

EASING ANXIETY IN PEDIATRIC PATIENTS

Colorful distractions and three-dimensional elements in these medical office designs show that, for these doctors, putting kids at ease comes first.



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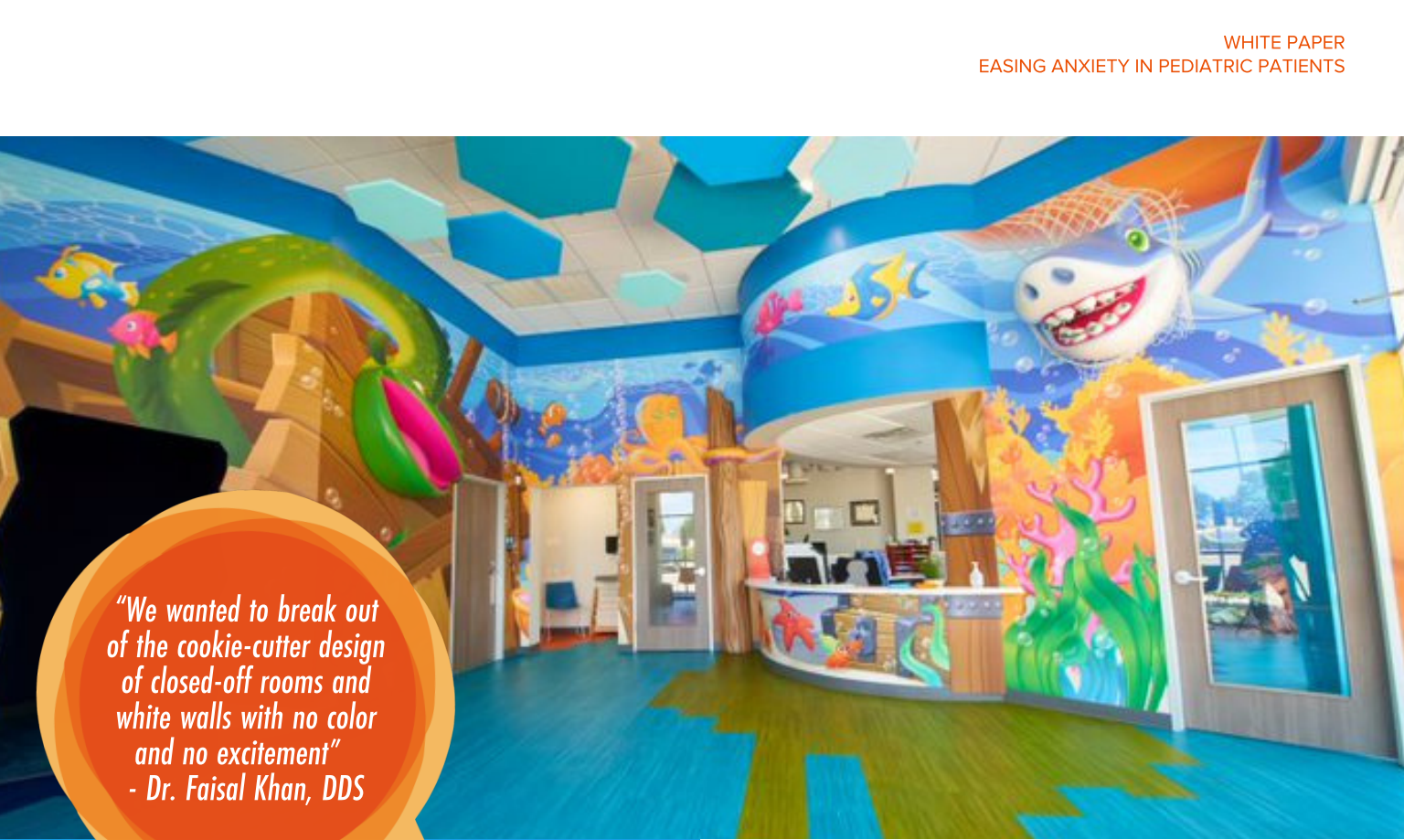
PLAYFUL SPACES IN MEDICAL OFFICES EASE ANXIETIES FOR YOUNG PATIENTS

Playful interior designs help ease the anxieties of young patients at three pediatric dental practices. Unique, custom office interiors – designed, fabricated, and installed by Worlds of Wow, a Texas interior design company – change dread to delight for the young patients and their parents. The colorful, relaxed atmosphere turns regular checkups into happy experiences, developing long-term relationships between the family and the practice, and ensuring dental health success for the children.

