

HABITS

Is life a bit of a grind? – Ann Gadd

Teeth grinding and why we do it.

Ever woken up and felt your jaw to be sore, had a dull headache or earache that disappears as the day wears on, had facial pain or sensitive teeth? Chances are you may be grinding your teeth at night. Officially called bruxism, not only can grinding cause the physical discomfort already mentioned, but by exerting thousands of kilos of pressure per square inch on the teeth surfaces it can, wear down the teeth, loosen them, result in tooth fractures, cause gum reduction, chipped enamel and jaw joint problems. Yet, because you do it mostly at night, you may be completely unaware that you are grinding.

Physical causes

Teeth grinding has been attributed sleep disorders, an abnormal bite or missing teeth. Studies have also shown that a lack of Pantothenic acid, an anti-stress vitamin and a factor in motor activity control, may also be a cause. A calcium deficiency, which can cause involuntary movement of muscles in the mouth, resulting in grinding, may be a cause. Yet as we know, nothing happens on the physical without an initial emotional trigger.

There has also been some recent evidence to suggest that selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (such as Prozac) may also increase tooth grinding. People

who teeth grind are also more prone to biting their fingernails, pens etc. or the inside of their cheeks.

Emotional causes

Biting is a primal form of fighting – just observe small children who happily bite others when they are not getting their way. For animals, biting is the prime form of attack or defense. We speak about getting our *head bitten off* when someone is angry with us. Combine this with the expressions like *a daily grind* i.e.

something that slowly wears us down, and you have feelings of anger towards another carried for a long period. The anger demands payback: Hence, revenge. Grinding one's teeth over a period of time, also blunts the teeth, which would lessen the effectiveness of them should we be called on to fight. In softening the edges, we symbolically diminish our power, when we need to confront someone.

When we take a bite of something, we hold onto the object firmly. Are you holding onto someone or something that you need to let go of? Alternatively, do you need to come to grips with an issue, or get more involved? Is a problem slowly *grinding you down*? Anger to do with your boundaries being invaded, stress, fear and uncertainty, are also contributing factors.

When we mechanically grind something such as wheat, we break it down into a smaller more edible and digestible form. By grinding your teeth, are you attempting to make the problem or emotion smaller and hence easier to digest? We mostly grind our teeth in our sleep, which indicates that much of what we are feeling is unconscious.

Teeth also are situated in the throat or fifth Chakra area. This indicates that expression or lack of it is also an issue. Instead of voicing our anger or fear we keep grinding it, or going over it repeatedly and do not swallow or digest it.

Healing

Forgiveness doesn't look attractive until we get to the other side. Carolyn Myss

Some years ago, when a business partner of my husband's had his fingers very deep in the company cookie jar, I developed the habit of grinding my teeth at night. The situation lasted for some time, while we sought ways to extricate ourselves from this very parasitic relationship. He had taken from us and I wanted revenge! The problem was so bad that my dentist was talking about jaw surgery and special plates that I would have to wear before I did serious damage to my teeth. Once I realized the cause of the problem, I was able to work at forgiving this man and so the grinding lessened.

Identify who you are angry with and on whom you desire revenge. Then forgive them and the pain they have caused you. Stop wanting to *eat them up!* If you're uncertain about an issue, voice that concern and make a decision. Revenge can be motivational, but in the end, we are the person who is *ground down*. The more impersonal you can be towards someone who has betrayed you, the quicker you will get through the lesson. See the situation simply as a repayment of karma. If someone has invaded your boundaries, acknowledge that you may have allowed them to do so, and forgive yourself and them.

Physically, you should visit your dentist, who may recommend a custom-fitted mouth guard. Try also taking calcium or bonemeal tablets.

Don't let your teeth (and life) become a grind!

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