

## Emotional Dentistry

**Mario Utrilla Trinidad<sup>1\*</sup> and Helga Mediavilla Ibañez<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Doctor in Dentistry, MBA in Healthcare Management, Director of the Master in Management and Direction of Dental Clinics of PsicoDent, Spain*

<sup>2</sup>*Dental Consultant and Clinical Psychologist Specialized in Dental Phobia Individual and Corporate Dental Coaching Certified by AECOP-EMCC-ISCP-EFPA Founder and Director of PsicoDent, Spain*

**\*Corresponding Author:** Mario Utrilla Trinidad, Doctor in Dentistry, MBA in Healthcare Management, Director of the Master in Management and Direction of Dental Clinics of PsicoDent, Spain.

**Received:** November 14, 2017; **Published:** January 04, 2018

“The purpose of having an open mind, like that of an open mouth, is to fill it with something valuable” (Gilbert Keith Chesterton).

From the “tooth-puller” to the Stomatologist and the Dentist, the profession has evolved a lot, both in terms of scientific knowledge and in terms of the materials used [1]. What has not changed is the relational nature of this profession, that is, involves the need to establish a communication with patients and to manage the emotional contagion that occurs in these relationships. What I say produces an emotion in you and what you tell me produces an emotion in me.

The profession of Dentistry takes place in a context of constant interaction with people. Knowing what to say in each moment facilitates relationships, avoids misunderstandings and consequently improves the daily work quality and with it the professional and personal well-being [2].

All dentistry professionals “suffer” the consequences of interaction with difficult patients. Dentists and assistants raise their doubts about how to convince a patient to perform a necessary treatment for their dental health, how to relax a person who is very nervous, what to say to an aggressive patient who gets angry and does not attend to reasons, what to do when a patient keeps moving his head during treatment, how to react when they ask you for something you do not want to do, such as giving a date you had booked to rest, how to behave with a patient who does not perform the treatment for dental phobia [3]. And so many more doubts that are posed to the dental team during their day to day work.

Dentistry needs to add to its training program the learning of resources that allow professionals to handle these situations that interfere in the proper performance of their work and, consequently, in their mental health.

When you ask people who work in dental offices about what criteria they follow to adequately solve these difficulties, they tell you that they do it “as they can” and in most cases they do not solve as they would like.

Patients do not always go to the dental office willing to do what the doctor says [4,5]. Each person comes to the consultation with their own fears, their way of communicating, acting, thinking, feeling. Therefore, the first thing we have to do is to know the patient: how can we know what he wants? How can we know what he is afraid of?

Other complaints from professionals refer to the quality of their working life. They allege that they tire a lot, that they are disappointed, apathetic, sad, that they sleep badly, that they do not feel like going to work, that they feel nervous and irritable [6].

The goal of Psychology in Dentistry is to provide dentistry professionals with resources that allow them to obtain better quality in their work. The most useful tool for this is to learn to communicate with patients [7]. If the professional learns to know and communicate with his patients, he will be able to handle and solve the conflicts that arise. When things are solved, you feel better, not only because it has been solved, but because you perceive control of the situation for future occasions and this generates professional well-being [8].

In this context of scientific study and research, a new concept emerges that we define as Emotional Dentistry. They are techniques that allow us to handle our thoughts, emotions and direct our behaviors; order and clean them so that they do not produce anxiety, depression or discomfort, if not relaxation, tranquility and optimism [9]. It mainly consists of trying to see reality, see and interpret things as they really are; not like fear, insecurity or bad experiences make us see them. The degree of mastery that a person achieves over these skills is decisive in order to have more or less success in personal and professional life.

In the dental practice, these skills are very important in the relationship with the patient and in the prevention of their professional stress. The professional of Dentistry who is motivated in his profession will be happier in relationships with his patients [10]. The professional of Dentistry that controls his anger when a patient does not act correctly; that controls your frustration when things do not go as you wish; that has the capacity to wait for things to come out and postpone the moments of rest whenever possible; that when he feels angry, anxious or sad he is able to manage them so that he does not incapacitate his daily personal and professional functioning; who is able to empathize by putting himself in the place of the other and trusting others, will be able to establish better professional relationships with his patients.

These competences produce emotional contagion in our patients in such a way that when I empathize, it is easier for the other to empathize with me. If I transmit trust, then they give me confidence; If I relax, I am able to relax the patient.

These competences can be had or not. And if you do not have it, you can acquire it, because it has been shown that the brain is permeable and you can continue adding competencies in it.

### Emotional Dentistry is:

- The ability to motivate ourselves
- The ability to persevere in the endeavor despite possible frustrations
- The ability to control impulses
- The ability to defer bonuses
- The ability to regulate our own moods
- The ability to prevent distress from interfering with our rational faculties
- The ability to empathize and trust others.

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**Volume 17 Issue 1 January 2018**

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