

Ideal Alignment

For patients enduring the pain of TMJ, the latest advances in adult orthodontics can provide relief, and a beautiful smile, too!

BRIAN COPELAND

After undergoing arch expansion and adult orthodontic treatment, Brian says migraine headaches are no longer a regular occurrence for him, and he calls his terrific smile a "happy side effect."

These days, migraine headaches only disrupt Brian Copeland's life about once a year, which is so much better than the once-per-month episodes he had suffered for a good portion of his life. "I've had TMJ problems since I was sixteen or eighteen," he shares. "Until a few years ago, the only thing I had ever heard of to help was surgery, and I just didn't think a surgery with fifty percent effectiveness was the direction I needed to go."

Temporomandibular joint disorder, or TMJ, as it is commonly known, refers to any of a number of disorders in the region of the temporomandibular joints, located directly in front of the ears. TMJ symptoms can include difficulties or discomfort when biting or chewing, a popping or clicking sound when opening or closing the mouth, headaches, earaches, jaw and/or facial pain, and tenderness.

Fortunately for Brian, because of his work as a guest service representative at The Smile Centre, he learned of nonsurgical treatment options that could relieve his TMJ problems. "Once I heard that there were nonsurgical options, I said, *Oh, I'm definitely going to give this a try.*"

Treating the whole patient

Richard A. Stanley, DMD, founder of The Smile Centre, is a board-certified general dentist with advanced training in cosmetic dentistry, endodontics, implants, neuromuscular dentistry, craniofacial pain, and orthodontics who believes in addressing everything related to a patient's oral health. "Because we are a comprehensive care practice, we begin by gaining a thorough understanding of the patient's complaints, problems, and concerns, as well as assessing orthodontic and structural issues of the skull and jaw," he explains.

"When you start off with a CAT scan, you begin to get a feel for why their teeth are wearing, why they have bite problems, why their teeth are crooked, or why they have clicking or popping in the jaw joints. It's a good foundational starting point."

That approach, Dr. Stanley shares, is based on a crucial lesson he learned in dental school. "We were taught to be physicians of the oral cavity, and we're supposed

to look at more than just the teeth," he says. "We look at the tongue, the gums, and the bone and soft tissues around the teeth, as well as the head, neck, jaw joints, muscles, and facial aesthetics. We spend a lot of extra time gathering that information."

Once he has incorporated the results of his evaluations into a series of treatment options,



RICHARD A. STANLEY, DMD

Let us help

To learn more about the health benefits and cosmetic transformation possible with adult orthodontic treatment, including Invisalign, arch expansion, and TMJ therapy, call to schedule your appointment with Dr. Stanley today. For the office located at **5899 Whitfield Avenue, Suite 105**, in Sarasota, call **(941) 351-4468**, or **(941) 497-5451** for the office located at **1500 E. Venice Avenue, Suite 203**, in Venice.

Dr. Stanley says he sits down with the patient to "brainstorm" about what they would like to accomplish and in what sequence. "For most people," the doctor informs, "it's a matter of working the treatment into their schedule and their budget, looking at financing options and generally making it fit into their overall life."

When it came time to treat Brian, Dr. Stanley says, the comprehensive approach worked exceptionally well. "Brian had migraine headaches and clicking in his jaw joints. He was also *overclosed*, meaning that when he would bite down, you would see no lower front teeth, and he didn't have much chin prominence."

To provide treatment, the doctor notes, he used a variety of technologies, including referring Brian out for an MRI. With the

combination of CAT scan and MRI, Dr. Stanley says he was able to study the condition of the bones and discs in Brian's jaw joints, as well as the muscles, ligaments, and blood vessels surrounding the joints. "With him, we did what is called a palatal expansion because the arches of the mouth were narrow, thus there was not adequate room and the teeth were very crowded. By expanding the arches, the teeth were given more space and then aligned."

Along with this orthodontic technique, the height of the lower teeth was slightly increased to correct Brian's "overclosed" condition which also helps to provide additional support of the TMJ. As the jaw joint and facial muscles are made more comfortable, the doctor explains that the clicking and popping, as well as headaches and neck aches, can be alleviated. "What we're trying to achieve is a recapture of the disc that is supposed to be inside the jaw joint, acting as a cushion and positioner for the bony portions of the joint. The goal is to be conservative and decompress the joint, allowing us to reduce or eliminate pain."

Dr. Stanley says that, like Brian, many of his TMJ patients are pleasantly surprised by both his ability to provide a specific diagnosis and by the effectiveness of the treatment results. "They feel better and they look better," he says. "Many times, patients' breathing airways increase when we open up their bite and move their jaw into a better position, which helps with snoring and sleep apnea."

"There is also a surprising difference in overall facial aesthetics," the doctor notes. "It gives them better chins and gets rid of the wrinkles around the mouth and chin. When we get all the structural components in the right place and the soft tissues of the face are supported, people look younger, more energetic, and more rested."

Amazing improvement

According to Brian, one of most crucial factors in his successful treatment was Dr. Stanley's commitment to continuing education. "I've been very impressed with him as a doctor because he is always willing to go a step beyond to help his patients have a better life. If a patient needs something and he can't find a professional who can help, he'll say, *I'll go and get the extra schooling so that I can make*

sure the patient is in a better situation."

For Brian, that commitment translated into a series of treatments that did indeed make him feel better, while also improving his bite and giving him a more attractive smile. "At first, Dr. Stanley created an oral appliance for me that drastically reduced the tension in my jaw," he recalls, "but he was always trying to find a more permanent solution instead of having me wear an appliance daily."

After the doctor's additional training in orthodontic care and craniofacial pain, in addition to general dentistry and implantology, Brian says that even better TMJ treatment options presented themselves. "I went into expanders for six months, and then braces for just over two years," he explains. "Now, I have a clear plastic retainer that doubles as a bite guard, which keeps me from clenching and grinding my teeth. The degree of improvement has been amazing!"

An important point to understand, Dr. Stanley adds, is that Brian's situation is representative of many. "A majority of the population is walking around with jaw joints that are at some stage of disruption and/or degeneration, and they just don't know where to look for help."

"Our work is a collaboration with our patients," the doctor stresses. "We study the whole person, their facial aesthetics, bite, teeth, jaw joints, sleep patterns, snoring, and sleep apnea, while also connecting with them personally to establish a comfortable relationship. When we work together to come up with the best plan for each patient, we really can do spectacular dentistry." **FHCN—Brenda Klettke**



Richard A. Stanley, DMD, is a board-certified general dentist with advanced training in cosmetic dentistry, endodontics, implant dentistry, bone grafting and sinus augmentation, craniofacial pain, neuromuscular dentistry, and orthodontics. He earned his undergraduate degree in biology from Florida State University and his DMD (Doctor of Dental Medicine) degree from the University of Florida's College of Dentistry, followed by MBA coursework at the University of Sarasota. Dr. Stanley is a member of the American Dental Association, the Florida Dental Association, the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry, the West Coast Dental Association, the Sarasota County Dental Association, the Academy of General Dentistry, the American Academy of Craniofacial Pain, the Academy of Osseointegration, the American Academy of Functional Orthodontics, and the International Association of Orthodontics.