



## Our Shared Katabasis with Dr. Douglas

In mythological times, a katabasis (kuh-tab-uh-sis) was the term describing a conscious descent into the darkness, the underworld, in search of a deeper understanding, or perhaps to bring someone or something of great value back to the outer-world. This deepening of connection required a person of exceptional status with a willingness to face oftentimes harrowing risks of hell in a descent holding the promise of achieving a higher meaning for and purpose in life.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 Virus has forced a katabasis for us all. Like it or not, similar to a blizzard warning for the next day, we are urged if not forced to isolation and self-quarantine, a potentially deep, dark descent into time alone – time spent without concerts and ball games and movies and restaurants or even retail therapy.

Fear not, my brothers and sisters. This apocalyptic time will usher in a Phoenix as harbinger of better times to come. You see, apocalypse actually means awakening, and the promise of better things to come. Together we can and will endure the inconvenience and sad tragedies of this viral exposure. On the other side, what could possibly be improved you might ask? How about our time with our ‘selves’ ushering in a profound recognition, a re-newed awareness of our inter-being, our true connections to each other. I know for myself, declining a handshake and denying a hug has left a vacuum of soul isolation and a dark hole in my heart. If nothing else, the CoronaVirus reminds me that we are all susceptible, all sharing a common humanity if you will. No immunity. At such times the undeniable words of Mother Teresa echo in my head, “we belong to each other.” Not only do we belong to each other, we are responsible to each other. And therein may lay the gift in this downward, inward journey.

If we can muster the raw rage against this new adversary that threatens our daily freedom to move about and interact, and turn that anger and frustration into useful energy, perhaps that drive will show up as a new response-ability. The response-ability to exercise sustainable habits of well-being that promise to distance ourselves from future weakness to viral threats, in fact wellness threats of all manner.

The major act currently advised, even above and beyond isolative quarantine, is personal hygiene. How we tend ourselves with handwashing and sneeze and cough etiquette holds special value in stopping the spread of the virus. What might be considered an ignored simple common courtesy of staying home when we are sick (or keeping kids home from school) and politely maintain exemplary personal hygiene may be the tremendous awakening born of this global pandemic.

We are all receiving a barrage of announcements in the wake of the uncertainty of the trajectory of this pandemic. Words are shared from responsible parties about concerns, support, commitment, assurances, focus and safety. In calmer times, these same words would be a part of the recipe for sustainable wellness for each and every one of us. On the humble scale of dental wellness, as a microcosm of the global crisis, prevention mandates personal self-care. We can no longer depend on outside powers and institutions to inform our wellness and the relational wellness among us. It is incumbent on each and every one of us to come out of the dark inner journey we are treading and rise up, owning the requirement of self-care for the sake of community-care.

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### *“Closing time, when every new beginning is some other new beginning’s end” – Semisonic*

*As I recently anticipated “closing” the merger of Dr. Egan’s practice with Drewyer Dentistry, it occurred to me how funny it can be the way we word the world and its occasions. Nothing was ‘closing’, why, in fact, we found ourselves at the very threshold of new beginnings, powerful openings. Together we have discovered an unlocked door, widely opening into a new room. Together, professionally and personally, practitioners and patients step into the bright sunshine of new possibilities and challenges, awakening to our inherent flexibilities to absorb change and persevere.*

*Truly, upon “settlement”, things are emphatically ‘un-settled’. Together we are all scrambling to discover our place, our fit, our comfort zones among and for each other. In all of our new relations, I urge you to embrace a common mantra: “Together, we will figure things out.”*

*All of us here at Drewyer Dentistry open our hearts and our skills to our new partners towards the goal of sustainable dental wellness, yes, and also sustainably balanced wellness of our collective bodymindspirits. Moreover, we recognize the powerful ways we can follow our passions in life informed by the strength of our relations in the face of all of the challenges waiting ahead.*

## Ohaguro

Sometime around the 8<sup>th</sup> through the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, tooth dyeing was a practiced method in Japan. Culturally influenced (go figure), this beautification method was embraced by the women of their time. While today we have our potent and safe methods for tooth whitening, folks during the Heian period ingested a dye made from soaking iron filings in tea or sake. When oxidized, this potion turned black! The rigorous practice of ingesting the liquid daily (Ohaguro) would keep the teeth the desired black, while also strengthening the teeth and preventing decay. My, my, how things change.

