

# MIND & BODY

DAVID PU'U/GETTY IMAGES

## Why Paying Attention to This Moment Creates Your Best Future

Many of the moments that make up our life slip by in a cloud of extraneous thinking

**NANCY COLIER**

**L**iving in the present moment is at the heart of all mindfulness teachings and the essence of well-being. But what is this thing we call being present?

I'm not sure we all share the same answers, or if it even matters that we do. What does matter is that we know what being present means for ourselves in a practical way. And perhaps too, that we have a sense of why we even want to be in the present moment as an intention for our lives.

There's something inherent in all human beings that longs to feel connected to everyone and everything else. At a deep level, we want to heal our fundamental aloneness.

When we're fully present, we feel connected to life and everything in it. We are part of the moment, inside it. So too, there exists a drive within us to directly experience life and know our experience more intimately than we can through any idea, concept, memory, or fantasy.

*Continued on Page 8*

Living in the moment is the first step to a responsible—and enjoyable—adult life.

## Device Makers Have Funneled Billions to Orthopedic Surgeons Who Use Their Products

While fines for violating anti-kickback laws reach into the millions, profitable device makers may see that as the cost of doing business, says prof

**FRED SCHULTE & ELIZABETH LUCAS**

Dr. Kingsley R. Chin was little more than a decade out of Harvard Medical School when the sales of his spine surgical implants took off.

Chin has patented more than 40 pieces of such hardware, including doughnut-shaped plastic cages, titanium screws, and other products used to repair spines—generating \$100 mil-

lion for his company, SpineFrontier, according to government officials.

Yet SpineFrontier's success arose not from the quality of its goods, these officials say, but because it paid kickbacks to surgeons who agreed to implant the highly profitable devices into hundreds of patients.

In March 2020, the Department of Justice (DOJ) accused Chin and SpineFrontier of illegally funneling

more than \$8 million to nearly three dozen spine surgeons through “sham consulting fees” that paid them handsomely for doing little or no work. Chin had no comment on the civil suit, one of more than a dozen he has faced as a spine surgeon and businessman. Chin and SpineFrontier have yet to file a response in court.

*Continued on Page 4*

SATYRENKO/SHUTTERSTOCK



Regulators have long focused on pharmaceutical companies' payments to doctors, but far less known is the impact of similar payments from device companies to surgeons.

THE  
EPOCH  
TIMES

TRUTH and TRADITION

# A NEWSPAPER GEORGE WASHINGTON WOULD READ

SUBSCRIBE TODAY  
ReadEpoch.com

THE  
EPOCH  
TIMES

The Book You've Been  
Waiting for...



NOW  
BIGGER SIZE,  
EASIER TO READ  
FORMAT

"Extremely well  
researched and true."

"The Truth, as horrifying as it is,  
shall set us free. This should be  
on this country's academia's  
list of required reading."

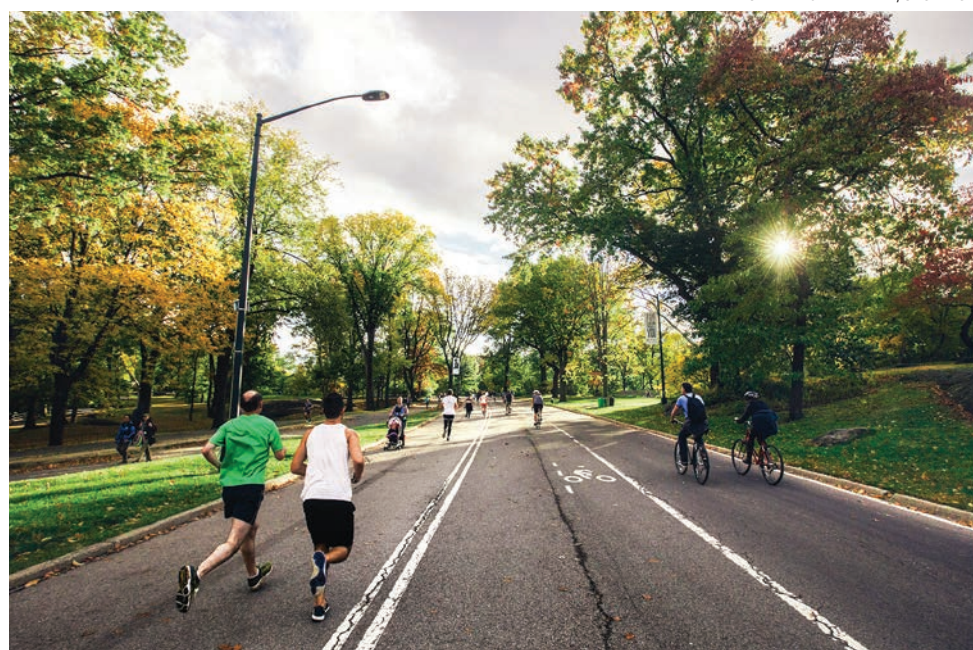
## HOW THE SPECTER OF COMMUNISM IS RULING OUR WORLD

The specter of communism did not  
disappear with the disintegration of the  
Communist Party in Eastern Europe

ORDER NOW!

Available at  
amazon

EpochShop.com



Studies show that you can actually grow new brain cells if you can get your heart rate up for a minimum of 15 to 30 minutes per day.

MADE TO MOVE

## The Benefits to the Brain From Moving Your Body

You can't walk away from your problems—  
unless your problem is a scattered brain

NISHA JACKSON

The sad reality is that your brain shrinks with age. As we grow older, our memory, concentration, and focus can fade. Statistics show that every three seconds, somewhere in the world, a new patient is diagnosed with dementia.

You often hear people talking about their fading memory, loss of concentration, and shoddy focus. Today, many people are concerned that they are losing their mind when they forget what they are doing five seconds after thinking about it (at any age).

These aren't always signs of dementia, since we are more distracted than ever. And yet, with the rise in dementia, it's wise to take care of your brain. Fortunately, there are many things you can do to enhance the brain's good working status and to actually improve how well the brain functions as you age. We now know through research that the brain can regenerate at any age and giving it what it needs is the answer to making a good brain great.

Exercise is key to brain health. Moving your body just makes sense. If you can consistently move your body to get your heart rate up for a minimum of 15 to 30 minutes per day, studies show that you can actually grow new brain cells. This all about oxygen and circulation. There isn't a part of your body that can be at peak health without oxygen and good circulation.

So instead of overworking your brain all week with stress, worry, scattered incomplete thoughts, and sensory input, consider instead refueling with oxygen and increased blood flow through increasing your heart rate and moving your body. The goal here is to establish a habit by doing some form of body movement every day for 30 days.

**There isn't a part of your  
body that can be at peak  
health without oxygen  
and good circulation.**

Try making it a goal that you don't answer emails, surf social, or sit down after waking up in the morning—until you have done some sort of physical movement. Go for a walk, hike, bike ride, turn on some music and dance, jump rope, or whatever you like for 15 to 30 minutes.

Attempt to get your heart rate up to the point that you are sweating or slightly breathless. Studies show that exercise in the morning allows you to burn more calories, sets your day on the right track for higher production, and enhances mood, energy, and focus for the entire day.

In addition, there is yet another benefit of exercise for the brain. When you consistently move your body for more than six months, there is a little center of the brain called the hippocampus that becomes more activated. This center is



Exercise has many benefits, including stress relief and social connection.

responsible for memory, focus, and attention, and is most negatively affected by age and lack of movement or good sleep. This memory center of the brain also shrinks with age, but exercise alone can help prevent this from happening or recharge it if it has already begun shrinking!

