

Florence Nightingale

Match #00000

You know that feeling you get in the pit of your stomach when you rise to meet a challenge? The feeling of your heart beating faster as you gear up to pass the tests life has placed before you? I live for those moments. I felt it as an undergraduate preparing for my future and when I left to pursue the dental career I dreamed of at UCSF. I get that feeling when I learn new things and when I can use my experiences to educate and help others. During the six weeks of my pediatric rotation, I felt it deeper and more strongly than ever before.

My most vivid memory of pediatric dentistry was actually not a pleasant one: I was about five years old and was told to quiet down while my head was forcefully moved in unnatural directions. I remember feeling uncomfortable and disliked the idea that my dentist didn't feel the need to communicate with me simply because I was a child. While transitioning to becoming a provider in the clinic, I kept that incident in mind, especially while interacting with pediatric patients; and I was careful to be respectful of each and every one of my patients.

Throughout my third year, my experiences with pediatric dentistry have solidified my passion to pursue this path for several reasons: I like that pediatric dentists are at the forefront of preventing dental disease, fully encompassing the role of practitioner and educator. I enjoy having the opportunity to apply what I have learned, something I pursued in an elective this spring when I presented a lecture on the preventive benefits of fluoride. Teaching children about oral hygiene has been one of the most empowering experiences of my training. One of my most memorable experiences occurred while volunteering at a private office: a ten-year old boy came to me because his classmates were teasing him about his teeth. When I demonstrated proper hygiene technique and showed him how simple it was, his entire persona lit up. The transformation in his outlook really energized me.

I also like that pediatric dentists forge lifelong relationships with their patients. Building any relationship takes trust and patience, but with a child, it is especially important, as they truly take everything at face value. I learned this lesson very quickly, and developing my skills with my niece and nephews has been particularly satisfying. My goal is to draw upon these experiences to meet the needs of my patients and my practice. In particular, I would greatly enjoy employing my skills by treating children with disabilities. While observing a clinic at Boston University, I saw how a child with a disability could be fine one minute and then inattentive and restless the next. I appreciated the challenge it was to find the right balance of patience, skill, and understanding.

Living and working in San Francisco these past few years, I have experienced an extremely diverse patient population. Growing up as a first-generation American citizen, I have developed an inherent respect for differences, and been inspired to pursue a variety of outside interests. I enjoy experiencing new foods and cultures, especially through travel, exploring different cities and the way people live. At Boston University, I took the opportunity to study Art History in Greece for a summer and took it even further by backpacking alone through France and Italy. I traveled to England recently for the first time as an adult where I was able to make a connection between the people my parents are today and the lives they had before coming to America. Music also plays an essential role in my life and my adventurous nature leads me to all varieties. If my MP3 player could speak, I am sure it would beg me for a much needed break. From participating in a Tango event at Mt Holyoke, to chatting about the latest pop-stars with children, I have found music to be a powerful means of connecting with people of all ages. I have been lucky in that life has granted me many diverse opportunities. I have an open mind and am always willing to hear new perspectives; no matter where I find myself, I strive to engage with the people and the world around me.

After residency I plan to pursue a career in private practice while maintaining ties with dental schools by possibly teaching on the clinic floor on a weekly basis. After the breadth of experiences I have had, I am confident that I possess the traits and skills necessary to be a successful pediatric dentist. I am energetic, focused, and understanding. My background in psychology and counseling as a Student Health Advocate has refined my communication and interpersonal skills, which facilitates my work with children as well as their parents. Given this background, I am searching for a residency program that emphasizes teamwork, offers a varied clinical experience, and cares for a diverse patient population. I am certain that such a program will help me to continue being excited and motivated about joining the ranks of today's pediatric dentists.