

I was brushing my teeth while looking in the bathroom mirror, when I heard a little voice in my head say, "You are a good brusher!" It was the voice of my new dental hygienist and she was smiling when she said that.

Upon remembering that bit of praise, I brushed with more zeal and enthusiasm than I can remember ever brushing before. This may sound like a trivial thing to you but my history with hygienists has been pretty bleak. They have criticized my style of brushing and flossing and my frequently bleeding gums were a sign to them that I was inept at the job of cleaning my own teeth!

As a result of all this negative judgment imposed upon me, I decided to try out different hygienists. I was looking for one that didn't make me feel like a deficient person and who didn't criticize me given that I was in fact doing an excellent job. That was a tall order and was hard to find. Apparently, many hygienists felt as if it were part of their job description to find fault with how I cleaned my oral cavity. They even included criticism of my tongue cleaning ability or lack thereof!

So, I would always dread getting my teeth cleaned. I would also feel badly about myself when I left their office. And, I was not inspired to brush or floss any better than I had been. To tell you the truth, I now felt like skipping a few flosses and that it would make no difference anyway so why bother with all the work. In a sense, I was negatively reinforced.

However, after being with this new hygienist I felt good about my oral hygiene habits. I came away feeling good about my abilities; my teeth, her work, which increased my desire to do more to keep my teeth clean, not less.

I began thinking that if we talked to ourselves in the positive manner in which this woman spoke to me, we would feel better about ourselves on a daily basis. If we complimented ourselves on what we were doing right, we would not only do those things better, but we would be smiling much more.

I got inspired to spread the word to talk kindly and nicely to yourself. When you look in the mirror to brush your hair or teeth start appreciating what you see. Point out the good things you like about yourself. Make it into a hygienic self-admiration moment. You can get clean, groomed and feel good about yourself all at the same time!