There are far more benefits of exercise that are well-publicized but noteworthy of mentioning here:

- Exercise helps you connect with others socially which is one of the determinants of living longer. We need social connectedness to improve the quality and length of our lives.
- Exercise allows your brain the space to manage stressful events and to help set your emotional state for the upcoming day.
- Exercise lowers inflammation, which is connected to body pain, fatigue, autoimmune disorders, and dementia.
- Exercise is an extremely effective tool for managing and treating depression and anxiety.
- Exercise helps you control your eating, cravings, and overall weight as you age.
- Exercise regularly enhances deeper sleep at night; restoring your body and brain.

So, the next time you get frustrated that you can't remember the simplest things or your focus wanders like a fly, think about how much you are moving your body daily and treat yourself to a good brisk walk!

Nisha Jackson is a nationally recognized hormone and functional medicine expert, renowned lecturer, motivational speaker, radio host, columnist, author of the bestseller "Brilliant Burnout," and founder of OnePeak Medical Clinics in Oregon. For 30 years, her approach to medicine has successfully reversed chronic problems such as fatigue, brain fog, depression, insomnia, and lack of stamina.

FOOD AS MEDICINE

# Top Therapeutic Properties of Ginseng

Research reveals that ancient reverence for this healing root was well-placed

DIANE FULTON

Did you know that ginseng, a root-based plant, has wonderful health benefits for your brain and heart and protects the natural functioning and balance of your entire body?

In fact, the healing properties of ginseng have been known in Asian medicine for thousands of years, and the highly prized herb was once worth its weight in gold. The primary components in ginseng believed responsible for its broad spectrum of therapeutic properties and studied by modern scientists are called ginsenosides.

Scientific evidence in both basic and clinical research is growing on the amazing abilities of ginseng as neuroprotective, cardioprotective, liver protective, and as a treatment for serious diseases such as cancers, diabetes, and illnesses caused by oxidative stress and inflammation. Ginseng has also been found to improve immunity, energy, and sexuality.

**Neuroprotective Properties**

Ginsenosides have extensive neuroprotective properties. Ginseng helps with depression, insomnia, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, and drug-induced neural cell damage.

Ginseng has the potential to increase cognitive ability for those with Alzheimer's and can alter gut microbiology by affecting the expression of apoptosis proteins. This neuroprotective effect and positive changes in the large intestine microbiota were demonstrated in a study of tree shrews.

In a meta-analysis of 18 eligible studies involving 343 animals, results suggested that ginseng has positive effects in animal models of Parkinson's, demonstrating powerful neuroprotective potential for human Parkinson's disease.

Hydroponically cultivated red ginseng, wild-growing white ginseng, and a placebo were studied for effects on the brain activity of healthy elderly subjects during relaxation and mental challenges over four weeks. Both ginseng treatments resulted in higher memory, attention, and mental performance compared to the placebo but the red ginseng also had stronger mood and calming effects on subjects.

In a stroke meta-analysis from six databases, the ginsenoside Rb1 showed the strongest neuroprotective characteristics. It reduced brain water content, increased neurogenesis, and showed anti-apoptosis, anti-oxidation, and anti-inflammation properties. It also enhanced energy and cerebral circulation.

**Cardioprotective Effects**

Ginseng also has anti-obesity, anti-diabetic, and cardioprotective effects. Findings of an in vitro study of ginsenoside show ginseng inhibits the proliferation of vascular smooth muscle cells through G0/G1 cell cycle arrest and eNOS/NO/cGMP pathway activation. This gives it strong potential to prevent and treat cardiovascular diseases.

Eighteen research studies with 1,549 participants were meta-analyzed. Ginseng was more effective than nitrates for treating ischemic heart disease in general and angina pectoris in particular.

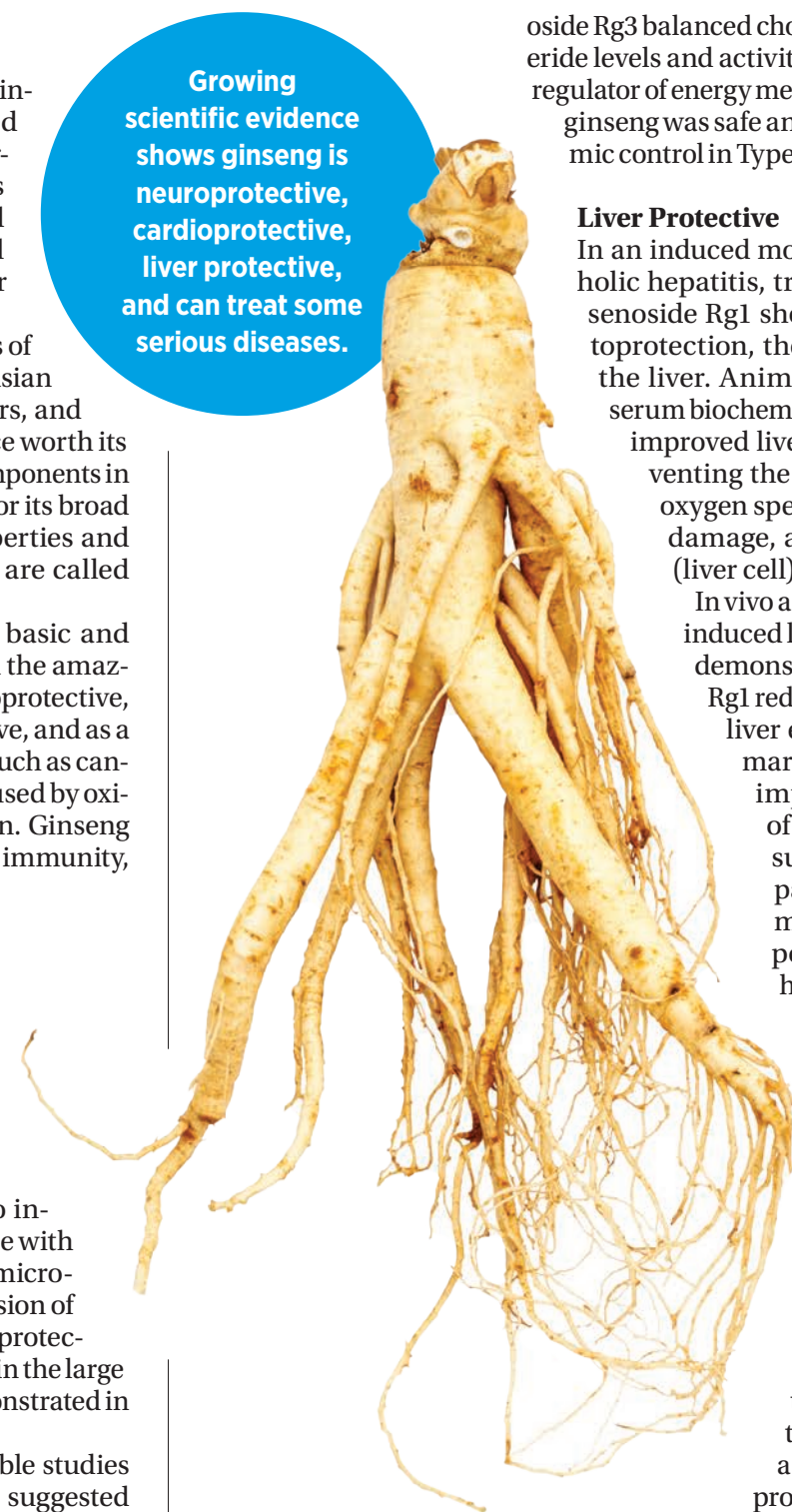
In a systematic review of 113 research studies using ginseng, benefits included decreased fatigue and dementia and significant improvements in treating heart failure, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and cancers.

