

# Smile for Success!

**W**hen you hear that someone has a winning smile, it usually means that the person has an attractive smile that is pleasing to look at. But does the attribute have literal implications that defines that individual's social status and success? Can a winning smile indicate that the person is headed for a life full of success and happiness? Some people believe so.

It's well known that being beautiful affords people a variety of advantages. Many studies have shown that how a person looks influences how they are perceived and treated by others. In addition, scientific studies indicate that attractive people exhibit more positive behaviors and traits than those who are unattractive.

## Attractive people get ahead

It is now thought that the advantages of being beautiful transfer to the work environment. A recent survey conducted by *Elle* magazine and MSNBC found that attractive bosses are more likely to be described as competent, collaborative, and good delegators.

The results of the survey also indicate that beauty confers virtue: "Good-looking bosses are thought to have gotten their jobs because of rain-making ability, hard work, social skills, and talent." On the other hand, less than 15 percent of unattractive bosses received high marks from their employees. The report stated that "unattractive bosses are suspected of crooked advancement: nepotism and inflating their resumes."

## A beautiful smile has power

So what defines beauty? In a Clairol "What Is Beauty?" survey, beauty attributes were divided into personality traits and physical characteristics. When asked to specify what physical attributes are most closely associated with beauty, men were most likely to select eyes (71 percent) followed closely by the smile, whereas teen girls and women cited smile most often (60 percent and 61 percent).

A strong, beautiful smile has power. A full, genuine smile automatically exudes confidence, likely due to the fact that people with great smiles are more self-assured.

According to the Smarter Smile Survey conducted by Harris Interactive, 64 percent of respondents agreed that people with nice smiles are more outgoing, and 87 percent thought that the smile is very important to self-esteem.

In a separate study by Orbit chewing gum, roughly six in ten adults believe that if they had a whiter smile, it would boost their self-confidence. In addition, the study also found that 71 percent of the respondents believe people with nice smiles make friends far more easily than those with crooked teeth.

## Take your smile to the next level

So what can be done to improve your smile? The first step is to have an evaluation by your cosmetic dentist. In general, a pleasing smile begins with a healthy smile. A full examination will reveal any problems related to dental decay or periodontal disease. Once your teeth and gums are found to be healthy, a cosmetic dental evaluation is necessary to outline goals and set up a cosmetic plan.

The plan may be as simple as having your teeth cleaned and whitened to remove unsightly stains or lighten yellowish teeth. In addition, replacing older, discolored fillings may also spruce up your smile. More dramatic options to create that winning smile could include gingival plastic surgery, braces, veneers, or a cosmetic reconstruction.

With the porcelain veneers and no-metal crowns that are available today, the result can be very natural in appearance. Your cosmetic dentist can go through all of the options with you. If you're looking for a cosmetic dentist, make sure to do your homework. Ask to see a portfolio of actual completed cases and ask for references from other patients.

## A step in the right direction

So will whitening your teeth get you that job promotion you've been working toward? Will correcting your crooked front teeth bring you life-long happiness? Certainly there are many factors involved when considering life success, but having a nice smile and feeling confident is a step in the right direction. 

PHOTO: THOMAS BALSAMO



*Thomas Jackson, DDS, is advanced-trained in periodontics and periodontal prosthesis. Dr. Jackson is a board-certified periodontist and the founder of the Chicago Center for Cosmetic & Implant Dentistry. He lectures nationally and internationally on issues relating to dental implants and cosmetics. Dr. Jackson is an associate professor at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine, and he may be reached at 847-842-6900.*