

Treating my Granddaughters

“Are you really, really sure you want to do this?”

My wife Fredi, who is also my office manager, best friend, and harshest critic, did not think it was such a good idea. Two of my granddaughters needed some difficult dental treatment and my wife thought it would be foolish for me to treat them myself.

“They love you so much,” she objected, “and the dentistry that they need is going to be rough. Why jeopardize your wonderful relationship with them?”

I, on the other hand, felt that I couldn’t trust anyone else to be as loving, caring, and competent as me. “How can I possibly allow them to be treated by another dentist?” I reasoned.

The ten year-old needed some difficult, orthodontic extractions. The five year-old had massive decay on primary molars and needed pulpotomies and restorations. “Don’t worry,” I reassured my wife, “I’m really good at this. Other dentists send me all the tough kids who they’re afraid to treat. I can certainly take care of my own granddaughters.”

On the day of their appointment, I was anxious and I figured the girls would also be anxious. But, I wasn’t too worried. Children who fret and cry? Scream and shout? Kick and fuss? My assistants and I had seen it all and knew how to handle every eventuality.

I was not prepared for what happened, however. The girls were perfectly cooperative little angels. They sat perfectly still, opened their mouths nice and wide, and let me do everything I needed to do. What they did, though, was my biggest nightmare scenario when treating pediatric patients.

What did they do? They whined softly through the entire procedures. I hate when patients whine. I can’t stand it. I don’t know why, but crying, screaming, shouting, and kicking I can handle; whining really, really, gets to me.

Both granddaughters did the same thing: “Ahhhhhh, ahhhhhh, ahhhhhh,” softly, through the entire procedures. And, when children whine like that, there’s really not much to do about it. They are cooperating, their mouths are open, they’re not thrashing about, and I can do the procedure safely.

But, I really, really, hate it! So, I did the only thing possible: I tried to drown out their whining by turning up the office music very, very loudly. The amplified music helped, although it failed to completely mask the background whining.

I finished their dentistry, gave them abundant hugs and kisses, awarded them with every prize and sticker that I had in the office, and sent them on their way.

Driving home after work, my wife and I usually discuss the day's events. I was describing the demanding dental treatment that I had performed so very skillfully on my granddaughters.

I was relating, in clinical detail, the difficult extractions of the ten year-old's over-retained ankylosed primary molars, and their long, curved roots that perilously cradled the secondary tooth buds. I somehow believed that she would really be interested in all the clinical details.

To my surprise, my wife reached over to the car's radio and turned up the volume, very, very loudly.