

Custom Fixes For Daily Grinders

Advanced tools help erase damage caused by bruxism

BY ROY CUMMINGS

Volusia Health Care News

The brightly-colored painted bunting migrates most often at night, and their numbers are declining rapidly, so Cheryl Demers considers herself quite fortunate to have spotted a pair of the songbirds prancing around her garden just before Christmas last year.

"I guess they decided to stop and have some lunch at my place on their way through the area," Cheryl says. "It was a very exciting moment for me because I love birdwatching. I've become a complete nutcase about it. I probably spend more money on bird seed than I do on groceries."

A few years ago, Cheryl had to devote some of her hard-earned money to fixing a dental problem, this after the crown on a front tooth broke off just a day before she was slated to make a major presentation at work.

"I was in a panic, and my husband suggested that I go see the dentist he'd been seeing for a couple of things," Cheryl says. "I was really lucky because he was able to take me in right away, but when he looked inside my mouth, he was like, *Oh, no; lots of work to do here.*"

The dentist Cheryl went to see is Jayraj Patel, DMD, FAGD, FAAD, DABOI, of DeLand Implant Dentistry, and the issues the doctor found were mostly caused by *bruxism*, which is the involuntary, yet habitual grinding, clenching and gnashing of teeth.

"I've been grinding my teeth my whole life, and I'd done it so much that, when Dr. Patel and I met, my teeth were very, very short," Cheryl says. "My whole mouth has suffered the slings and arrows of teeth grinding, but Dr. Patel said, *I can fix this if you want.*"

Cheryl was indeed looking for a fix for her ailing smile, so Dr. Patel conducted a comprehensive exam to determine the extent of the damage. His findings included two broken molars, one on the lower left and one on the lower right.

He also found a *dental implant* on an upper left molar that had been seated but never crowned. The rest of Cheryl's teeth were simply worn from grinding, but they were in danger of breaking, so as a fix, Dr. Patel recommended the Cheryl undergo a *full-mouth rehabilitation*.

Patient Preference

"Now, a full-mouth rehabilitation can be quite expensive," the doctor acknowledges. "And depending on how you want to go about doing such a project, it can be time-consuming. It can be done in a



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Cheryl is all smiles now that all the damage she suffered from grinding her teeth has been repaired.

few months, or it can take as long as a couple of years. It all depends on the patient's scenario.

"But at our practice, patients do not have to pay for everything up front. We can also customize the treatment plan based on the patient's preferences, such as their desired timeline and finances. That's what we did with Cheryl.

"We started, of course, by planning everything out. That was in August of 2022, and what prompted her to get going on everything was another fracture, this to her upper right lateral incisor, which is the tooth right next to the front teeth."

Dr. Patel deemed that tooth "beyond repair," so it had to be pulled. He later replaced it with a bridge that he fashioned as part of the makeover in which all the fractured and worn-down teeth were pared down and capped with crowns.

"In case like this, though, you can't just prepare the teeth and place crowns on them the way you normally do," Dr. Patel says. "In a case like this, you also need to find the patient's VDO, which stands for vertical dimension of occlusion.

"That refers to how tall the teeth are when they touch. And because Cheryl had ground her teeth down so much, that had changed. So, we had to reestablish that. But in doing that, you need to be careful that the patient doesn't wind up with other issues such as *TMD*."

"I've never had a dentist who is as kind as Dr. Patel, who puts me at ease the way he does."

— Cheryl

TMD stands for *temporomandibular disorders*, which are issues pertaining to the temporomandibular joint (TMJ) and the muscles that control jaw movement. To ensure those issues don't develop in his patients, Dr. Patel starts by performing a joint vibration analysis.

"We do that to establish a baseline for the health of the patient's jaw," Dr. Patel explains. "At our practice, we do that for anyone who is undergoing extensive dental treatment, and we constantly monitor them throughout the process to ensure that nothing we're doing is negatively affecting the patient's jaw joint."

In doing so, Dr. Patel uses a diagnostic tool called the JVA that measures the vibrations produced by the temporomandibular joint during jaw movement.

Rest, Regroup, Relax

The process for crowning teeth typically calls for the patient to be fit first with temporary crowns that are worn for a week or two while the permanent crowns are being manufactured. Cheryl, however, wound up wearing her first temporary crowns for close to five months.

"We treated her upper arch first, and we kept her in the temporary crowns for a little more than four months so that she had time to adjust to the length of the new teeth and her new jaw position," explains Dr. Patel.

By the end of 2022, Cheryl had made those adjustments, so her permanent upper crowns were placed early in 2023. Cheryl waited more than a year to address her lower arch, but that work began in June, and so far, she is extremely pleased with the results.

"Everything looks great," she enthuses. "I recently had lunch with a friend who hadn't seen me in a year or so, and she was blown away. She was like, *Oh my gosh, you look great.* So I am very pleased with the outcome. And very pleased with Dr. Patel.

"The biggest thing for me is, all my life, I've been afraid of dentists. I get very nervous around them. But Dr. Patel is so patient. There are times when he can tell I'm getting overwhelmed, and he just lets me sit in the chair for a while so I can rest, regroup and relax.

"I've never had a dentist who is as kind as Dr. Patel, who puts me at ease the way he does. And he's talked to me a lot about proper maintenance

Meet the DOCTOR

Jayraj Patel, DMD, FAGD, FAAD, DABOI/ID



earned his dental degree from the University of Florida College of Dentistry. His goal is to deliver comprehensive and compassionate care

to patients in a caring, comfortable and professional environment. He provides personalized and complete care using the latest technologies and treatment modalities with an aim to build long-term relationships with patients based on trust, respect and friendship. Driven by a deep passion to help patients, he is constantly pursuing advanced training through continuing education courses. He has extensive training in implant dentistry through the AAID MaxiCourse from Augusta University Dental College of Georgia and Comprehensive Implant Continuum from Implant Educators. He is certified to perform IV sedation in the dental office. He is a diplomate of the American Board of Oral Implantology/Implant Dentistry, a fellow of the American Academy of Implant Dentistry and Academy of General Dentistry.

DeLand Implant Dentistry

JAYRAJ PATEL, DMD, FAGD, FAAD, DABOI/ID

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Dr. Jayraj Patel is known for his exceptional, caring attitude toward his patients and work. He is committed to delivering the most advanced, personalized dental care while offering patients a uniquely satisfying experience. Along with the staff of DeLand Implant Dentistry, he welcomes new patients and any questions concerning the range of services, which include cleanings, preventive care, sedation, and cosmetic, restorative, prosthetic and implant dentistry. For an appointment, call or visit the office.

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and things I can do to make sure I'm not damaging my new teeth, and he's never condescending when he explains things, which is why I would absolutely recommend him to anyone." ■



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