Colorful interior design with custom, whimsical elements can create a spirit of fun in the healthcare office, helping to ease anxiety in young patients and their parents. Interior designs for the pediatric medical office can reflect the vibrant culture of the surrounding community, the local environment, and even the fun interests of the doctors and staff. Attention-getting elements can divert a young patient from a fearful meltdown, allowing parents and caretakers to relax and engage with the healthcare providers.

A playful space, such as those created by Worlds of Wow creates indoor playful spaces for kids of all abilities, can create a positive first impression for young patients, making that office their medical home until they reach adulthood. Thoughtful designs can accommodate special needs, making every child feel welcome.





"We wanted to break out of the cookie-cutter design of closed-off rooms and white walls with no color and no excitement"
- Dr. Faisal Khan, DDS

FUN ENVIRONMENT LEADS TO LONG-TERM PATIENT RELATIONSHIPS

Grand Parkway Pediatric Dental, Richmond, Texas, is about an hour away from the Texas Gulf Coast. This proximity to the coast is evident in the playful office owned by Dr. Faisal Khan, DDS. Visitors enter a space filled with natural light, vibrant coastal colors, and a welcoming, smiling shark showing off a set of braces. Walls are full of colorful murals featuring popular Disney characters. Young patients hop aboard surfboard-shaped exam tables for routine services and relax in neon-colored examination chairs for treatments.

"First impressions make a world of difference," says Khan. One benefit of a positive first impression is the good impressions support business growth. Parents who know their child is safely entertained have an easier time consulting with the office staff and doctors. Young patients who want to return to the fun dentist office make it easy for the family to develop long-term relationships with that pediatric dental practice.

Khan says the quality of the experience at the office is just as important as the business growth. The unique interior design at Grand Parkway Pediatric Dental provides a better, less stressful visit for young patients.

"We wanted to break out of the cookie-cutter design of closed-off rooms and white walls with no color and no excitement," Khan explains. Thanks to his extensive pediatric dental experience, he has observed that solid walls surrounding a plain examination table can be claustrophobic to some young patients, increasing their anxiety.

Surfboard examination tables are placed in a large open space filled with natural light from the large windows. Color and decorative themes from the Texas Gulf Coast and Disney fill the room from floor to ceiling immersing the young patients and parents in a spirit of fun. This makes it easy for families to enjoy their visits to Dr. Khan and his staff.

In South Carolina, Dr. Dorothy Baker, DDS, brought the Lowcountry into her practice, Summerville Pediatric Dentistry, just west of Charleston. "I wanted to have a little bit of the flair of this area in the office design," she explains. Young visitors to the Summerville Pediatric Dentistry office are immediately drawn to a cypress garden, complete with trees, a grinning alligator in the waiting room, a happy hound dog in his house, friendly frogs, and other local wildlife.

*"Theme doesn't
have to be too childish
to be fun for kids. It
can still look
professional and put
together"*

"All the animals in our design are local animals," Baker says. Since most of her young patients are from the area, "they know what an opossum looks like. This interior design has a lot of aspects that are familiar to children," she says, as opposed to an unfamiliar medical environment.

The Worlds of Wow designers maximized the impact of the three-dimensional cypress trees by extending the tree canopy onto the ceiling with two-dimensional art. "Continuing the theme from the walls onto the ceilings and floors enhances the sense of being immersed in the story you want to tell in your space," says Kevin Cravens, creative director at Worlds of Wow.

The Summerville Pediatric alligator is a favorite photo opportunity for children's selfie shots for social media posts. The office design provides parents comfortable seating in the shape of cypress logs and stumps, which provides "another great way to create an immersive experience for families," Cravens says.



