet two, and ask your self:

Question: What needs to happen / not happen in order that this reason can happen?

Write down, in the lines on the next page every / any way you can make the reason happen. Write it down even if it appears stupid because this will again start the "green light thinking process." Again you may benefit from doing this over a couple of days. Keep the list handy and add to it as ideas come into your head.

Now, as I said some of these reasons may be things that need to happen / not happen. Others may be things you need to know. I will give examples for each.

Example one: Something that needs to happen / not happen

| Write the reason you are working on in the box below | |
|---|---------|
| I don't want to hear the drill | A |
| | |
| What needs to happen / not happen in order to make the above happen | Ranking |
| I find an alternative to being drilled | 3 |
| I wear ear plugs | 2 |
| I take a personal stereo | 1 |

In this case I can only think of three possibilities.

Next you need to rank the things that need to happen in the same way you ranked the reasons stopping you from making the appointment. Questions you should ask yourself include:

1. Is it possible
2. Is it practical
3. Would it work
4. Is it within my control to do that
(if not then you need to change this question to how do I know the person concerned would do this. An example of this is I need to trust the dentist and that will be covered in the next example)
5. Is it fair to all concerned

Then write the ranking number in the column next to the appropriate thing that needs to happen. (See above)



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Example two: Something you need to know.

This is slightly harder to explain as it is much more subjective.

| Write the thing you need to know | |
|--|----------------|
| I could trust the dentist | A |
| | |
| How do can I be sure of the above | Ranking |
| How do I know I can trust the dentist | |
| How do I know if I trust people | |
| If I saw the dentist a few times before treatment I would know | |
| I would know if I could talk to them first | |
| I get a gut feeling about people | |
| I could email them fist and see what type of impression I get about them | |

Enter the thing you need to know in box A of Sheet 4 then write down all the things that come in to your head that relate the thing you need to know. (See above)

Once you have formulated the list of things that would enable you to know what you need to know, you need to rank them and select the ones that are appropriate.

Again the following questions may help.

1. Is it possible
2. Is it practical
3. Would it work
4. Is it fair to all concerned

Once you have completed all the sheets go to Step five



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Sheet three

Print one of these for each thing you need to know.

| Write the thing you need to know | |
|-----------------------------------|---------|
| | |
| | A |
| How do can I be sure of the above | Ranking |
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Step 5

This is the final step. Well done for persisting and getting this far. In working through this you will have made a major step forward along the road to freedom from fear. You will already feel different about making that appointment so now you need to start to find out how to find dentists to approach.

You are now ready to seek the professional help you require. This is an important time and one that you need to consider carefully. However, having worked through this process you now know:

1. You know exactly what you need to happen / not happen in order for you to make an appointment.
2. You know exactly what you need to do in order to make all the things you need to happen either happen or not happen.
3. You know exactly what you need do / know in order to know all the things you need to know.

It may have taken you years to get to this point so a little time in ensuring you make the correct choice is well spent.

Recommendation is by far the best way of making this first contact.

Ask friends, relatives or loved ones if they know of a dentist that may be able to help. If not then scan the adverts for dentists that state they deal with nervous or anxious patients. However, it is vitally important that the dentist will work with you in the way that YOU need and they are willing / able to enable you to deal with all the things that are stopping you from undergoing treatment.

When you have located what you think maybe a suitable practice the next thing to do either is telephone or write to them. An example letter appears in the appendix of this document.



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Symptoms and severity

Tick the appropriate severity boxes expressing how you feel when you think about the symptoms listed below. Include this in your letter to the dentist or take it when you go for your first appointment.

The ratings are from 1 to 5 where -

1 = relaxed (no great problem)

2 = uneasy

3 = anxious

4 = very anxious

5 = extremely anxious to the point it makes me feel ill.

Be totally honest about the way you feel, as this will help the dentist to understand exactly how you feel

| Symptom | Severity | | | | |
|---|----------|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Thinking about a visit to the dentist. | . | . | . | . | . |
| What the dentist will say about the state of your mouth | | | | | |
| Making an appointment. | | | | | |
| Opening your mouth in front of the dentist. | | | | | |
| Feeling out of control (being laid back in the chair). | | | | | |
| Being unable to breath. | | | | | |
| Being sick in the chair. | | | | | |
| Passing out. | | | | | |
| Losing control (because of panic / anxiety) | | | | | |
| The sound of the drill. | | | | | |
| Having things placed in your mouth | | | | | |
| The affects of any anaesthetic | | | | | |
| Being unable to breathe | | | | | |
| Pain | | | | | |
| The smell of the surgery. | | | | | |
| Losing all my teeth | | | | | |
| Gagging | | | | | |
| Other symptoms not included above | | | | | |
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Covering Letter to the dentist

Remember to include the Symptoms and severity sheet and also Sheet one

Dear <enter the dentists name>

I am writing to you in the hope that you will be able to help me overcome my dental phobia.

It is <enter how long since last appointment> since I last visited the dentist due to my extreme dental phobia.

However, I am now at the point where I feel that I want to face my fears and I am now ready to seek the professional help that I require.

I enclose:

1. A questionnaire that I have completed in order to give you a greater understanding of the symptoms I experience when thinking about dental treatment.
2. A list of all the things I need to happen / not happen in order that I can actually make an appointment sorted into an order of importance.

It has take a lot of courage to get to this point and it is a great achievement that I can even send this letter. I am determined to deal with my fears but I cannot do it without the right sort of help. Do you offer the sort of services I need. Please let me know either way

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thanking you in anticipation