



WAZ UP DOC?

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Dear Mom, I Lost My Retainers

A parent's perspective

If you want to stir up conversation at a PTA meeting or your child's next soccer game, just mention retainers. Like the set that was washed away in the Gulf of Mexico and the one that was eaten by the family dog, every retainer has a story that someone is dying to share.

I hadn't heard those stories yet, but I sensed we were in trouble the day my 14-year-old daughter was fitted for her retainers. Chalk it up to mother's instinct..

"For the next 18 months you'll wear your retainers day and night," the orthodontist's young assistant told my daughter. "Otherwise your teeth might slip back into their old positions. Take the retainers out only to eat." (Obviously she didn't realize a teenager eats continuously.) "One thing you should never do," she went on, "is wrap them in a paper napkin. We lose more retainers that way!"

I'm not sure Anne heard much of the instructions. She was busy choosing the right color combination for her retainers; her final choice was blue with multicolored glitter.

The Need to Nag

At first, because they were pretty, she wore them nearly as much as she should and almost never forgot where she'd left them. Then tedium set in, and so did I. I was determined that she have the best outcome modern dentistry and I could provide. Like "eat your vegetables" or "fasten your seat belt," "wear your retainers and be careful not to lose them" echoed through our house. Nagging, I believed, was my duty when the issue was so important.

About a month later, after a hard day at work, I found a note from Anne on the kitchen table.

Dear Mom,

I lost my retainers. I can't believe I did it.

I'm so sorry. I feel so dumb. I looked and looked for them,

I cried and cried, but I couldn't find them.

Love you,

Anne

Commentary:

In our practice once the braces are removed, retainers are worn full-time for six weeks only.

From that point on part-time wear is adequate to maintain the teeth in their new position. We believe that teeth positioned in a well-balanced position maintain themselves with minimal need for retain-

In case that wouldn't soften me enough, she had printed "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry" all around the edges of the note. During lunch at school that day, Anne had wrapped her retainers in a napkin and, yes, thrown them away. A janitor helped her search the trash cans, but the retainers were gone.

Maybe it was the note, maybe I was just tired, but somehow I stayed calm. "Everybody makes mistakes," I told her. "It doesn't mean you're dumb or bad; it just happens. But you still must take responsibility for those mistakes. So you will pay for your new retainers." She cried for ten minutes, then thanked me for "punishing her fairly," a moment I will not soon forget.

Replacing her retainers meant starting from scratch with new plaster impressions of her teeth. The process cost Anne a pretty penny and took a good two weeks. I caught myself staring at her mouth during the interim, imagining I could see her teeth moving. Her orthodontist, however, was nonchalant about the whole thing. "I guess we forgot to tell you not to wrap them in a napkin," he said, laughing. "Don't worry about it, it happens quite often." For us "quite often" was six days later. No note was necessary this time; the news was written on Anne's face when she walked through the door. She'd lost them again!

Into the Dumpster

Just days before, my supervisor had told me how she had back-tracked a hundred miles and dug through a Taco Bell dumpster to find her daughter's retainers. The image of my boss splattered with salsa inspired me. If she could do it, so could I, or rather we. I called my husband and told him to meet us behind Anne's junior high. Even dressed in old clothes and wearing rubber gloves, there is no dignified way to dig through a dumpster. Hanging over the side didn't work, so my husband climbed in and threw big, smelly bags out to Anne and me. We gritted our teeth, held our breath and dug.

For Anne the embarrassment was more potent than the smell. She was terrified her friends and teachers would see us in such a humiliating position; but she needn't have worried. Everyone behaved as though they saw nice families in a dumpster every day. A math teacher waved and flashed us a knowing smile. "Lost a retainer, huh? Happy hunting." The school counselor stopped to chat. "Oh, that looks familiar," he said. "Let's see, my son lost his once—no, twice." The janitor was especially nice. After we found Anne's (yes, we did find them), he opened his closet and invited us to wash our hands. I got the feeling he looked forward to lost retainers for the fellowship they provided him.

A Compromise

With the retainers sanitized and back in Anne's mouth, I saw the situation more rationally. Expecting a teenager to be responsible is like balancing a cup and saucer on your head: It is possible, but don't risk your grandmother's best china. The orthodontist obviously knew that, Anne knew that even the janitor seemed to know that, so why hadn't someone told me?

My choice was either to make Anne and myself miserable for the next 18 months, chiding, begging and threatening, or to compromise. I chose the latter. With only two weeks of school left, I decided it was better to send Anne and keep the retainers home. She could wear them at night and on weekends. And if her teeth moved a hundredth of an inch. So be it. The surprise was that Anne began to police herself. She actually wore her retainers more hours per day once I gave up my nagging.

Parenting became so much easier once I learned to relax a little. Thank heaven I stumbled on that truth when I did. I'm going to need it. The orthodontist recently confirmed that daughter number two needs braces.

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OFFICE NEWS

Our New Team-member

We are happy to announce the addition of Connie Baker to our team. Connie has a long track record in dentistry. She relocated from Sacramento to Silicon Valley at about the time that our ex-employee Megan was moving to Southern California. Connie wears several hats in our office. Her main position is at the front desk scheduling the patients. Her second job title is "Treatment Coordinator" which involves helping the new patients with their questions & concerns. Finally, she backs up our clinical staff in the afternoon rush-hours adjusting patients braces.



Connie, Andrew and John

Hawaii Trip

This Fall, our entire team will attend the Pacific Coast Society of Orthodontists annual conference in Honolulu. Both doctors plus our staff of Emelia, Connie, Tammy & Nayeli will be away October 9-13. The trip will hopefully have the dual benefits of learning & bonding (If we do not kill one another). We are all trying to loose those few extra pounds before we leave town.



Family News

In June 2010, doctor and Mrs. Mashouf celebrated their oldest son's graduation from Boston University, School of Dental Medicine. Kayhan Lawrence Mashouf immediately started his post-graduate education in orthodontics at the University of Colorado. Hopefully, we will have another orthodontist joining our practice in two and a half years.



Mashouf family from left: Kimia, Mercedeh, Kayhan, and Cameron at Boston University graduation

Jade Buddha

Tammy Tran, our clinical coordinator volunteers for two weeks at the world tour of JADE BUDDHA FOR UNIVERSAL PEACE in San Jose. The exhibit is open to the public until October 1st, 2010 at 1980 Senter Road San Jose, CA 95132. If interested to see this fantastic statue, call Tammy (408) 772-5628



Kid's Korner

For this issue of our newsletter we are taking a poll of our young patient's (16 years and under). Please fill out the following questions and mail it to our office or email it to info@drmashouf.com by November 15, 2010 and you can be 1 of 3 lucky winners in our drawing for a \$25 cash prize!

What is your favorite type of...?

- 1) Food _____
- 2) Music _____
- 3) Subject in school _____
- 4) Color _____
- 5) Pet _____
- 6) Book _____
- 7) Movie _____
- 8) Ride in a theme park _____
- 9) Future job _____
- 10) Sport _____
- 11) Drink _____
- 12) Vehicle _____
- 13) Cartoon character _____
- 14) Game _____
- 15) Actor/Actress _____
- 16) Song _____

To our patients: We thank all of you for referring so many of your family members and friends to us. Your vote of confidence is sincerely appreciated. It allows us to grow more and give more.

To our dental colleagues: It has been a privilege to be trusted by you. Please keep us on track by expecting the highest standards of professionalism.

Please email your comments to cameron@drmashouf.com

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