

# Fill'er up: Dentist trip is a gas

By Esther Baird

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BEVERLY, MASS. - I have a new guilty pleasure. Well, actually there's no guilt — just a morning of calm and peace with some free sample products thrown in at the end. No not the spa. I'm talking about the dentist.

I'd fallen behind on my dental care. Moving around and having children made it one more thing I didn't get around to. Plus, the longer I went without seeing a dentist, the less I wanted to go. Finally, my friend said she'd found one she liked and I summoned the courage to make an appointment.

I hired a sitter and dragged myself to the office ready for all sorts of bad news and a complete wreck of a morning. But at my first visit all I did was sit in the chair and enjoy the pleasant view of early spring flowers and a nearly budding tree. Sure I had some X-rays, but they were painless and the music was calming. Plus, the conversation was all grown-up. It wasn't half bad.

So when I told people I had another dentist appointment a few days ago, I rolled my eyes and sighed, but mostly because that's just how you talk about the dentist.

When I arrived, I hopped in the comfy leather chair and took in the view. The tree had bloomed and the music was still soothing. Because I was getting a cleaning, the dental hygienist gave me a pair of orange sunglasses.

I put them on. "These make me look rockin' like Bono don't they?" I said to the hygienist.

She smiled and nodded like that was the first time she'd heard someone make that comparison. "Yes. Yes they do." I knew it. Nothing says cool like a mom in a dental chair with rock-star glasses.

Then, my dentist came in and began to talk to me. He pointed out little things here and there and explained how the cleaning would work. As he did he poked around in my mouth. I don't have gums of steel and the prods and scrapes made me tense. I sighed, here came the big morning-wrecking phase after all.

But then he said, "If this bothers you, we can use the nitrous oxide gas."

"Really?" I asked. "For just a cleaning?"

“Oh sure.” He nodded. “But I have to drive after this,” I explained. “I’m not *really* a rock star. I have to uh . . . be Mommy all day.”

He smiled. “It only lasts while it’s on, five breaths after it’s off and you’ll be fine, maybe just a bit more relaxed.”

“Yeah?” I said from my reclined position, staring up at their peering faces. “Ok then, sign me up for the ‘more relaxed’ option.”

They placed the little mask over my nose and *that*, my friends, is how to spend a morning. I felt an instant, detached, calm. I was still aware of everything, including all the dental work being done to me, but I didn’t care.

My inner dialogue went like this: “Wow. I bet when he just jabbed that pick into her gum to scrape off the plaque it hurt. Here comes that loud, sucky thing that makes you feel like cotton is being plastered to your cheeks. Ah yes, that horrible scraping noise – wonder if that bothers her? Sure doesn’t bother me. Not my problem at all. I’m a rock star.”

Plus, the gas made me soooo witty. My, was I clever! Whenever they took a break, I peppered them with amusing comments about my dental care. They chortled and laughed and were clearly dazzled by my brilliant observations.

When they finished, I’d been scraped, scrubbed, flossed and rinsed. I felt rested and refreshed. Who needs a massage when there’s teeth cleaning??

Realizing that it was time to become Mommy again, I removed my Bono glasses and we discussed my future treatment.

“Now you do have a few cavities in the back that we need to fill. When we do that, you can think about if you want Novocain *and* the gas. It’s up to you.” My dentist explained.

OK, I’ll think about it. Hmmm. Done. Yes please, I’ll want the gas.

Don’t get me wrong, I haven’t tried this out with a bigger procedure like say, a root canal, but my new dentist has me on a regular cleaning schedule to keep me away from such work. And as long as I get to pretend I’m a super relaxed, rock star, I’ll be showing up for every appointment.

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