Ginseng also helped patients with congestive heart failure in a study of 54 subjects. Those treated with ginseng had better balance in important thyroid hormones, which helped increase the cure rate and effectiveness of existing therapies compared to the control group.

In a rat model, administration of ginsenoside Rg2 for 28 days increased cardiac function, alleviated myocardial fibrosis, and suppressed TGF-β1/Smad signaling pathways in heart tissues—confirming ginseng's cardioprotective abilities.

In an in vitro study, a treatment of ginsen-

Growing scientific evidence shows ginseng is neuroprotective, cardioprotective, liver protective, and can treat some serious diseases.



**Ginseng helps with depression, insomnia, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, and drug-induced neural cell damage.**

Ginseng also has anti-obesity, anti-diabetic, and cardioprotective effects.



oside Rg3 balanced cholesterol and triglyceride levels and activity of AMPK, a major regulator of energy metabolism. American ginseng was safe and effective in glycaemic control in Type 2 diabetes patients.

**Liver Protective**

In an induced mouse model of alcoholic hepatitis, treatment with ginsenoside Rg1 showed strong hepatoprotection, the ability to protect the liver. Animals had decreased serum biochemical parameters and improved liver histology by preventing the growth of reactive oxygen species, mitochondria damage, and hepatocellular (liver cell) death.

In vivo and in vitro studies of induced liver fibrosis in mice demonstrated ginsenoside Rg1 reduced serum levels of liver enzyme alterations markedly, dramatically improved the extent of liver fibrosis, and suppressed the hepatic levels of fibrotic markers, showing its potential in treating human liver fibrosis.

In a rat model of nonalcoholic fatty liver disease induced by feeding a high-fat diet, ginsenoside Rg1 was administered for eight weeks, resulting in improved liver function and remission of the disease, showing that ginseng could be a highly effective liver protector in humans.

**Anti-Cancer Powerhouses**

Ginsenosides are anti-cancer powerhouses. Scientists studied ginseng treatment of gastrointestinal cancer and confirmed its benefits as apoptotic (increasing cancer cell death), angiogenesis inhibitive (decreasing flow of blood to new cancer cells), anti-proliferative (stopping cancer cells from multiplying), and anti-metastatic (reducing cancer spread to other organs).

From a human cell in vitro study, the ginsenoside 20(S)-Rh2 had the highest therapeutic potential for treating colorectal cancer; results showed decreased cancer cell viability and inhibition of cancer cell invasion.

In a meta-analysis of 18 trials comprising 1,531 patients, treatment with ginsenoside Rg3 combined with chemotherapy improved the clinical efficacy and alleviated treatment-induced side effects for digestive system cancer.

Ginsenoside exhibits anti-cancer activity in various human cancer cell lines by modulating several signaling pathways and could effectively be used to reverse drug resistance and enhance therapeutic effects in cancer therapy.

The combination of treatment of calcitriol (an active component of vitamin D) and ginsenoside Rh2 were studied in vitro with human prostate cancer cells and results showed inhibited cancer cell viability up to 80 percent, lowered cancer cell proliferation, and increased pro-apoptotic actions using this synergistic combo as an anti-cancer treatment.

In scientific studies of breast cancer cells, treatment with ginsenosides induced apoptosis and cell cycle arrest, interfered with breast cancer metastasis, promoted efficacy of chemotherapy via suppressing migration and proliferation of cancer cells and suppressed breast cancer malignancy.

In a systematic review of 200 studies on the treatment of multiple cancers, scientists learned that ginsenoside Rh2 not only exhibits the anti-proliferation, anti-invasion, anti-metastasis, induction of cell cycle arrest, promotion of differentiation, and reversal of multidrug resistance activities against multiple tumor cells, but also alleviates side effects from chemotherapy or radiotherapy.

Six healthy adults who regularly consumed a Western diet and received seven days of oral American ginseng had higher lev-

els of ginsenoside compound K and higher cancer prevention potential compared to those on an Asian diet.

**Anti-Inflammatory Properties**

Targeting microRNAs using small chemical molecules has become a promising strategy for inflammatory disease treatment. In an in vitro study, the use of ginsenoside Rb2 effectively tamped down the inflammatory responses of the microRNA miR-216a associated with endothelial cell aging and atherosclerosis via the Smad3/NF-κB signaling pathway and highlighted its anti-inflammatory benefits.

Depression-like behaviors caused by chronic stress are related to inflammation and microglia activation as well. Ginsenoside Rb1 was effective in countering depression in a chronic restraint stress-induced model of mice and showed positive anti-inflammatory effects in the hippocampus, serum, and microglia and de-activated cell signaling proteins often associated with cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular, and neurological diseases.

Treatment with Korean ginseng in an arthritis-induced mouse model showed that ginseng has similar analgesic (painkilling) and anti-inflammatory effects as ibuprofen without the side effects, suggesting it as a potentially safer rheumatoid arthritis treatment.

**Ginsenosides are anticancer powerhouses.**

**Antioxidant Effects**

Accumulating evidence shows that natural medicines, such as ginseng, can treat atherosclerosis (lesions in the artery wall that can lead to reduced blood flow) by inhibiting endothelial cell apoptosis (cell death), which can be aggravated by oxidative stress from oxidized low-density lipoprotein, reactive oxygen species, tumor necrosis factor-α, homocysteine, and lipopolysaccharides.

Korean red ginseng was compared to vitamin E (a natural antioxidant) in fighting the drug cyclosporamide-induced liver damage, which is a common drug treatment for liver disease. Ginseng was overall superior to vitamin E (also an antioxidant) as a hepatoprotector in restoring blood biochemical findings and decreasing overall liver damage from drug treatment.

In a study of ginsenoside Rb1 of 197 patients with chronic kidney disease, those who received 500 milligrams (mg) per day of ginseng for six months showed increased renal function and reduced oxidative stress and inflammation, which slowed the progression of the disease compared to the control group.

Ten healthy volunteers received 300 mg of an antiretroviral, zidovudine, used for HIV patients orally with a two-week treatment of American ginseng—200 mg twice daily. Results showed no interference with zidovudine and lowered oxidative stress markers.

**Ginseng's Immense, Evidence-Based Therapeutic Value Relevant to 300+ Conditions**

Ginseng has long been a valuable natural therapy and its worth is only rising as the scientific community analyzes its medicinal advantages to protect your body from diseases and restore your health and well-being. For in-depth research on ginseng, see the GreenMedInfo.com database with over 1300 abstracts, relevant to over 350 conditions across 150 distinct pharmacological actions, all viewable here.

Dr. Diane Fulton is a professor emerita at Clayton State University. She holds a Ph.D./MBA in business (University of Tennessee-Knoxville) and a bachelor's with math/secondary education majors (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee). During her 45-year career as an administrator/professor teaching research and business, she authored 10 books, over 50 articles, and is now writing children's books about the body, mindfulness, and cross-cultural awareness. Her passion is to share her knowledge to integrate a healthy body, mind, and soul. This article was originally published on GreenMedInfo.com

For links to studies mentioned in this article, please see the article online at TheEpochTimes.com

# Device Makers Have Funneled Billions to Orthopedic Surgeons Who Use Their Products

While fines for violating anti-kickback laws reach into the millions, profitable device makers may see that as the cost of doing business, says prof

*Continued from Page 1*

Medical industry payments to orthopedists and neurosurgeons who operate on the spine have risen sharply, despite government accusations that some of these transactions may violate federal anti-kickback laws, drive up health care spending, and put patients at risk of serious harm, a Kaiser Health News (KHN) investigation has found. These payments come in various forms, from royalties for helping to design implants to speakers' fees for promoting devices at medical meetings to stock holdings in exchange for consulting work, according to government data.

