

Psychological and social issues associated with tooth loss

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Are feelings of depression overwhelming you? Is your self-esteem an issue? Having problems advancing in life or your career? Maybe you feel nervous or self conscious in social settings? Do you avoid social settings all together? Check your smile; tooth loss could be the culprit and you're not alone. Nearly 20 million teeth are extracted each year leaving scores of people to deal with the psychological affects of a less than perfect smile.

However, during the Academy of General Dentistry's (AGD) 56th Annual Meeting & Exhibits in Orlando, Fla., July 16-20, H. Asuman Kiyak, PhD, will address the psychological issues affecting people who must deal with the loss of a tooth, as well as explain how this loss can affect the quality of life.

In Dr. Kiyak's course, "Enhancing the Oral Health and Quality of Life for Partially Edentulous or Fully Edentulous Patients: The Importance of Communication," she will reveal the post traumatic effects a patient endures after the loss of a tooth and will also pinpoint ways a doctor can communicate with a patient to help them cope with and understand their options for restoring their smile.

"The major impact of tooth loss is on the appearance and social relations component of quality of life because people cannot change their appearance with missing teeth," says Dr. Kiyak.

In fact, recent results from a survey distributed to nearly 20,000 AGD

members revealed that more than 86 percent of general dentists reported social embarrassment is one of the greatest problems associated with tooth loss and more than half of these patients avoid social interaction because of it.

Yet, Dr. Kiyak noted that there are ways that patients can learn how to cope with the loss of a tooth. Dr. Kiyak encourages patients to:

- Weigh their options with the pros and cons for replacement teeth or even endodontic treatment to save a "hopeless" tooth.
- Review videos or still photos of others who have lost teeth and their current teeth status with removable or implant-supported dentures.
- Read testimonials of others who have undergone single, multiple, total tooth loss and replacement of these teeth with removable or implant-supported dentures, how they have coped with each stage and how they are functioning orally, systemically and psychologically with these dentures.

"A smile serves as an individual's most powerful tool," says AGD spokesperson Laura Murcko, DMD. "A great smile can make a great lasting impression, boost a person's self-esteem and confidence as well as improve their overall health."

Source: Academy of General Dentistry

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