## Teething Test

Any day now our grandson, Isaac, will sound the classic siren sound of dental awareness. You know, he's gonna start teething! And so, in order to stay a step ahead of that boy (good luck with that!), I've done a little research into the topic. Turns out, not every substance for soothing those sore gums while those sharp guys make their way into useful incising positions are across the board enjoyable for each little human. From silicone to wood, smaller to larger, bright and noisy to classic Zwiebacks, trial and error and trial again will be the way toward comforting and placating Isaac, and in turn Mom and Dad, while determining safe, chewable solutions. I still have a lingering question, however: how does one disinfect a Zwieback??????



## According to Ancient Egyptians, a Man Dies Twice.

First, when his soul leaves his body and a second time when people stop speaking his name. March 15<sup>th</sup> marks the 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passing of "Dock", Dr. Darwin Drewyer, Douglas' dad and Austin's grandad. Thanks to all of you who share in our rich legacy, Dock's name is regularly shared, in essence keeping his grand spirit alive and well within and without the walls of Drewyer Dentistry.

Each Morning Brings  
A perfect sunrise  
    behind the clouds shrouding me from its warmth  
If only I could see a little bit further through the haze  
    into the dream  
Maybe then I'd leave the cold muddy middle ground  
    where I stumble  
Stuck between locked down and being free  
- Nici Repose

Another Chance to Dance  
Remember when your mind is racing  
    And you ain't got nuthin' done  
The baby keeps on wailin'  
    And the day is said and done  
Your mama truly loves you  
    Your daddy's in there too  
And if you're reading this this morning,  
    The good news be  
There's MORE to do  
So greet that first breath with a smile  
Be grateful for another chance  
    And put your red shoes on my sweet  
You've been given another chance to dance  
-Nici Repose

## Spring is Here with a Dr. Austin Garden Update

The arrival of the vernal equinox marks the official astronomical start of spring in the Northern Hemisphere each year. This year will be the earliest astronomical spring in America in 124 years. The mathematics of the early spring can get complicated but it is a result of the inexactness of our 365 day calendar, daylight savings and the leap year. For me, it means the excitement of earlier sunrises and later sunsets.

A little update on my indoor gardening projects: I managed to keep alive most of my indoor plants and successfully grow a supply of mint and rosemary all winter long on my windowsill. Unfortunately, my propagated Jade plants have shown little growth since the last newsletter, small roots have started but little else. If you have any tips, please let me know at your next visit.

With the help of a good friend I added a new 4x8 foot raised garden bed to my garden this winter. Besides the pleasing esthetics, raised beds help keep out critters, improve drainage, lessen weeds and if built high enough, can save your back. Personally, I just like building things and a new bed gave me an excuse to get out some tools and work outside!

I'm excited to start planning what I'll add with the extra space. Any good ideas? What tomato variety? Grow Zinnias to cut for my wife? Peppers? I typically wait until at least Mother's day to plant seedlings. I did not start any seeds inside so I'll be on the lookout for some local organic plants for sale come May.

Happy Spring everyone!



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## Dr. Austin Weighs in on DIY Braces

Luckily, I have not run into any of my patients who have utilized one of the seemingly growing DIY orthodontic companies to straighten their teeth. If I did, I would immediately be warning about tooth loss, irreversible TMJ damage and loss of function (difficulty chewing).

While watching a University of Maryland Basketball game, I was bombarded by the marketing of one of these companies. So, I thought it would be a good idea to touch on the realities of this type of treatment as I'm now sure many of my patients have contemplated what these clear braces companies are all about. In a nutshell, without ever meeting with a dentist, someone is able to take an impression of their teeth and send it away by mail in order to receive clear aligners with the promise of straighter teeth. These aligners allow a patient to move their teeth with zero oversight by a dentist before or during treatment.

There have already been horror stories reported about patients losing teeth because teeth were moved too fast or they underwent tooth movement without being properly evaluated for gum disease. Even more prevalent are reports of teeth not lining up correctly when treatment is finished. For example, teeth not touching evenly, leading to difficulty and discomfort when chewing, not to mention long term risk of tooth fracture and ultimately tooth loss. Have I scared you enough?

Many people begin this type of treatment due to the lower costs when compared to orthodontics with a certified dentist. Ultimately, many end up having to have extra treatment with a board certified orthodontist to fix the mistakes of these DIY Ortho companies. This means added costs and lengthier treatment timelines. It's no surprise that many of the patients utilizing these cheaper DIY ortho alternatives are not seeing a dentist regularly in the first place. The American Dental Association is working on protecting these patients but unfortunately the information is not as widespread as we would like.

If you are reading this newsletter, you are already in the hands of a good dentist but please spread the word about the dangers of these remote teeth straightening services. If you are interested in straighter teeth ask me about safe treatment options at your next visit!

