Achieving the impossible

Dr Jacob Krikor discusses what to do if you’re faced with having to improve the appearance of a tooth that looks beyond salvage

You know the feeling. The patient had a root filling on the central incisor 10 years and five dentists ago. The tooth went dark and now after all these years with a dark tooth the patient chooses you to pose the question to that you dread to hear: “Can you do something to make this tooth look better?”

I usually look at the tooth and look again and again from this angle and that angle, playing with my goatee pretending to be smart, studying the tooth while in fact I am crying inside remembering the times when I tried with a single veneer, indirect ceramic or direct composite and failed to match the next door tooth.

On a few occasions I have been lucky when the neighbouring tooth was a crown and with a triumphant smile I suggest to have that crown replaced at the same time as we are crowning the dark tooth. This will ensure the best aesthetic results. But what if the neighbouring tooth is a nice untouched big lovely incisor? Do I cut it?

Achieving better results
Here are some steps I use to help:

1. I take a picture of the front teeth before preparation.

2. I take a picture of the tooth after preparation to give my technician as much information as possible.

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3. I send the patient to the local technician for shade and shape taking. The technician is then able to add those tiny but crucial characteristics to the tooth that make it look natural.

4. I use multi-shade cement, such as Variolink Veneer Cement that has the try-in paste and the different cement shades.

Learning from the experts

I recently attended a hands-on course about direct composite restorations arranged by Ivoclar Vivadent and presented by Dr Ron Jackson (USA). Dr Jackson has extensive experience in comprehensive restorative and cosmetic dentistry as well as being an active lecturer internationally.

The focus of the course was on restoring front teeth whether as a single tooth or multiple teeth. I was really inspired and amazed by how much we can do with today’s composites. During the day, Dr Jackson demonstrated how to restore a tooth with the help of the multi-layer system Empress Direct and the results were really impressive.

Of course, it is a learning curve in that the more you use it, the more you master it.

In the images included in this article courtesy of Dr Ron Jackson we can see the results that can be achieved by this technique. As for me, I now can’t wait for the question to pop up again: ‘Can you do something to make this tooth look better?’ And the answer is: ‘You bet I can.’

If you have similar cases with satisfactory results either by using a direct or indirect technique and want to share your experience I would be more than happy to hear from you.

To see more of Dr Jackson’s clinical cases, visit www.ron-jacksondds.com. Dr Jackson is also lecturing at the seminar entitled: Giving Your Patients Something to Smile About: Composite Artistry, on June 24-25 2010 at the London Dental Education Centre (LonDEC). Go to www.odonti.com and click on the link ‘courses’ or contact Ivoclar Vivadent for course details.

About the author

Jacob Krikor graduated from dental school (Odontologen) in Gothenburg, Sweden in 1998. After working in general practice in Sweden for two years, he moved to the UK and now has his own practice in Bexhill-on-Sea. He is especially interested in cosmetic dentistry and has been in general practice since graduating. Jacob is also the founder of two websites: www.askyourdentist.com for patient information and www.odonti.com, which was created to make life easier for dental professionals. To contact him, email drjacob.krikor@odonti.com.

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