

## **Jane and the Tetracycline Stain**

Jane was an extremely attractive lady, who had been my patient for many years. Her one not-so-attractive feature was her smile.

Her mother had been extremely ill during her pregnancy with Jane, and was given large quantities of tetracycline antibiotic. Today, tetracycline is never prescribed during pregnancy because it is known to invariably cause an extremely unattractive, dark gray permanent discoloration of the child's adult teeth.

Over the years, Jane and I had often spoken about placing eight, beautiful, porcelain laminates over her upper front teeth. This relatively simple procedure that could give her a very beautiful smile, was, unfortunately, very expensive.

One day, Jane walked into my office and announced, that because of her son's upcoming marriage, she was finally ready and eager to do the esthetic dentistry.

Treatment progressed rapidly, and in just two weeks her laminates were bonded into place and were absolutely gorgeous. Her new, attractive smile now matched the rest of her appearance. With a promise to return the following morning for a final polishing, Jane rushed out of the office, telling us that she was racing over to her mother's house to show off her new smile.

When Jane returned the next morning, she was sobbing. I couldn't understand it: Did one of my laminates break? Was she displeased with the results?

The patient explained that on the previous day, as soon as her mother saw the beautiful new smile, her mother began crying uncontrollably. Apparently, for all those years, Jane's mother secretly felt very guilty and blamed herself for taking tetracycline and causing her daughter's unattractive dental condition.

Now that the cosmetic dentistry was completed, all those years of pent-up anguish were released in a torrent of tears. Mother and daughter spent a good part of the night hugging each other and crying in each other's arms.

I found it difficult to control my own emotions, as I polished her teeth.

I was proud to be part of this somewhat bittersweet story, but couldn't help but wonder if there were others that I could have, or should have, helped over the years, but somehow failed to do so.