Health policy experts and regulators have focused on pharmaceutical companies' payments to doctors—which research has shown can influence which drugs they prescribe—for decades. But far less is known about the impact of similar payments from device companies to surgeons. A drug can readily be stopped if it's deemed harmful, while surgical devices are permanently implanted in the body and often replace native bone that has been removed.

Every year, a torrent of cash and other compensation flows to these surgeons from manufacturers of hardware for spinal implants, as well as artificial knees and hip joints, totaling more than \$3.1 billion from August 2013 through the end of 2019, a KHN analysis of government data found. These bone specialists make up a quarter of U.S. doctors who have accepted at least \$100,000 or more, and two-thirds of those who raked in \$1 million or more, from the medical device and drug industries last year, the data shows.

"It is simply so much money that it is staggering," said Dr. Eugene Carragee, a professor of orthopedic surgery at the Stanford University Medical Center and a critic of the medical device industry's influence. Much of the money is deemed to be compensation for consulting duties, medical research, or royalties for inventing or fine-tuning new surgical tools and techniques. In some cases, it pays for trips, splashy junkets, or rewards for surgeons promoting products to their peers.

Device makers say the long-established practice leads to higher-quality, safer products. "Doctors help develop and refine medical devices, and they even create new devices themselves, sharing their intellectual property with companies to help save and improve patients' lives," said Scott Whitaker, president and CEO of AdvaMed, the medical technology industry's trade group.

But industry whistleblowers and government investigators say all that money changing hands can corrupt medical judgment and tempt surgeons to perform unnecessary and wasteful operations. In ongoing lawsuits, patients say that they've suffered life-altering injuries from screws or other spinal hardware that snapped apart or that they're forced to live with disabilities that they blame on defective knee or hip implants. Patients alleging injuries range from seniors on Medicare to celebrities, such as Olympic gold medalist Mary Lou Retton, who had surgery to replace both of her hips. The gymnast sued device maker Biomet in January 2018, alleging the hip implants were defective. The suit has since been settled under confidential terms.

The case against Chin's company, SpineFrontier, is among more than 100 federal fraud and whistleblower actions, filed or settled mostly in the past decade, that accuse implant surgeons of taking illegal compensation from device makers—from surgeon entrepreneurs like Chin to marquee names like Medtronic and Johnson & Johnson. In some cases, device makers have paid hundreds of millions of dollars in fines to wrangle out of trouble for their involvement, often

without admitting any wrongdoing.

Court pleadings examined by KHN identified more than 700 surgeons who have taken money, including dozens who pocketed millions in royalties, fees, or other compensation from 2013 through 2019.

The names of hundreds of surgeons were redacted in court filings or sealed by judges.

Court filings named 35 spine surgeons who used SpineFrontier's surgical gear—some having done so for years. At least six of those surgeons have admitted wrongdoing and paid a total of \$3.3 million in penalties. Another has pleaded guilty to criminal charges. It's illegal under federal law to accept anything of value from a device maker for using its wares, though most offenders don't face criminal prosecution.

Chin, 57, who lives in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and owns SpineFrontier through his investment company, declined to comment about the DOJ lawsuit or the consulting agreements.

"There is a court date [for the DOJ case] as ordered by a judge," Chin said via email. "If we get to that point the facts of the case will be litigated."

## Back Surgeries Under Scrutiny

The nation's outlay for spinal surgery to treat back pain or to replace worn-out knees and hips tops \$20 billion per year, according to one industry report.

Taxpayers shoulder much of that cost through Medicare, the federal program for those aged 65 and older, and Medicaid, which caters to low-income people.

In one common spinal procedure, surgeons may replace damaged discs with an implant, using screws and metal rods to hold it in place. The demand for surgery to replace worn-out knees and hips has also mushroomed as aging boomers and others seek relief from joint pain that restricts their movement.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the competition for the sale of orthopedic devices is fierce: Roughly 250 companies proffer a dizzying array of products. Industry critics blame the Food and Drug Administration, which allows manufacturers to roll out new hardware that's substantially equivalent to what is already sold—though it often is marketed as more durable or otherwise better for patients.

"The money is just phenomenal for this



▲ Patients may pay heavily for medical devices that are as simple as a screw.

medical hardware," said Dr. James Rickert, a spine surgeon and head of the Society for Patient Centered Orthopedics, an advocacy group.

Most of the products are "essentially the same," Rickert said.

"These are not technical instruments; [it's often] just a screw."

Hospitals can end up charging patients \$20,000 or more for materials, though the hospitals themselves pay much less for them. Spine surgeons—who make upward of \$500,000 per year—bill separately and may charge \$8,000 to \$20,000 for major procedures.

Which equipment hospitals choose may fall to the preference of surgeons, who are wooed by manufacturing sales reps, who could possibly be present in the operating room.

And it doesn't stop there. Whistleblower cases filed under the federal False Claims Act allege a startling array of plans to influence surgeons, including compensating them for joining a medical society created and financed by a device company. In other cases, companies bought billboard space or other advertising to promote medical practitioners, hired surgeons' relatives, paid for hunting trips, and even mailed checks to their homes.

Orthopedic and neurosurgeons collected more than half a billion dollars in industry consulting fees from 2013 through 2019, federal payment records show.

These gigs are legal so long as they involve professional work done at fair market value. But they've drawn fire as far back as 2007, when four manufacturers that dominated the hip and knee implant market, including a J&J division, agreed to pay \$311 million to settle charges of violating anti-kickback laws through their consulting deals.

KHN found at least 20 whistleblower suits—some settled, others pending—that have since accused device makers of cam-

▲ Surgeons take a torrent of cash and kickbacks from device makers for using their hardware.

ouflaging kickbacks as consulting work, including paying doctors to sit on suspect "advisory boards" or other activities that entailed little work to justify their fees.

In November 2019, device maker Life Spine and two of its executives admitted to paying consulting fees to induce dozens of surgeons to use Life Spine's implants in the operating room. In all, 21 of the top 30 Life Spine adopters were paid and they accounted for about half of its total device sales, according to the DOJ. Life Spine and the executives paid a total of \$6 million in penalties. The company didn't respond to requests for comment by press time.

Similarly, SpineFrontier received "the vast majority" of its sales, more than \$100 million worth, from surgeons who were compensated, the DOJ alleges. Often, they were paid by way of a "sham" company run by Chin's wife, Vanessa Dudley Chin, from a mail drop in Fort Lauderdale, according to the DOJ. A defendant in the DOJ civil case, she had no comment.

Kingsley Chin told KHN via email that he takes no salary from SpineFrontier, based in Malden, Massachusetts. In 2013, Chin received \$4.3 million in income from the company, according to court filings in a divorce case in Philadelphia from an earlier marriage. In 2018, SpineFrontier valued Chin's interest in the company at \$75 million, according to government records, though its current worth is unclear.

SpineFrontier's management thought paying doctors was "the only reliable way to steadily increase its market share and stave off competition," Charles Birchall, a former business associate of Chin's, stated in a whistleblower complaint. The case is one of two whistleblower suits filed against SpineFrontier that the DOJ has joined and consolidated. Chin has yet to file a response in court.

