

the STRAIGHT PATH to MORE CONFIDENCE

BY ELIZABETH COSSICK

HERE'S A LITTLE QUIZ FOR YOU:

Which of these reasons is the most important for children to get braces?

- ☐ **A)** Teeth are a top bullying target.
- ☐ **B)** Straight teeth are easier to clean and keep healthy.
- ☐ **C)** A smile is the first thing people notice when they meet someone.
- ☐ **D)** A misaligned bite can cause uneven wear that jeopardizes teeth in the long run.

Did you guess that all are correct? They are. Braces straighten teeth and correct bites, which improve dental health and longevity. But, really, the social fallout of crooked teeth is equally huge. Call it shallow, but it's a researched fact: We judge people by their teeth. All the time. And even online! There are actual studies of adults unfriending people on social media because they did not like their smile. And those are *adults* (the supposedly mature ones in society). Put that crooked smile in the middle of a seventh-grade boys' locker room, and, well ... it ain't a recipe for improved confidence.

"Parents often tell us that their child is being teased about the appearance of his or her teeth. Middle schoolers can be especially insensitive and cruel," says Dr. Russell Kincer, who

has been practicing orthodontics for over two decades in Marietta. Research upholds his observations: A recent study of sixth-grade children published in the *American Journal of Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics* found that teeth are the *number one* feature that increase a child's chance of being bullied – beating out both physical weakness and weight.

But, the positive side of the coin is that an attractive smile does the opposite – increasing confidence by up to 75 percent, says a recent study of patients following orthodontic treatments. "That's the best part of my job," shares Dr. Kincer. "Patients, especially adolescents, often come in with a really low self-image, hiding their smile. Then, once we start correcting their bite and alignment, they change into open, confident kids."

This was the story of Jake Mason, a ninth grader at Hillgrove High School, who recently completed treatment with Dr. Kincer. Jake says, "My self-esteem was really down, but when I got my braces off, my confidence really went up."

"The difference in Jake has been *huge*," affirms his mom, Katie Mason. "I was actually tearing up. I told Dr. Kincer that the work they do is not just surface. Jake is just so happy and even more responsive around the house. There are changes on the inside that happen when you love your smile."

For Jake, there's one benefit he quickly names as the best. "I've been told I have a great smile," he says, adding, "Girls tell me that. I'm a lot more confident talking to girls, now. That's the best part."



Jake Mason

FINANCIAL FIX

Did you know orthodontists are some of the few medical professionals who offer no interest payment plans?

Combined with insurance benefits and employer flex-spending accounts, braces have become increasingly affordable. So, don't let finances dead end you; talk to your orthodontist about options.



SOURCE | Kincer Orthodontics, 44 Old Hamilton Road, Marietta. Complimentary consultation: 770-424-5280 (no referral needed). Kincerortho.com

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