

## DR. DIPIKA SHAH - A HOLMDEL DENTIST GUIDED BY THE GOLDEN RULE

By Tony Senk

Many, at a very early age and often at their mother's knee, learn about the "golden rule." The hope is that, when they get a bit older, they will try and live their life by the precept of that rule. For Dr. Dipika Shah, a Holmdel dentist with more than 30 years of experience, the golden rule also serves as a guideline by which she runs her dental practice. She treats her patients the way she would like to be treated.

Treating her patients in that manner and providing to them a full range of dental services under one roof by one dentist and one dental team have served Dr. Shah well over the years - and she has a legion of loyal patients and a binder full of thank you letters from delighted patients to prove it!

She said she loves being a dentist and looks forward to work every day - and the accompanying sense of satisfaction and reward she feels when she makes a patient happy, relieves their pain, or hears them say nice things about her like, "You made my day today!"

"I live and breathe good, caring, and quality dentistry," stated Dr. Shah, "and part of that dentistry requires keeping abreast with new technology and staying current with advances in the profession through continuing education courses taught by top-notch trainers and organizations. When I am considering the purchase of new technology for the office, I think about how it could help my patients. After much thought, I may choose to purchase the technology - like others might invest in their boat or vacation home. I spend most of my waking hours in this office, so this is my boat and my vacation home! I derive a lot of pleasure in providing to my patients the best dentistry possible in a relaxed atmosphere at an affordable price."

Much of that technology is aimed at making patients feel less stressed during their visit to her dental office, and to help calm her patients' anxiety, she has transformed her office into a spa-like setting.

"It is easy to put a patient to sleep and do dentistry," said Dr. Shah, "but art is taking a patient's fear away without any risk or the harmful side effects of medications. You do this by winning their trust and relaxing them."

Patient comfort is refined in her office with ergonomics and meticulous attention to details. Hers is one of the first dental practices to have "ergo soothe" massaging chairs. In addition, each treatment room is equipped with large flat-screen televisions, integrated with computer and headphones for patient entertainment. "Also, a cutting-edge LED chair light illuminates a patient's oral cavity as bright as sunlight, without glaring in their eyes," Dr. Shah noted. "A state-of-the-art 3-D digital X-ray machine - the 'Mercedes' of the office - has very low radiation, provides a much sharper image, and shows details to diagnose the quality and quantity of your bone, abnormalities, vital structure near surgical sites, oral can-



Dr. Dipika Shah



Certificates and awards galore, each presented to Dr. Dipika Shah, adorn the walls of the halls of her dental office in Holmdel.

cer lesions, and a lot more. Noiseless and vibration-less electric drills, lasers, air abrasion, and many other technological advancements are at the office for patient care and comfort."

Being a mother, Dr. Shah said she knows how moms sometimes sacrifice their own health when they get too busy or cannot find a babysitter, so she has equipped her dental office with a "kids' room." With x-box games, a flat-screen television, toys, puzzles, and magazines and books for all age groups, the kids are kept entertained while mom, dad, or their siblings get their dental work done. And, the kids' room is in close proximity to the front office staff, so they can keep an eye on the youngsters at all times.

"I want to be sure," she explained, "that my patients' children do not fear going to the dentist - and even look forward to coming here."

Every detail to ease the patient's anxiety is considered, right down to the strategic placement of the patient chair in the treatment rooms. They each look out of a large window, so, in the springtime, patients can - and do - watch a mother bird caring for her young in nests in the trees outside.

"Anything I can do to help allay my patients' apprehension and increase their comfort level is, to me, worth the investment," said Dr. Shah. "You can't go wrong when you purchase equipment that helps patients feel less stressed. This all requires more patience and time on my part, but it's the way I choose to run my practice."

She said clear communication with her patients is also vital to their dental health. "I always explain to my patients what I call 'the ABCs' - that's alternatives, benefits, and costs. And, I explain why it's important to have a small cavity fixed now so they don't need root canal or a crown down the road. I don't have a dental hygienist; I do that work myself because it allows me time to establish a rapport with my patients, and I often take that time to educate them about the importance of caring for their teeth."

Dr. Shah is one of a select group of dentists in the nation to receive the prestigious Master in Academy of General Dentistry Award from the Academy of General Dentistry. She is a past president of the Monmouth/Ocean County Dental Society, a trustee and delegate to the New Jersey Dental Association, and a strong leader in the Holmdel community.

Adorning the walls of her dental office are dozens of awards and certificates Dr. Shah has earned over the years. They include the Lifelong Learning and Science Recognition Award, and letters signed by President George W. Bush and Governor Chris Christie honoring her for dental services she has donated, especially each February 1, when she provides free dental service to children on "Give Kids a Smile Day" as part of Children's Dental Month.

From a dental exam, checking for everything from cavities to oral cancer, to crowns and bridges, root



Here's a look at the kids' room at the Holmdel dental office of Dr. Dipika Shah.





Treatment rooms that look more like spas than the inside of a dental office are just another patient-friendly feature at Dr. Dipika Shah's Holmdel office.

canal, implants, invisalign and orthodontics, TMJ, sleep apnea, extractions, the placement of porcelain veneers, and treating gum disease. Dr. Shah offers "one stop shopping" dentally-speaking - using the very latest cutting-edge technology.