From March 2013 through December 2018, the company offered some surgeons \$500 or more per hour for "consulting," which could include the time they spent operating on patients—even though they were already being paid by Medicare or other health insurers. Other surgeons were paid repeatedly to "evaluate" the same products, though their feedback was "often minimal or non-existent," according to the DOJ complaint.

## Patient Injuries Pile Up

While the payments have piled up for doctors, so have injuries for patients, according to lawsuits against device makers and whistleblower testimony.

Orthopedic surgeon-turned-whistleblower Dr. Manuel Fuentes is suing his former employer, Florida device maker Exactech, alleging that it offered "phony" consulting deals to surgeons who had complained about alarming defects in one of its knee implants.

Their findings should have been forwarded to the FDA to protect the public, Fuentes and two former Exactech sales reps alleged in their suit. Instead, the company paid the surgeons "to retain their business

and secure their silence" about patients needlessly undergoing a second operation to address the defects implanted in the first surgery, according to the suit. Lawyer Thomas Beimers, who represents Exactech in the case, said the company "emphatically denies the allegations and looks forward to presenting the real facts to the court." In a court filing, the company said the suit was "full of conclusory, vague, and immaterial facts" and argued that it should be dismissed.

In Maryland, spine surgeon Dr. Randy F. Davis faces a lawsuit filed in early 2020 by 14 former patients who claim he implanted counterfeit hardware from a device distributor that had paid him hundreds of thousands of dollars in consulting fees and other compensation.

Davis used the hardware, which hadn't been FDA-approved, on roughly 250 patients at the University of Maryland Baltimore Washington Medical Center in Glen Burnie, Maryland, according to the suit. Several patients say screws or other implants failed and they sustained permanent injuries as a result. One woman said she was left with little feeling in her right foot and needs a cane or walker to get around. Others claim "extreme mental anguish" for fear the hardware inside them will fail, according to the suit.

The patients allege that Davis improperly disposed of defective screws and other hardware he removed, rather than send the items for analysis or report the failures to authorities. Instead, the University of Maryland hospital sent "hush" letters to patients that falsely told them that no defects had been found, according to the suit. A spokesperson for the hospital, which is also a defendant in the suit, denied the allegations, noting: "We will vigorously defend this lawsuit and at its conclusion are quite confident we will prevail."

Davis and his lawyer didn't respond to repeated requests for comment by press time. The lawsuit is pending in Anne Arundel County state court.

Surgeons are free to implant devices they helped bring to market or promoted, though doing so can prompt criticism when injuries or defects occur.

That happened when three patients filed lawsuits in 2018 against Arthrex, a Florida device company. The patients argued that they were forced to undergo repeat operations to replace defective Arthrex knee devices implanted by Pennsylvania orthopedic surgeon Dr. Thomas Meade.

Meade wasn't a defendant in the cases. But the patients accused him of misleading them about the product's safety and a recall. One noted that Meade had served as a prominent consultant to Arthrex and had "participated in the design, testing, marketing, promotion, and sales" of the knee implant. The patient alleged that Arthrex had paid Meade more than \$250,000 for work that included "promotional speaking, travel, lodging, and consulting."

In court filings, Arthrex admitted making payments to Meade for "consulting and roy-



Massive fines become little more than a business cost for some device makers.

alties," but denied wrongdoing. The cases were settled in 2020. Meade didn't respond to requests for comment by press time.

Chin's dual roles as SpineFrontier's CEO and user of its hardware was called a "huge" conflict of interest by a judge in a pending malpractice case filed against both the company and him in South Florida.

In that case, Miami resident Patrick Chapoteau alleges Chin performed back surgery in 2014 using SpineFrontier hardware even though it had little chance of success. According to the suit, a Chin-designed screw implanted to stabilize Chapoteau's spine broke in half, causing him pain and disabling injuries.

In a legal brief, Chin's lawyers argued that he regularly operates on people with disabling back problems, noting: "The surgery is sophisticated and challenging. On a few rare occasions, his patients have not obtained the relief they expected or experienced unanticipated complications that required additional care."

Joseph Wooten, a former Chin patient and Florida power company employee, alleged in a 2014 lawsuit in Broward County Circuit Court that Chin had 15 previous malpractice claims that had ended in more than \$8 million in settlements, an assertion Chin's lawyers disputed.

"He never told me of his bad record injuring people," Wooten, 64, wrote in a court filing. His wife, Kim, and he said the surgery caused "debilitating and life-altering injuries." The case has since been settled. Chin acknowledged no wrongdoing and the terms are confidential.

## Unlike drugs which can be stopped if harmful, surgical devices are permanently implanted in the body.

KHN reviewed court pleadings in nine settled malpractice cases in Philadelphia, where Chin served on the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania Medical School from 2003 to 2007, as well as six such cases in South Florida filed since 2012. Details of the settlements are confidential. Five of the six South Florida cases are pending, including one filed in December by the widow of a man who died shortly after spine surgery. In all of the cases and settlements, Chin has denied negligence.

In her lawsuit pending against Chin in South Florida, Nancy Lazo of Hialeah Gardens, Florida, said she slipped and tumbled down the stairs outside her Miami office, landing on her back and arm. When the pain wouldn't go away, she turned to Chin and had two operations, one in 2014 and the other in 2015. Her lawyers allege that a SpineFrontier screw Chin implanted in her spine in the second procedure caused nerve damage. Lazo, 51, a former billing clerk with two adult sons, said she can no longer work and remains in "constant" pain. "Based on what my doctors have told me," she said, "I will never get back to normal." Chin denied any negligence and the case is pending.

## Government Struggles to Keep Pace

Concerns that industry payments can corrupt medical practice have been aired repeatedly at congressional hearings, in media exposés, and in federal investigations. The recurring scandals led Congress to require that device makers and pharmaceutical companies report the payments to a government-run website called Open Payments, starting in August 2013. That website shows that payments to all doctors have risen from \$8.6 billion in 2014 to just over \$10 billion last year. A recent study found payments by device makers exceeded those of pharmaceutical companies by a wide margin.

Both the North American Spine Society and the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons told KHN that close ties with the industry, while seeming to generate huge payouts to some surgeons, lead to the design of safer and better implants. "These interactions are really essential for good outcomes in patient care and that needs to be preserved," said Dr. Joshua J. Jacobs,

who chairs the orthopedic surgery department at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago and the AAOS's ethics committee.

Although more than 600,000 American doctors lap up industry largesse, most do so through small payments that cover the cost of food, drinks, and travel to industry-sponsored events. When it comes to big money, however, orthopedists and neurosurgeons dominate, collecting 25 percent of the total—even though they represent only 5 percent of the doctors accepting payments, according to the KHN analysis of Open Payments data.

Dr. Charles Rosen, a spine surgeon and co-founder of the advocacy group Association for Medical Ethics, said that he was once offered \$2,000 just to show up and watch an industry-sponsored panel. "It was quite unbelievable," he said.

Rosen said that while he believes a "relatively small number" of surgeons cash whopping industry checks, many do so are influential figures who can "help direct medical care."

Government data confirms that even as several orthopedic and neurosurgeons received tens of millions of dollars in 2019, 81 percent of them got less than \$5,000 from the industry.

Federal officials recently signaled their displeasure with the hefty fees paid to doctors who promote their products to peers, especially at restaurants, entertainment, or sports venues that feature free food and booze, but little educational content. In November, the inspector general at the Department of Health and Human Services issued a special fraud alert that such gestures could violate anti-kickback laws.