*"I wanted to have a
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office design,"*

At Eastern Orthodontics and Pediatric Dentistry in Greenville, NC, pride in the local culture strongly influenced the design, says Jennifer Pope.

Greenville is home to East Carolina University and its mascot the East Carolina Pirates, “so our children’s play area is based on a pirate ship,” Pope explains. The ship has a colorful, larger-than-life crew of a monkey, octopus, and pig, each playing an instrument. The ship offers space for video games, a television, and a slide that looks like a ship’s dock.

Before the Worlds of Wow team developed, built, and installed the design elements, Pope remembers their office was somewhat bland, with muted colors on the walls and floors. “Now, with this design and the vibrant colors, the first thing the children say when they walk in is ‘Wow!’ They run to the pirate ship, see the slide and the games in the lobby and they almost forget they are at the dentist office,” which is what the doctors and staff wanted to achieve.



“Now, with this design and the vibrant colors, the first thing the children say when they walk in is ‘Wow!’
- Dr. Jasper L. Lewis Jr.,
DDS, MS

Dr. Jasper L. Lewis Jr., DDS, MS, started the practice in 1973. His son, Dr. Lee Lewis, DDS – a Jeep enthusiast – has since joined the practice. Worlds of Wow designers were able to incorporate this personal interest by including a life-size Jeep, equipped with surfboards, in the orthodontics side of the lobby.

CALM COLORS HELP TO CALM PATIENTS

Khan, Baker, and Pope explain the custom design elements are carried through their entire office spaces, becoming more calming and soothing as the patients and parents enter the exam and treatment areas.

At Eastern Orthodontics and Pediatric Dentistry, for example, they continue the pirate sea voyage theme in quiet rooms, or spaces that allow patients to relax. These rooms get plenty of natural light from large windows and feature elements of sea voyages. One offers a quiet under-the-sea space while the other room distracts anxious children with the night sky, allowing the children to imagine following the stars and planets just like the ancient mariners.

Panels of soundproofing material in pleasing colors help to muffle sounds and help ease anxieties.

Baker points out the colors used throughout the design at Summerville Pediatric Dentistry are “almost borderline spa colors,” such as tranquil blues and greens.

Khan says, “When our patients are in the waiting room, they see a lot of colors. Those colors become calmer as we move into the examination areas” with the surfboard examination tables.



COLOR IN CHILDREN'S SPACES

Red

Anger, love, passion, and power are typically related to the color red. When using the color red in a children's space, it is best to use it with other colors, so a child isn't overstimulated. When the right combination of different colors and red is achieved, it can help children with detail-oriented or repetitive tasks.

Pink

Pink is a calming color associated with kindness and nurturing. Some studies suggest that the feelings associated with pink occur only during the initial exposure.

Yellow

Yellow represents happiness, energy, warmth, and attention. Soft yellows increase concentration, while more intense shades help with memory and boost metabolism. But be careful with how much yellow is used in space. Too much yellow can be overwhelming and even stressful for children.

Orange

Similar to the other warm colors, orange creates feelings of energy, enthusiasm, happiness, and attention. In children, orange enhances critical thinking and boosts memory. However, some children are overwhelmed and feel it's too bright.

Blue

Productivity, calmness, sadness, and stability are a few feelings brought on by blue. Blue is one of the most popular colors, especially with little boys. It is a calming color, which makes it a great choice to use in rooms to help ease anxiety. Using too much blue can depress or invoke feelings of sorrow.

Green

Green is the most relaxing color for the eyes. It is the color of nature, luck, safety, and envy. Using green in interior design is a great choice for all ages. Green has a soothing effect that can increase concentration and reduce anxiety.

Purple

Purple is the color of imagination. It is rarely seen in nature, so some feel it's mysterious. It can also represent wealth and royalty. Purple is an appropriate color for preschool rooms to enhance creativity and calmness.

