

## Lessons Learned In A Dentist Chair

First, there is a difference between dentists. Finding the right dentist is among the most important priorities in life (at least in my life). It takes a lot of effort, and often the first step is finding the wrong one--maybe more than once, or a lot more, and always takes a lot of luck. Consider yourself very fortunate to find Dr. Rahul Sachdev in his new Burlington, North Carolina location.

Second, teeth are not your most durable body part. Even the healthiest person on earth needs a dentist. No one is ever going to manage in this lifetime without one (or many if you're not so lucky). Since this is a definite need, like you need your kidneys or your heart, then the best one possible is a huge advantage for both longevity and quality of life.

Third, patience is perfection. Expertise and skill in dental procedures are by comparison relatively simple to identify. But patience is itself a very special skill. When you're having trouble getting numb for a procedure, feeling pressured only makes the problem worse. Dr. Sachdev lets you feel like you're an honored guest in a private home. You are not just a customer there lined up and run through like cattle to slaughter. The way he executes a dental procedure is like seeing a master craftsman completely merged with his craft. He never rushes and never quits, never . . . until the job is done—perfectly.

Fourth, sensitivity is gender-neutral. Dr. Sachdev notices whether you are uncomfortable almost before you do. He makes it his mission for you not to feel any pain or discomfort—physical or mental. The ultimate hospitality. Whatever level of dental anxiety you may experience is put to ease there in the most natural, professional manner imaginable. Sometimes I wonder whether he's more of a psychologist than a dentist: He knows what to say and when to tell you. But I don't think any school can teach that skill. And if you're one of them, the "man's man," like I was for years, and years, who just grits down and bears the pain, who are you kidding? Maybe yourself. Been there, done that. Long-term, I don't recommend it. Short-term either for that matter.

Fifth, a friend is someone you trust because he has never given you a reason not to trust him. Dr. Sachdev and I aren't exactly what I would call friends in the social sense, I don't know the names of his children. But I don't know anyone I trust more or consider more of a friend.

Whether your need is simple maintenance or the most intricate cosmetic procedure, Dr. Sachdev is the consummate professional and at the same time something beyond what you expect from a highly trained and skilled dental practitioner: He is truly an artist. He operates from a foundation that only the premier dental schools in the country teach, but further with the flare we appreciate maybe as an award-winning chef in one of the finest restaurants or a virtuoso violinist. Rarely if ever do we talk about surgeons or doctors of dentistry this way. But there is an elite class—the dentist's dentist (the one other dentists seek out for their personal care)—and mere words are not sufficient to properly differentiate them from other dentists in general, especially that small, rare group of the super-talented. If there were a five-star scale awarded to this profession, Dr. Sachdev

would need six stars. And if you think I'm exaggerating, consider it a challenge—or at worst I will concede he is in the top three you will ever meet (but I didn't have children when I met the other two, and trust me that makes a big difference). And the subject of amalgam doesn't even come up there, which has been known to send me reeling out the door without another word. . . .

Let's talk about referrals for a moment. Not an issue, right? Oh yeah. . . . When you do move away, you don't want to go back out in the cold dark night and start all over finding Dr. Sachdev's replacement. Good luck with that. A referral from this office is golden. Worth its weight. Or if you need that special oral surgeon to perform a related specialty service, you want to know you are going to someone these people trust. While there are those (maybe that pain-gritting crowd) who possess the bravado to rely on trial and error, keep in mind that oral surgery is a one-time thing in most cases. So you get it right or wrong—one time. You can trust that I (and my children) am not going anywhere Dr. Sachdev (or Dr. Hogan) hasn't personally endorsed.

As the proud father of a lovely 20-year-old daughter, I have seen the smile on her face and in many ways her whole life transformed by Dr. Sachdev's almost magical touch. He made her wait for years before he agreed to do the crowns because—remember—he's patient, and he makes sure he does everything exactly right and exactly at the right time, i.e., perfectly. And as a very experienced 63-year-old professional who has sought out the best dentists in several states including Florida and North Carolina, not to mention one who suffers from dental anxiety extreme enough to lift me out of a dental chair like this one where I am sitting right now with a bib still attached as I ran out the door never looking back, I have nothing to gain by saying these things. Only expressing my sincere appreciation, true gratefulness, unmitigated respect and pure admiration.

And as you might expect, Dr. Sachdev surrounds himself with the best people you will ever find in a dentist's office. So far it's a straight flush for everyone there really knowing what they're doing. I haven't yet had the chance to meet the entire staff in his new Burlington office (in early 2016 he left a very successful practice he built for a group in Pittsboro), but I can already tell you that Darlene dazzles in the front office (she's practically psychic in the way she handles the business end, as well as considerate, practical and as likeable as you could ever ask). Susan simply soars above the crowd in hygiene (never had my teeth cleaned so well before). And Brittany is practically a dentist herself it seems when she sets up and assists in the treatment suite. My apologies for not being able to name the others, I'm sure everyone there is nothing less than the best in their field. Nice folks too, everyone one of them. It's more than worth the drive from Chapel Hill, but my friend Dr. Sachdev would have to move pretty doggone far away for me not to follow him wherever he went—and I'm not just talking about an hour or two; I can't even imagine how far too far would be.