

First Person Singular

Nahid Maleki,

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HAD ONCE A LITTLE GIRL who came in here for a consultation, and I looked at her, and she didn't need braces. Everything was perfect. And I told her parents: "You know, I have good news for you. She doesn't need braces. Her teeth are perfect." And the little girl looked at me, and she was very disappointed. She said, "But don't you think I need a little bit of braces?" I said, "No, sweetie, you look great!" She started crying. I



said, "Sweetie, why are you crying?" She said: "All my friends have braces. I am the only one who will not have braces. I want braces!" So there is this discussion between the little girl and the father. And then the father turns around and says to me, "Doctor Maleki, could you please put some braces on her?" *Why would I put braces on her?* And he says, "Why don't we do it for just a few months, so she can get this thing that everybody else is doing." I said, "You know, once you put braces on, the position of teeth will change." The father said: "I don't care. Just put

some braces on her." I said, "Fine, I'm going to put braces on her but not the wires." So we just put braces in there. Three, four months. We changed the color of the rubber bands, so she got all of the different colors that she wanted. And then she said, "Okay, you can remove it now."

I always wanted to have a big family. I wanted to have lots of kids. But, with my private practice and my teaching responsibility, I have no time, so I stopped at just one. And then, the more I worked in my office, the more I noticed: Hey! I have all these kids!

Interview by Patricia Murret