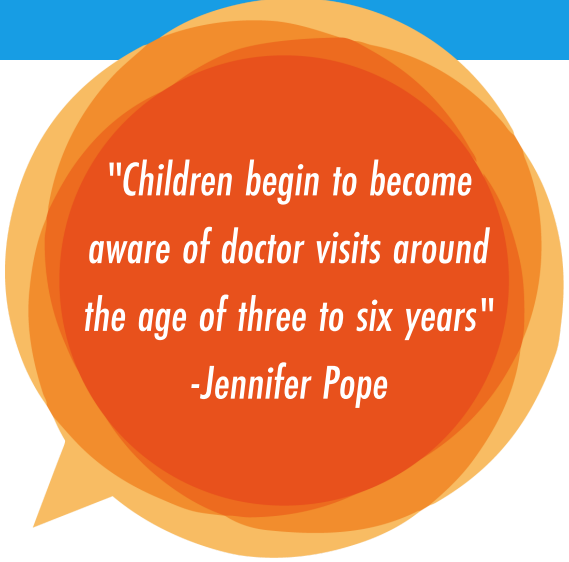
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CAUSES OF ANXIETY IN YOUNG PATIENTS

Children begin to become aware of doctor visits around the age of three to six years, Pope says. These young children may equate the visit to the dentist with the visit to the doctor, Baker explains. “A lot of kids are getting tubes in their ears or have tonsil issues and they're getting nasal scopes. They go to the pediatrician for normal vaccinations. Then they come to our office and immediately assume that we're going to do something invasive.”

Pope agrees, saying the Eastern Orthodontics and Pediatric Dentistry team members clearly understand that “with dentistry, we are in their personal space. Your mouth is your personal space. The children are in a vulnerable position and they can’t back away.” Khan says distractions such as television monitors on the ceiling and music can help to divert the attention of the young patients during the examination or procedures. He has also been known to sing with his patients to ease their nerves.

Parental anxiety or stories from older siblings about “getting a shot” may increase the anxiety in young patients, which is why these attention diverting designs and other anxiety-relieving techniques are so important to quality care.



*"Children begin to become
aware of doctor visits around
the age of three to six years"
-Jennifer Pope*

89%

Parents polled said their child's biggest source of fear involved getting a shot (66 percent for children 2 to 3 years old and 89 percent for children ages 4 to 5.)

43%

stranger anxiety (43 percent) were main reasons children age 2-3 years were afraid.

31%

Some parents tried to placate their young child by promising to get a treat after the visit (31 percent) or telling the child there wouldn't be any shots (21 percent).

1ⁱⁿ 5

One in five parents said it was hard to concentrate on what the doctor or nurse was saying because their young child was so upset.

PRE-VISIT TOURS, GAMES AND POSITIVE WORDS REDUCE STRESS

Parents are encouraged to show their children what to expect from a trip to the dentist. Khan, Baker, and Pope encourage parents and children to tour the pediatric dentistry office, either virtually or in person. Knowing what to expect, well before the appointment, dispels the fear of the unknown.

Each practice maintains a robust website with office photos, educational resources, and kid-friendly games and materials to help the parents familiarize their children with dental health.

