



## “Why Do You Want to be a Dentist?” Sample Answer #2

*One morning, when I was still a child, I saw my father in pain when he came home after working the midnight shift. He was grimacing and holding his jaw. I asked him what was wrong and he said it was nothing. A few days passed, and when I saw him next his jaw was swollen and he had a fever. We had just resettled in Canada after leaving El Salvador, but neither I nor my parents spoke any English, at least, not well.*

*My mother and I asked our neighbor in broken English where we could go and she was kind enough to drive us to Dr. Martin Grove’s office. Dr. Grove came into the waiting room to see us, and began speaking perfect Spanish. As soon as my father heard Dr. Grove speaking Spanish, he broke down. I think he was relieved to hear someone speaking Spanish, for a lot of reasons. I think my father was exhausted, scared, homesick and in so much pain, that he just couldn’t hold it in anymore.*

*Dr. Grove removed the abscess and would not accept payment, which was fortunate because we had no money to pay him. But we bought insurance eventually, and we all came to see him. I was never really sick as a child, so I didn’t have many reasons to see my family doctor. But my sweet tooth meant I saw Dr. Grove a lot.*

*When I was still in high school and during one of my appointments, I asked Dr. Grove, out of curiosity, what I would have to do become a dentist. He told me that I needed to do well in science courses like biology and chemistry, do a lot of volunteer work in the community or anything involving helping and serving others.*

*I remembered that an assisted living center had opened up in our neighborhood, so I asked if I could start volunteering to spend time with the folks at the center. I also started taking online tutoring courses to advance my knowledge of the sciences, since I often struggled with those subjects in the past. After a few months of tutoring, I scored a 97% on a biology exam, and felt confident enough to take online, introductory courses in anatomy and pharmacology.*

*When I told Dr. Grove about this, he volunteered to let me shadow him for a few weeks. He let me watch when he interacted with patients and also told me his own motivations for becoming a dentist. He told me that his father had also experienced a lot of problems with his oral health. Dr. Grove grew up in a small town, and it was the fact that his father had to travel to see a dentist that inspired him to become one. He was motivated, as I am, by service and helping people address a very important, but overlooked aspect of their well-being: oral health.*



## “Why Do You Want to be A Dentist?” Sample Answer #3

*I was fourteen when my dentist told me and my parents that I would need braces and I thought my life was over. I remember feeling hot and nervous. I squirmed in my chair as the dentist spoke. A girl at my school, Tracey, had braces and my friends and I would tease her endlessly about them, even to the point of crying.*

*Now, as I sit before you, I consider myself a well-educated adult trying to enter a profession based on compassion, duty, and service, so when I look back on who I was as a teenager, which was not so long ago, I feel pangs of regret. I don't console myself by saying I was young, immature and so many other things, but I'm glad I'm not that person anymore.*

*I resisted the braces at first. I begged my parents not to get them. I told them without shame that the kids at school would make fun of me. But there was no getting around it. One of my baby teeth had not fallen out and it was blocking my adult teeth from emerging. My dentist showed my parents and I the x-ray. That one baby tooth had caused what looked like a traffic jam of teeth in my gums.*

*When I told my friends that I would need to get them, they all laughed, but they didn't care. I was more nervous about Tracey and what she would do or say. Then it dawned on me that I was finally seeing things from her perspective, something even her tears could not get me to do. I got my braces and on my first day back at school I saw Tracey.*

*I apologized to her for everything I had said and asked for forgiveness. She walked away without saying a word and never spoke to me again. I was hurt, but later I realized I was naïve to think I was worthy of forgiveness. But her actions inspired me even more. The more I thought about it, her reaction was a kind of forgiveness.*

*When the shoe was on the other foot, she could've chosen to be as immature, and heartless as I was, but she didn't. She stopped short of assuaging my guilt, but she showed me more compassion and consideration than I ever showed her. I want to become a dentist because I want to help people feel accepted, confident and cared for, because I witnessed first-hand how transformative and life-changing it can be when someone shows you even a little bit of compassion.*

*After I graduated high school, I took a gap year before entering university and traveled to Mexico to volunteer with a non-profit helping promote oral health and hygiene in rural areas that lacked these services. My Spanish was lacking, but I still helped explain proper oral hygiene with dolls and plush toys, which got the kids' attention and let me communicate without having to speak.*

*I stayed there for almost three months. I became close with one of the professional dentists who volunteered at the clinic. He told me that he had just finished dental school and was going back to*



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*the States to start his practice. He also mentioned that if I was serious about dental school, that I should start preparing for the DAT, which is what I did as soon as I returned.*

*I took a DAT prep course and started studying in earnest after that. It paid off as I scored a 20 on my first-attempt. My scores gave me the confidence I needed to apply, but I never forgot that my other motivation was to always show compassion and understanding, so I also started volunteering at a dental clinic inside a minimum-security prison. I choose to volunteer there because the needs of incarcerated persons are often ignored, and it was important to me to interact with people who are not always shown compassion.*