

Teeth and nails, antennas and amplifiers

1. Start at the right outer molar.
Drive the tongue over the terrain.
2. around to the left molar.
Swing around the cone.
Return inner lapse.
Repeat.
3. Notice the bumps.
Grit.
Slippery curves.
4. Wish for smooth.
Imagine speed.
avoid: erosion.
5. electric toothbrush Turn into a vehicle.
Lap the track:
outside – inside – around.
6. Pause to check the road with the tongue.
Compare the shine.
Marvel.
7. Continue racing until the track
is a glide.

8. End when the teeth feel like a polished circuit.

The rules that govern our daily lives are often abstract and disconnected from their original purpose. I could completely relate to the child who didn't want to brush their teeth for two whole minutes. Doing something just because you're supposed to, for the entire time it takes the sand to run through the narrow neck of an hourglass, raises questions about why. The visual distraction of flowing sand or an app's countdown is pleasant, but it offers no answers.

So instead, we begin a journey. A journey of the tongue across the teeth. It's like Mario Kart. The tip of the tongue starts its first lap in the upper jaw, bouncing over all the bumps from the right outer molar, halfway across to the left molar, where it swings around like it's rounding a cone, and drives back on the inside, until we're back at the right molar again. We do lap after lap and start to notice differences in the terrain. Some areas are rough and gritty, others smooth and slippery.

We want all the teeth to be smooth and slippery—so we can glide and zoom quickly, so that no bacteria can get a foothold and start eroding our enamel.

We pick up the toothbrush. We brush—just the front surface of one front tooth, for a little while. Then we test-drive with the tongue. Does it feel slick? Shinier than the tooth next to it? Yes! Then we do the one next to it too!

And suddenly, the toothbrush becomes a Mario Kart as well—starting its laps: outside – inside – around, lap after lap. Every now and then, we pause and check the surface with the tip of our tongue. And marvel. Tooth brushing becomes a moment of play and discovery. It lasts much longer than two minutes—and becomes far more meaningful and enjoyable.

We begin to appreciate the feeling of smooth teeth. We sense that it helps our teeth. It makes it ok.

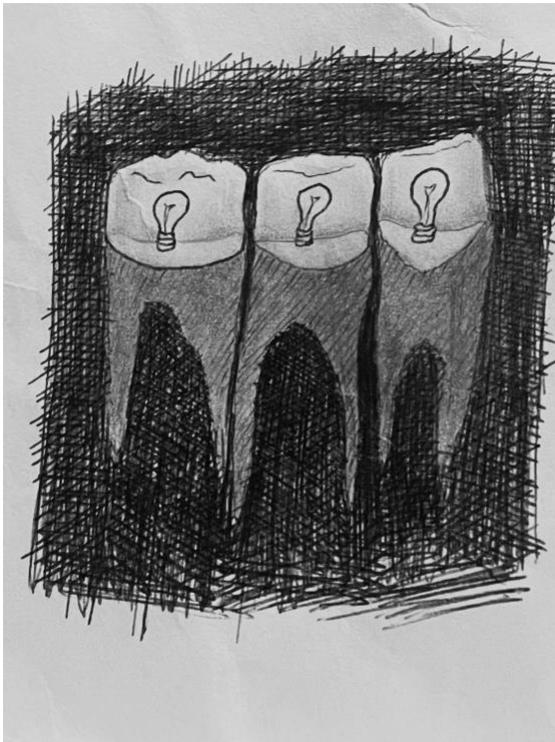
2024 juli

I'm sitting outside on the grass, trying to enjoy the sun. T climbs all over me. He's in my face—pulling at my lips, tugging them, trying to open my mouth. He tilts his head, studying my teeth. Then he grabs my chin and lifts it upwards.

He says, "Direct it towards the sun! Direct your teeth towards the sun and you'll have Wi-Fi!"

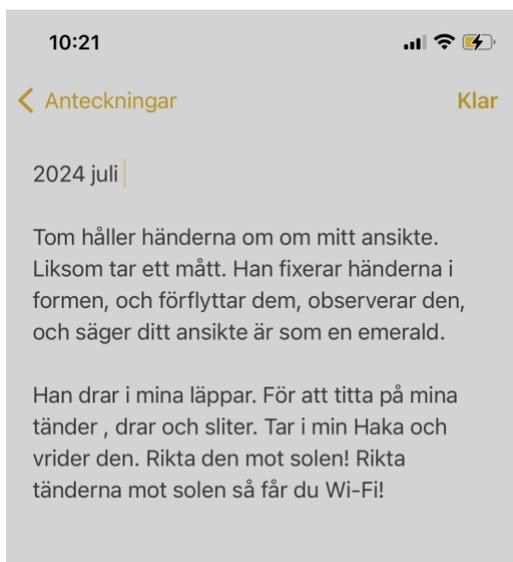
I go from being irritated and a bit overwhelmed to letting out a flabbergasted laugh. I laugh until I cry. It's the funniest thing I've ever heard. I don't understand why or how, but I can't stop laughing. It's as absurd as it is true—somehow.

I hug him and say, "I love your mind!" Then I gently push him away and take out my phone. I have to write this down in the mobile note where I collect all the brilliant things my kids say. I don't want to forget this one.



January 2025

I go through some old boxes with sketch books and this scribble of light bulbs inside teeth comes up. I immediately come to think of T's comment earlier this summer and I pick up my phone to read it.