Companies that ignore the reporting law can be fined up to \$1 million, though no fines were levied from 2014 through spring 2020, according to a CMS report. That changed in October, when device giant Medtronic agreed to pay the government \$9.2 million to settle allegations that it paid kickbacks to Sioux Falls, South Dakota, neurosurgeon Dr. Wilson Asfora to promote its goods. Officials said the company sponsored more than 100 events at a Brazilian restaurant owned by the surgeon to clinch the sales. Just more than \$1 million of the fine was assessed for failing to report the transactions. A Medtronic spokesperson said the company fired or took other disciplinary action against the sales employees involved and "remains committed to maintaining the highest standards of ethical conduct."

KHN identified four spinal device makers—including SpineFrontier—that have been accused in whistleblower cases of planning to hide consulting payments from the government.

Responding to written questions, a CMS spokesperson said the agency "has multiple formal compliance actions pending which it is unable to discuss further at this time."

But penalties for paying—or accepting—kickbacks often are small compared with the profits they can generate.

"Some people would say if you penalize companies enough, they won't be making these offers," said Genevieve Kanter, an assistant professor at the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine. She said small fines may be chalked up to the "cost of doing business."

The Federation of State Medical Boards doesn't keep data on how often its members discipline doctors for civil kickback offenses, according to spokesperson Joe Knickrehm. The federation has "long advocated for stronger reporting requirements," Knickrehm said.

DOJ officials wouldn't discuss whether they're seeking fines from more surgeons. But in a statement in April 2020, then-U.S. Attorney for the District of Massachusetts Andrew E. Lelling noted that the government will investigate any doctor "who accepts money from a device manufacturer simply for using that company's products."

*Fred Schulte is a John A. Hartford Senior Correspondent on the KHN enterprise team. Elizabeth Lucas, a data editor, specializes in data analysis and reporting for the enterprise team. KHN's coverage of these topics is supported by The John A. Hartford Foundation, Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, and The SCAN Foundation. This article was first published by Kaiser Health News.*



▲ Patient lawsuits allege life-altering injuries from broken surgical hardware.

## FOOD AS MEDICINE

# Foods That Can Cause Depression

What you eat stirs a chain reaction that can affect your mind and mood

KELLY BROGAN

The food you eat directly affects your brain.

Food is the best medicine. All your cells, bones, signaling molecules, and tissues are built from what you eat. For example, dietary fats are the building blocks of brain tissue and help balance hormones. Muscles are built from protein. Different vitamins and minerals are used to create energy and send electrical impulses along neurons so that we can move, think, and feel.

This physiological reality is why a nourishing diet is one of the best strategies against depression.

The food we eat affects both our human cells and the cells of the microbes that live inside us. Numerous studies have shown that food changes the collection of trillions of beneficial bacteria in our guts, called the microbiome. In the name of convenience, flavor, or simply habit, many of us consume inflammatory foods on a daily basis. These increase intestinal permeability (leaky gut), harm the microbiome, and create chronic inflammation that can lead to depression.

Many studies have shown that people who eat an anti-inflammatory diet have significantly lower risks of depression. A recent study that tracked about 6,500 women over the course of 12 years showed that women eating an anti-inflammatory diet had a 20 percent lower risk of developing depression than their peers. These anti-inflammatory diets consist of healthy fats, vitamins, antioxidants, and plenty of high-quality protein. On the other hand, many foods in the standard American diet create chronic inflammation. These five inflammatory foods are the most frequent offenders I see when treating patients for depression.

Many so-called comfort foods deplete the body and depress the mind.



LEON HARRIS/GETTY IMAGES

## Our bodies were not designed to handle the blood sugar and insulin roller coaster that many of us are on.

## Gluten

Gluten is the glue-like protein found in wheat. Grains such as barley, rye, and contaminated oatmeal contain proteins that may be recognized by your body as gluten. Gluten and gluten-like proteins are some of the most inflammatory foods you can eat.

Gluten drives inflammation by irritating the gut and gut microbes, as well as intestinal tissues. This protein causes gut cells to produce a compound called zonulin, leading to intestinal permeability. Gluten, which is a sticky protein, can also interfere with digestion by clumping together food particles. A recent study showed that gluten caused inflammation in the gut cells of

healthy volunteers, suggesting that gluten may cause adverse effects that can lead to depression in anyone.

Gluten consumption has been linked to depression, seizures, headaches, anxiety, nerve damage, and ADHD-like symptoms. Gluten has been linked to over 200 conditions, with neurotoxicity topping the list.

I've seen amazing recoveries from people who ditched the gluten, including myself. Gluten-free diets have helped people heal from many seemingly hopeless diagnoses, including depression.

## Dairy

Believe me, I understand the pleasures of dairy. Growing up in an Italian family, many of my fondest memories involve cheese, ice cream, ricotta, and yogurt. Science supports our attachment to dairy. On a molecular level, dairy contains morphine-like compounds which engage our opiate receptors and create a mild dairy addiction.

A number of studies have shown that casein, a protein found in dairy products,

can drive inflammation. Casein has been linked to several psychiatric conditions, ranging from schizophrenia to depression. Dairy may not be a problem for everyone, and some people can tolerate certain types of dairy, such as raw milk. If you're suffering from symptoms of depression or anxiety, it's worth eliminating dairy for 30 days and seeing how you feel. Some people are able to reintroduce dairy after a month off with no problems, while others totally lose their taste for it and even vomit when trying it again.

People struggling with depression may be overlooking a major contributor—the food in their pantry.

## GMOs

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) have become a staple in the standard American diet. Beyond being a population-wide experiment in manipulating nature's design, these foods have been heavily treated with pesticides and herbicides. Since these chemicals have been designed to kill, it makes sense that they're quite toxic to our own human and microbial cells. Indeed, studies have shown that the common pesticide

Roundup (glyphosate) causes cancer.

Alarmingly, these chemicals have been found in fetuses and breast milk, showing that the toxins used in modern farming are harming future generations. Roundup is toxic to fetal cells and can lead to birth defects. This toxicant disrupts our microbiome, messing with the production of essential amino acids like tryptophan, absorption of minerals, and detoxification in the liver.

In addition to Roundup—which is the primary herbicide sprayed on GMOs such as soy and corn—GMOs also carry a variety of other toxicants. As even non-GMO foods can be contaminated with pesticides, I advise my clients, especially those suffering from depression, to eat organic foods.

## Sugar and Artificial Sugar

Americans love sugar. The average American eats a staggering 164 pounds of sugar per year. Think about that for a moment. Even worse, sugar is highly addictive—the more we eat, the more we want.

Our bodies weren't designed to handle the blood sugar and insulin roller coaster that many of us are on. Here's how it goes: When you eat sugar, whether it's in soda or pasta, your blood sugar jumps and then spikes insulin. When insulin removes blood sugar, you then have a blood sugar crash, and cortisol comes in to compensate and try to move sugar out of storage and back into the bloodstream. Since your brain needs steady sugar to function, this chain reaction has several effects. This process, often called reactive hypoglycemia, causes carb and sugar cravings, which lead to anxiety, headaches, irritability, and, ultimately, depression.

Overall, high blood sugar causes inflammation, which is one of the most significant risk factors for depression. Balancing blood sugar is one of the most effective treatments for depression and anxiety.

Sugar messes with our brain health in three main ways. First, sugar creates inflammation, often by spiking insulin and harming our gut microbiome. Next, sugar derails hormones, ultimately increasing levels of the stress hormone cortisol and disrupting the balance of sex hormones. Finally, sugar starves the brain and damages important structures in our bodies, like cell membranes and blood vessels. All of this can lead to depression.

