Kid stuff! Now braces are for grownups, too

By DORIS S. WILEY
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Why are all these people smiling?
Barbara Schwartz of Whitman has a mouth full of braces. "I had them three years to reach them," she said. "I could go through with the trauma of wearing braces. Now I have them on." It is of more than passing interest that she is married. She is wearing three sets of braces, and one of those people described it as a "mess." But when you get to be 30, you don't want to be cute: it never occurred to me that a smile can change the way you think. It can change the way you feel.

Barbara Barth of New Britain Township, Bucks County, had a gap in her teeth and an overbite, but she decided to get braces. She was married, and when she had the orthodontics work done, she decided to change her habits. She is wearing a mouth brace, and she is wearing a mouth brace, and she is wearing a mouth brace, and she is wearing a mouth brace.

And then there's Dr. Gregory S. Miller, who is an orthodontist in Bethlehem. He's on a roll, and he's getting the "total treatment" — braces in both jaws, brackets in the mouth, and he's getting his teeth fixed. He's been in treatment for three months, "things are moving," and he's getting his teeth fixed.

The appliances in his mouth. He's also experiencing something else. "I wish I had a nickel," he says, "for every patient who said, 'Now you know what it feels like.' It has made me more empathetic and has given me a lot of new perspective.

So, it seems that braces aren't just for show anymore. For a variety of reasons, more and more adults are getting braces." He's not the only one who feels this way. Dr. Eugene Coben, a clinical professor of orthodontics at Temple University and president of the Philadelphia Society of Orthodontics, says one reason is that adults are "more cognizant of the potential gain to them. Dentistry today has more to offer.

He says that the "proximity structure" is a crucial factor. "This is what you face the world with. People are interested in your appearance. It's a matter of self-esteem, self-image. The bulk in the mouth is wearing braces, and the teeth that are very crowded are simply spaced. Getting teeth properly aligned, he believes, is a "worthwhile contribution.""