What is it about teeth that we both seem to find so extraordinary?

In the light of my recent discovery of stimming and sensorimotor processes, I realise/remember/become aware/that I often run objects across my two upper front teeth. I open a drawer and look at its contents. I pick up a pen with a metal cap and run it back and forth across my teeth. There's an incredible sensation—something about the material becomes immediately apparent. I instantly get a sense of what this material is, what it can do, how it might be used, when it would break if I applied pressure.

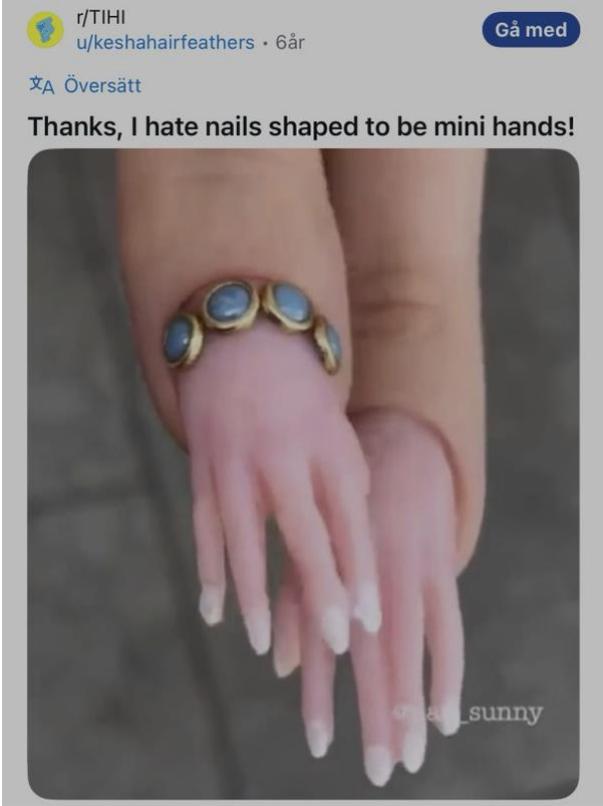
I suppose teeth are a part of our skeleton pushing out through our flesh—like antennae catching signals from the outside world and transmitting them into the inner parts, the centre, the core of my body. I don't know if they can give me Wi-Fi, but I'm now convinced they're definitely a kind of receiver.

I look through other things in the drawer. I pick up a few and test them. Only hard, smooth objects feel right for this kind of exploration. Metal, glass, plastic—they all offer rich, distinct experiences. I pick up a coarse rock and can't even bring myself to press it against my teeth. But instead, it feels right to run it over my lips. The same with an eraser, and a paintbrush.

I realise how important this behaviour must have been to my practice—how much it has shaped my understanding of materials. It's funny that you can do something so crucial all your life without ever being fully aware of it.

I look at my hands and think about all the different finger stimms that resurfaced this summer—the little shapes my fingers tend to trace in the air or inside my pocket. Now I look at my nails. They're also these hard extensions of the body, and I immediately feel the urge to tap them on the surface of the laptop. My fingers want to tap the keyboard—not to type anything, just to make soft clicking sounds. I straighten them, continuing to tap using the inner side of my fingers. Then they stiffen, and I let the upper joints stick out and make contact instead. This creates a sensation very similar to the one I get from my teeth. There's just a thin layer of skin over these bony joints, and they give off a very distinct sensory feedback.

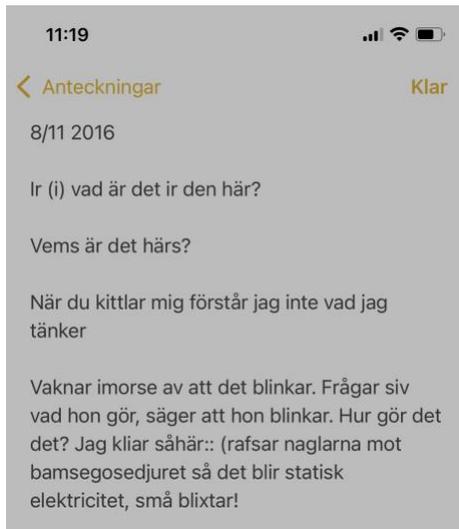
I realise—recall—that I tend to do this when I walk around outside. I like to tap things I pass: mailboxes, streetlights, fences. I google “finger tapping” and gets directed to TikTok ASMR desk-tapping videos.



The nails are as elaborate as S's since she got that nail gel lacquer UV lamp for christmas.



When I pick up the phone next time, the notes-app with quotes from my kids is still open and I get caught by it. I read all the way down to 2016 there I find a note:



It says: I wake up this morning to flashing lights in the dark. I ask S, (who is lying next to me), what she's doing. She says she's "blinking".

Me: "But how are you doing that? " S- "I'm scratching like this" (shows how she scrapes her nails against the Bamse stuffed animal, creating static electricity and tiny sparks!).

- On your way to work
- Begin walking along the street.
- Look at your nails.
- Let them extend beyond you.
- As you walk, tap them softly on a passing surface.
- Tap to listen.
- Straighten your fingers, look at your palm.
- Use the inner upper joints to tap the next surface.
- Notice how the sound moves closer to the bone.
- While walking, let surfaces invite your tapping
- Signal to mailbox, streetlights, fence, walls.
- Accept the replies they offer.
- Continue until you arrive at the station
- When you return in the evening: Walk without touching anything, replaying the taps in memory.