Because of all the research showing how harmful sugar is, food manufacturers have gotten creative in naming it. Don't be fooled by code names like cane sugar, crystalline fructose, maltodextrin, high-fructose corn syrup—it's all sugar.

It's tempting to swap out sugar for artificial sweeteners, but products like aspartame and sucralose are 'zero calorie' because they can't be digested by the human body. Unfortunately, these chemicals don't just pass through your body with no effect. Artificial sugars confuse



Gluten is linked to depression, headaches, and anxiety.



A dairy protein is linked to several psychiatric conditions.



Roundup damages the microbiome, which affects mood.



Sugar is linked to anxiety, irritability, and depression.



Processed oils are linked to psychiatric disorders like depression.



Processed oils are linked to psychiatric disorders like depression.

hormones and change your microbiome. A high-profile scientific article showed that artificial sugar consumption leads to metabolic syndromes such as insulin resistance and diabetes. Choose sweeteners that your body recognizes, such as honey.

## Vegetable Oils

The standard American diet contains large amounts of unhealthy fats, mostly in the form of commercial vegetable oils. Many processed foods, ranging from store-bought cookies to salad dressing, contain these oils. Vegetable oils include safflower oil, corn oil, sunflower oil, soybean oil, and canola oil. These oils are considered 'processed' because many high-heat and high-pressure steps, as well as chemical solvents, are required to create them. Many of these oils are made from GMOs.

Have you ever seen a canola plant? Canola oil, which has been touted as heart-healthy, is derived from the Canadian rapeseed plant. Recognizing that "rape oil" wasn't a good marketing name, this invention was given a new name as a combination of "Canada" and "ola," which means oil. Today, it's genetically modified by Monsanto to withstand saturation with Roundup herbicide.

Our bodies don't recognize vegetable oils, especially when they're heated and distorted. Consuming vegetable oils triggers inflammation and has been linked to thyroid dysfunction, cardiovascular diseases, nutrient deficiencies, cancer, and psychiatric disorders such as depression.

## So What Do I Eat?!

I recommend that people give themselves two to four weeks to kick the sugar, gluten, and dairy habit. In this time, you can try non-GMO foods and healthier fats like olive oil and lard. People are amazed by how good they feel and how quickly their tastes change.

It can be overwhelming to try to overhaul your diet, and we've been led to seek quick and easy fixes. As someone who's radically changed her diet and outlook on eating, I assure you that the deep commitment to yourself and your health is worth it. When you remove these inflammatory foods, you can more easily tap into your intuition to properly nourish yourself.

For links to the source studies that this article draws on, please visit our website for the online version or visit KellyBroganMD.com

Kelly Brogan, M.D., is a holistic women's health psychiatrist and author of the *New York Times* bestselling book "A Mind of Your Own," the children's book "A Time for Rain," and co-editor of the landmark textbook "Integrative Therapies for Depression." This work is reproduced and distributed with the permission of Kelly Brogan, M.D. For more articles, sign up for the newsletter at [www.KellyBroganMD.com](http://www.KellyBroganMD.com)

# It Takes a Village to Raise a Child in a Screen-Addicted Culture

Screen use can devour your kid's childhood, but you can give it back with help from like-minded parents

MELANIE HEMPE

I was recently invited to a gathering of eight moms who had been to a ScreenStrong workshop at their school. They were learning from each other about how to deal with the screen dilemmas in their homes. We sat together in a cozy den and chatted about what grades our kids were in, what they were doing online, and how hard it was to manage video games and social media. It made me realize again that parents need a close community when facing an issue like managing kids and screen addiction.

## There Is Strength in Numbers

"We have so many questions," one mom said.

"I just need to talk to moms with kids the same age as mine to get advice," said a mom of a 15-year-old girl.

"How do you get your husband on board?" asked another.

Then one mom got teary-eyed and said in a broken voice, "I feel so alone, I am so stuck and have made so many mistakes already. I just have to say that I am so glad to be here."



FIZKES/SHUTTERSTOCK

## When we're influenced by a positive peer group, everyone enjoys the benefits.

A moment of silence was followed by such wonderful support for this mom as everyone agreed that they all felt isolated and needed to be in that room. They needed validation and support from other moms. They needed to know that they were not the only ones having problems managing screens in their homes.

I remembered all of these feelings so well from when my oldest was struggling with screen addiction in the form of video game dependency. I felt isolated and stuck too. I remember asking all my friends for help. I finally found answers when I read "Playstation Nation" written by a mom and dad who had gone through the same struggle.

I kept reading books and becoming more educated myself. Then I went a step further

and gathered a group of moms similar to this group. We were eager to learn more about how to manage the screens in our homes. We met on a regular basis and read books together while our kids played in the backyard. We all decided to establish video-game-free homes and delay giving our kids smartphones. We had peace of mind when our kids played at each other's homes for playdates. A huge burden was lifted and our kids thrived.

Until we formed that community, we felt like we were all on our own islands—paralyzed and privately losing the screen battle in our homes. It was because of our newly formed community that real change began to occur for all of us and we became screen-strong families. Our kids reaped tremendous benefits from growing up screen-free, and we never looked back.

## Why Community Is So Important in Battling Screen Addiction

Humans are born with a strong need to belong to a larger group. It's in our nature to bond with and even mimic others around us. It's a survival skill. When we're influenced by a positive peer group, everyone enjoys the benefits. When we're influenced by a negative peer group, the group suffers.

The need to conform to the larger group is strong—including our screen culture. We change our actions and behaviors based on this culture. For example, even though we know our kids aren't ready for a smartphone, we give in at early ages because the community around us is giving in. We let our 9-year-olds play mature-rated games if our friends allow theirs to.

As we conform to the group, our blind spots grow. We know it's not in our teen's best interest to be on social media, but we give in because we feel powerless to step out from the crowd. We don't want to be isolated

and unusual. Remember the story of the emperor's new clothes? The emperor strode around believing his clothes were invisible to fools, and the crowd cheered him on until one young boy shouted the obvious. Social conformity can make fools of us all.

Raising a child with a budding screen addiction is a lonely path. It is embarrassing to admit that your son plays video games for 6 hours a day, dropped out of his sports, and hates school. It is difficult to share the news that your daughter spends hours every day editing TikTok videos and taking selfies, or worse, that she's sending nude photos. It's hard because these side effects of our dysfunctional screen culture are not openly discussed by our peers. It is also hard because we live in a culture that promotes early and excessive screen use, and we feel that if we were doing our job as parents, our kids would be able to handle it. But no kid can.

So when trouble hits, and it eventually will, we privately seek the help of another community: counselors. Sometimes counselors tell us that "Tech is here to stay; this is our teen's world." "If we don't allow toxic tech, we are a controlling parent, and our kids will hate us." Or, worse, "Parents are in the dark and don't understand their kid's virtual world, so most kids need counselors today." These opinions are not accurate nor are they based in science. As a result, we come up empty-handed, more isolated, and afraid. Meanwhile, our children's problems due to screen addiction grow worse.

## Real Change Happens Best in a Small Group

Are you feeling isolated on your screen journey? Do you feel like your child is the only one without a phone? If you're having trouble finding like-minded peers, it may be time to start your own small com-



Many apps and games are designed to addict their target users—children.

munity. The good news is that you won't need an army of like-minded friends, just a small core group. You can begin by hosting a book club-style meeting in your home and become more informed on the science behind kids and screens. As you meet together to discuss and troubleshoot problems on a regular basis, you'll gain confidence.

