

# WE DON'T TAKE CARE OF TEETH... WE TAKE CARE OF PEOPLE

**W**hen I was invited to participate in this project, I had a tremendous will to awaken the awareness of dentists, to look out of their offices, out of the bubble in which we spend hours and maybe some spend the entire life. But fortunately, I abandoned the idea that might seem my presumption, and then I recalled the image of a boy I met in the Northeast countryside, in the state of Pernambuco (Brazil), in a city called Floresta, far from any cosmopolitan urban city, far from CAD-CAMs, digital dentistry and likes. When I first met Tiago, he was already 17 years old. I remember him looking suspiciously at the classroom door, which we transformed into a dental office with four dental chairs in full operation for 5 days, providing quality dentistry for those who were forgotten. And there are many. In Brazil, more than 20 million people never attended any colleague among more than 300,000 dentists with active registration in our council. That makes no sense in the country with the largest number of dentists in the world.

Let's go back to Tiago, a boy who was part of these statistics until that day. I asked his name and he answered very shy, I soon realized that there was some problem. Tiago did not have the maxillary

central incisors, and the lateral incisors were severely destroyed by caries. We're talking about teeth here, but the problem was so much deeper, and we'll talk about it later. I put the boy on the chair and he did not even know what was happening, the image of him with a scary face, being led to something new, was even a little funny. But fun ended there. We treated with humanization and technology, which can surely walk together. Tiago had his smile back, but he did not know how to smile. It was useless giving back his teeth in an improvised composite resin adhesive denture. I handed the mirror in his hand and waited for the reaction... and it did not come. I was frustrated, at that time I could not understand. Tiago went away, and I was disappointed, without understanding. After 30 minutes he returned with his mother, a lady in her 40s, whipped by the hard work that made her look older than 70s.

- I want to speak to the person in charge.
- That's me.
- I'd like to tell you a story... At the age of 12,

*Tiago suffered a bicycle accident and lost his front teeth. All birthdays and all Christmas evenings he asked me to give him teeth. I said I could not, and he cried. I cried too, because for a mother it is very difficult not being able to help. He did not want to go to school, did not present school jobs in front of other students, it was very difficult. I have no conditions, I always told him that one day God would help. And God sent you. You came from São Paulo to take care of people who nobody remembers.*

It was hard enough to hear that ... everyone was thrilled, she was crying a lot and so was I.

*"I'd like to give you a gift, Doctor."*

She reached out and handed me a grocery bag, a little heavy... and I opened it.

It had so much more than those guavas, it had gratitude, love, and happiness.

We cried together in a big hug, a very special moment, much beyond Dentistry.

It was clear for me and for all who were there that we do **not take care of teeth, we take care of people.**●



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