Smile Pinki

Although I am American, my parents are Korean. So growing up with 2 different cultures have at times put me at a clash, but at other times has helped me to see both sides of the Western and Eastern worlds. But one thing that I can conclude is that deformities are not accepted by most cultures. The only difference between the cultures seems to be the way that they might project their thoughts.

In Korea, because it is a small country, if there is a trend, then you can see just about every single person with that trend. There is unity but little individuality. So for a disabled, or deformed person to walk on the streets, as sorry as someone might feel, that deformed individual is looked down upon as not being able to get married, having a successful career, or becoming socially advanced. And feeling the insecurity that is drawn upon the reaction of people, the deformed in Korea will most likely hide their head in embarrassment always looking to the ground, not go out at all, or even at times have committed suicide.

Hence, the values that come with oral health and dentistry are related. Korea has turned into a very superficial country. Every woman *and* man must be the epitome of perfection. The society stresses this, and parents as well as kids in school will stress this. So for a person to have either yellow, stained, or missing teeth, would be a sign of one of the following titles: “low class”, “lazy”, “unclean”, or even “poor”. Many will spend just on braces, whitening, straightening, and adjusting. Even if the jaw or chin in the face were to be too long or too short, plastic surgery would be applied to fix that “imperfection”. Even celebrities have pulled out teeth and so on to achieve a more narrow face appearance. So the dental world is not only for the health, but more for the outer appearance in Korea.

However, seeing both the Korean and living the American culture has helped me to appreciate a few things. One, we cannot ever be perfect and two, different is ok. So with the lack of self confidence in my looks, I think it not fair to critique someone or to fault them for what they were born with. Of course, as I mentioned, deformities are not usually accepted. So the only other option left for me would be to either help the person feel worthy (because this I strongly believe), or to offer them some treatment for that deformity. However, NEVER in my professional or casual setting would I treat someone inhumane because of a misfortune.