She invites everyone to come to her dental practice and see for themselves what sets her apart from other dentists. "With my extensive experience and our commitment to the latest technology," she said, "we are equipped to provide our patients with the best possible treatment. We welcome patients of all ages and needs. Let us create your beautiful smile. Remember, your smile affects the way you feel about yourself, and a beautiful smile and a pretty face brightens everyone's day."

A graduate of New York University, Dr. Shah started her private practice in 1984, opening a dental practice in Poughkeepsie, New York, before opening her office in Holmdel in 1997.

Her dental office is open Monday and Thursday, 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.; Tuesday and Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; and every other Saturday from 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The address is 723 North Beers Street, Suite 2-E, in Holmdel, right next to Bayshore Community Hospital. The office phone number is (732) 264-8180, and the website is [www.dentistnj.com](http://www.dentistnj.com).

## STOP BULLYING NOW, SAYS MARTIAL ARTIST

Anthony Codispoti, of Holmdel, knows a good investment when he sees one. As a financial advisor and an executive in a major investment firm, he knows that the best investment a society can make is in its children.

Mr. Codispoti is a first vice president at Morgan Stanley Wealth Management. When he is not busy investing millions of dollars on behalf of his clients, he is doing something equally valuable: making sure kids aren't being bullied.

As a sixth degree black belt, Mr. Codispoti owns and operates The Phoenix Way mixed martial arts studio - a venue he uses to instill bully-proofing skills in children through an integrated program called Confident Kids. He teaches setting boundaries against inappropriate touching or attention, and what to do in an attempted abduction - topics that parents and school professionals may not be qualified to teach.

"My son has high functioning autism and was prone to being bullied because of his social inabilities," said Alan Placer of New Jersey, who enrolled his son Connor in the Confident Kids program when it became clear that other children could be menacing. "Anthony taught him not only how to defend himself, but to walk with pride and confi-

dence, which helped his self-esteem." Learning anti-bullying skills has "all but wiped out his social problems, something his counselors could not do," Mr. Placer added.

Real-life methods to thwart bullies include how to handle name calling and teasing, protecting personal space and possessions, assessing appropriate defense, and how not to start a fight.

Judie Saunders of New Jersey is the mom of two young boys. She said, "My oldest son is quiet and risk-averse, but through his training he has gained confidence and self-defense skills. I am especially comforted as a parent by the anti-bullying techniques they are learning. My sons are learning how to identify and handle bullying situations."

Encouraged by the success of his seminars, Mr. Codispoti continued to look for new ways to curtail what he called rampant bullying throughout New Jersey. He was instrumental in pioneering an anti-bullying program called the Stop Bullying Now Project, aimed at empowering, providing resources for, and supporting children who are being bullied.

The issue is particularly sensitive now, as grassroots efforts through social media sites have become stronger. Also, the anti-bullying documentary, *Bully* (2011), has brought the issue to the mainstream.

*Bully* documents the plight of the over 13 million American kids who will be bullied at school, online, on the playground, and on the bus this year. It includes what some reviewers have called "shocking" scenes of physical and emotional abuse and the apathetic reactions of school administrators. It also charts the tragic story of an 11-year-old boy who committed suicide after being bullied.

"Finally, a movie was made on this critical topic, but ironically, it was given an R rating for language, a rating that prevents it from being screened in schools - the very place it would do the most good," said Mr. Codispoti. "We must create a culture where the epidemic of bullying will not be tolerated, and this movie would be a good first step."

Besides his campaign throughout the New Jersey school system, he created an interactive website, which may be found at [www.stopbullyingprojectnj.com](http://www.stopbullyingprojectnj.com), where children can report incidents and receive support.

There are three steps toward dealing with bullies that the Stop Bullying Project recommends:

- 1) **Document** - bullying is not okay. Write down and record the incident. Note the date, time, location, and people involved.
- 2) **Report** - go to parents, teachers, or other adults in charge and tell them what is happening.
- 3) **Ask for help** - you may not have the tools or authority to stop bullying, but someone you know does. Don't hesitate to ask for help.

Seventeen-year-old Chloe Tracy has been training in martial arts and anti-bullying seminars since she was nine. "The anti-bully program has helped me in every aspect of my daily life...focus, concentration, and a calm sense of self confidence even outside of the dojo, in theatre, sports, music, and schoolwork," she said.

"No one bullies Chloe. They've tried, but they've been unsuccessful," laughed Mr. Codispoti.

A graduate of Mount St. Mary's University with a degree in business and finance, Mr. Codispoti focuses on portfolio management, retirement, estate and philanthropic planning, and professional money manager selection. He lives in Holmdel with his wife, Michelle, and their children Jordan and Nicholas, who are already immersed in his classes as students.

Anthony Codispoti is a financial advisor with the Global Wealth Management Division of Morgan Stanley Smith Barney in Red Bank. He can be reached at (732) 224-3749, [www.AnthonyCodispoti.com](http://www.AnthonyCodispoti.com), or [www.ThePhoenixWay.com](http://www.ThePhoenixWay.com).



Anthony Codispoti with his children