

# What a Smile Means To Me

*By: Jonathon (Jack) Gore*

I never realized the true meaning of a smile until after I had my braces taken off. I never knew how much a smile could mean to me, or the effect getting a new one would have on my life. I have changed significantly from the time I got my braces put on up until now. Lots of that change I can attribute to having a very successful orthodontic treatment.

I have never been a particularly outgoing person. That was especially true during the time before I got my braces. Before my braces I hated the way my teeth looked. I didn't want to look at them and I especially didn't want anyone else to look at them. I very rarely smiled and if I did it certainly wasn't with my teeth. This embarrassment I had for my teeth made it difficult to want to talk to any new people, or to speak in front of large groups. I was scared they would make fun of me for my teeth. This fear is an especially challenging thing to have to deal with while being school because you are surrounded by hundreds of your peers. At that time a smile didn't mean much to me.

I had been wanting for a long time to get my braces. I was so excited when I got them because my teeth were finally going to be better. I was so excited for how my teeth were going to look that I had very little trouble dealing with the pain that is associated with having braces. I knew it was going to be worth so I kept the pain in the back of my mind. I would check the mirror everyday watching my teeth slowly but surely coming together. Finally the day came where I got to take the braces that I had wanted so badly off.

When I first looked in the mirror after getting my braces off I literally could not believe what I saw. I looked again. And again. And probably another hundred times. I was beyond excited with what I saw. I felt like a new person. I had a whole new confidence about myself. The whole day, probably the whole week I couldn't stop myself from smiling. This time with my teeth. I was so eager to talk to people and show off my new smile, it was such a different feeling from when I was scared to talk to just about anyone.

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I now know exactly what a smile means to me. A smile is way more than just looking happy and showing your teeth. A smile is confidence. A smile is being able to be outgoing and talk to people because you are confident with who you are. Having a smile that I am proud of means so much to me. It has given me a new confidence to be outgoing, to be able to talk to new people, to be the best that I can be. That is what a smile means to me.