Our organization, ScreenStrong, has everything you need to delay toxic screens and begin your journey—from the educational pieces to organizing your own ScreenStrong small groups. Begin by going through the Kids' Brains and Screens mini-course workshop and listen to the ScreenStrong Families Podcast.

The journey will be much easier for your kids if they have some friends to join in with them. So organize some gatherings for them too. Plan regular non-tech activities for your kids' friends. One or two screen strong friends is all your kids really need to be happy as they reboot and transition to remove the tech distractions from their lives.

I recently spoke with a mom of five children who has been able to keep her kids screen free through the high school years. I asked her what her secret to avoiding screen addiction was. She said, "The best thing I did early on was to find one other family to take this journey with us, that made all the difference. Today we have two other families who are as serious as we are." I agree. That advice is priceless.

At the end of our meeting, all the moms felt better. They were empowered and they had made some new friends to call when they needed support. A few had plans to get their boys together after school at a local park. A few more were discussing ideas for getting their daughters together the following weekend. Another group



VICTORIA KOVELINA/SHUTTERSTOCK

was planning a Friday fun night for their middle school kids.

I left that meeting remembering how great it felt to finally have a plan. These moms now have a number to call when they need help, and they can look forward to having kids come to their homes just to have fun and be kids without video games or phones. I'm so happy for this new small group of parents. I got a big smile on my face as I remembered that turning point in the life of our family—we got our kids back. We have never regretted our screen strong decision, and we've never looked back. I don't think they will either.

Melanie Hempe, BSN, is the founder of ScreenStrong, an organization that empowers parents to help their children to gain the benefits of screen media without the toxic consequences of overuse that threaten healthy mental and physical development. The ScreenStrong Solution promotes a strong parenting style that proactively replaces harmful screen use with healthy activities, life skills development, and family connection. This article was originally published on [ScreenStrong.com](http://ScreenStrong.com)

Devices have digitized childhood at the expense of healthy development.

# Why Paying Attention to This Moment Creates Your Best Future

Many of the moments that make up our life slip by in a cloud of extraneous thinking

*Continued from Page 1*

We crave the flow experience, to be fully absorbed into an activity to the point where the separation between doer and doing evaporates and all notions of time disappear. We want, ultimately, to return to a state of oneness we seem to remember at a psychic level.

On a more immediate level, we want to be in the present moment because the distracted experience of not being present feels unsatisfying. It leaves us feeling empty, unfulfilled, and unreal—like ghosts in our own lives, the whole adventure slipping past us.

Profound regret appears for so many when they realize that they've missed out on their life. Not being present is like winning a ticket to the most amazing adventure ever created and choosing not to attend. We want to be present so that we can be in the game while this amazing opportunity is here.

Being in the present moment includes a few fundamental practices. Most of all, it involves experiencing what's happening in our senses right now. It's feeling what our body is feeling, inside and out; seeing what we're seeing, smelling what we're smelling, tasting what we're tasting, and hearing what we're hearing—as it's happening. It means experiencing the feelings and sensations through our body and not our mind's interpretation of them.

Being present means not thinking about our past, nor projecting our future. It means paying attention to this moment as it's arising through our senses without judgment or commentary.

While being present means not being engaged in thinking, it's important to mention that being present doesn't require the absence of thought. Being in the present moment doesn't mean the mind stops producing thoughts, and thoughts in and of themselves are not a problem for presence.

Thoughts happen, they can keep coming no matter how present we are. To be present with thoughts involves being aware of the fact that thoughts are appearing, but (and here's the big but) without identifying with those thoughts. In other words, noticing the presence of thoughts without getting involved in their stories, content, or going down the rabbit hole into which they beckon.

Being in the present moment means directly experiencing what's arising in the body, in the senses, which also includes



You can give yourself permission to show up for the present moment and then the next.

**Deep within us there exists a drive to make something with our moments, to move our life in a positive direction that will create what we want.**

paying attention to what's happening in the mind.

Simultaneously, living in the present moment involves experiencing whatever's happening right now without an agenda for where it needs to lead us. Being present is turning our attention to right now without trying to build this moment into a desired outcome.

Many of us, myself included, struggle with this more subtle aspect of presence. Deep within us, there exists a drive to make something with our moments, to move our life in a positive direction that will create what we want. As we're living this moment, a part of us, sometimes unconsciously, considers the present a stepping stone in the larger path of our life. We live in a linear frame, with the present moment inextricably linked to an imagined future.

This linear frame emits a subtle, sometimes imperceptible energy that keeps us at a slight distance from life. It keeps us doing something with life, making something out of it that will benefit us. With our 'now' perpetually linked to a future, we can't trust that it's safe to truly let go and surrender entirely into this moment, as its own destination.

To be fully in the present moment is to show up without demanding or expecting that it leads to anything else. It's to be here without using this moment to promote any particular identity, or demonstrate that we are or aren't something we imagine.

To be fully present is to relate to each now as a vertical eternity, a moment complete and whole, a hologram of everything. It is to release the idea of now as an usher between the past and future.

To live with profound presence is to trust that life will be enough and we will be enough if we simply show up for it one moment at a time. It's to believe that, like a necklace of pearls, life can be well-lived as a series of present moments strung together. The shift into this sort of presence is about letting go of the idea that we are the directors of our life and we need to use it to achieve a particular agenda.

When we pay attention to our senses

without judgment, interpretation, or agenda, and refrain from engaging in thinking, we start to experience—at a gut, heart, and mind level—that simply taking care of our now is the most skillful and successful means for taking care of our future and ending up where we want. It's much easier than we're conditioned to believe.

Counter to everything we're taught, the best way to create a joyful life is to pay attention to this moment and then the next and then the next. We can only learn this truth through practice. Attending to now is all we ever really need to do.

## Practices for Being Present

### Take a few minutes each day to drop out of your mind and into your body.

Feel the experience of right now as it's happening in your senses. Allow your attention to sync into frame with your body. Sense the felt experience of returning your attention to your own physical being. Feel the sense of relief, calm, joy, or whatever arises as you bring your body your full attention. Feel the "Aaah, yes, I'm here with you. I'm home."

### As you go through your day, notice the subtle drive to live the present moment as a means to an end.

Notice the spur to be or do something with the moment. See if you can drop that agenda. Practice surrendering into now, without any thought or plan for a future. Play with living in this moment as if there really is nowhere else to go. Give yourself permission throughout the day to require only one thing from yourself, that you show up for this now. Approach it as an experiment to discover if taking care of your present moment, and only your present moment, can be enough to generate a good life.

*Nancy Colier is a psychotherapist, interfaith minister, public speaker, workshop leader, and author of "The Power of Off: The Mindful Way to Stay Sane in a Virtual World." For more information, visit [NancyColier.com](http://NancyColier.com)*

**MyPillow**

### Giza Bed Sheets



100% Long Staple Cotton

### 6-Piece Sets Towels



\$44.98 w/Promo Code

### MySleepwear



\$48.99 w/Promo Code

Women's Loungewear Sets



Save 30% Plus 2 FREE MyPillows and 1 FREE set of Giza Dream Bed Sheets with Free shipping!

Save 30% w/Promo Code

**The Complete Coil Mattress Sleep System!**

Thank you Epoch Times customers!

I have my MyPillow Premium pillows at the lowest price ever.

Also, use the promo code below to get deep discounts on all my other MyPillow products!

- Mike Lindell

**Premiums**  
**\$29.98**

w/Promo Code

**Lowest Price Ever!**



800-795-5289 [mypillow.com](http://mypillow.com)

USE PROMO CODE: **EPOCH99**

Rates Expire on:  
07/31/2021