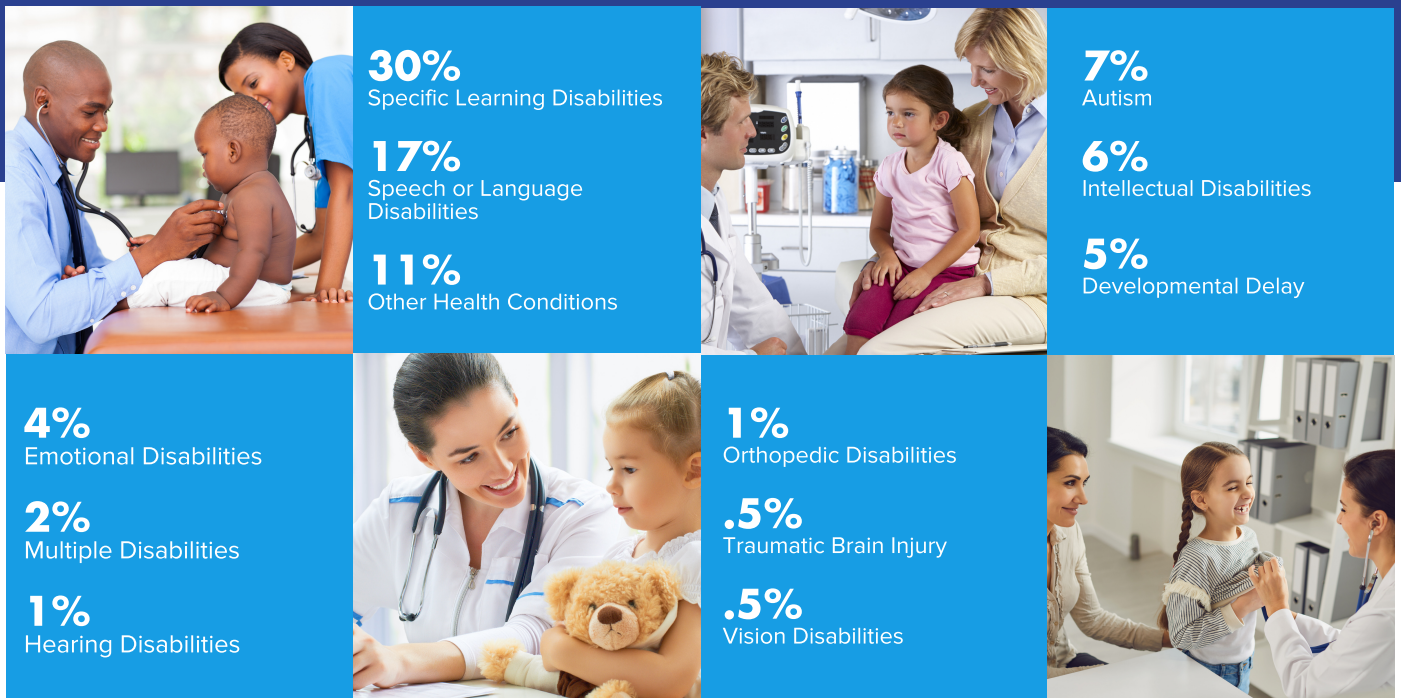
Pope says, “We encourage parents to be positive and to not use themselves as an example. Dentistry has come a long way since we were children.”

The team at Eastern Orthodontics and Pediatric Dentistry uses new words for dental procedures, such as the dreaded shot. “We don’t talk about giving a shot,” she explains. “We give the tooth ‘sleepy juice’ so the tooth will go to sleep.”



TIPS FOR ACCOMMODATING PATIENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Inclusive design is one of the specialties of Worlds of Wow. Research, outlined in [Inclusive Best Practices](#), shows out of 1,000 children between the ages of 3 and 21, approximately 85 will have these disabilities:



Each Worlds of Wow design offers spaces that allow these children to participate in play to their level of comfort.

Pope explains that Eastern Orthodontics and Pediatric Dentistry has created a “storyboard for children with autism and other special needs. It starts with a picture of the outside of our building and then shows them our lobby. The storyboard shows them the whole dental process so they know what it will be like.”

At Grand Parkway Pediatric Dental, Khan schedules office visits for special needs children during quieter office hours. Fewer patients and parents in the lobby allow for more physical space for patients with mobility devices, such as wheelchairs, to maneuver more comfortably.

CREATE A CUSTOM, COLORFUL, FUN SPACE FOR YOUNG PATIENTS



Medical offices can be sterile, which can scare and intimidate children. An intentionally designed office can feel welcoming and remove the dread of return visits. Creating a space that makes kids feel excited can make a huge difference in how they take care of their own health and their willingness to attend appointments.

Fun distractions can help kids leave their stresses and nerves at home. Distractions can be combined with calming themes and elements so patients aren't overwhelmed. Underwater and nature-themed spaces are relaxing for the whole family. Kids stay at ease and are entertained, and so are adults.

Pediatric medical offices are ideal sites for playful designs that ease the anxieties of young patients and provide stress-free visits for the parents. Custom designs that showcase your own flair, the local culture, or the environment, will create unique and happy experiences for your patients who will want to return to their healthcare home with you.

Learn more about playful design for all at Worlds of Wow, worldsofwow.com,
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CREATING MORE PLAYFUL WORLDS FOR ALL

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