

## HEALTH

## Musician Nenad Bach is transforming the lives of people with Parkinson's through ping pong

"I see the world that it could be rather than what it is."

By Tod Perry

07.06.22



Image courtesy of Meta's Community Voices film series

Nenad Bach, founder of Ping Pong Parkinson's.

Nenad Bach, a Croatian American recording artist, and peace activist has led an impressive life propelled by his inspiring optimism. As a musician, he's performed alongside Bono and Luciano Pavarotti and took the stage at Woodstock '94. He's recorded with legendary artists such as Garth Hudson and Rick Danko from The Band and The Grateful Dead's Vince Welnick.

As an activist, he was highlighted by the United Nations for his World Peace in One Hour campaign.

But in 2010 his life came to a temporary halt after being diagnosed with Parkinson's, a nervous system disorder affecting movement. According to the Michael J. Fox Foundation, it's a progressive disease that slowly worsens over time.

Over a million people in the U.S. and 6 million worldwide are affected by the disease.

After being diagnosed with Parkinson's, Bach was invited by a friend to play ping pong. The next day he couldn't believe how much better he felt. His cognitive abilities improved, his tremors were less intense, it was easier for him to walk and talk and he felt a greater "desire to live," he told Upworthy.

Bach immediately made ping pong part of his wellness routine. When he can't get to a physical ping pong table. No problem. Quest by Meta allows Bach to play ping pong with players around the world through a virtual reality headset and touch

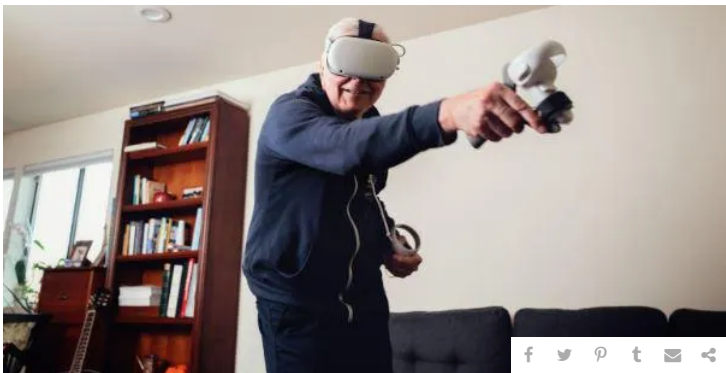


Image courtesy of Meta's Community Voices film series

"Playing ping pong to me means freedom. Free of past. Free of future. Once you observe the rotating, spinning ball in the air, you don't think about anything else," he said in the short film, "Nenad, Who Plays Ping Pong."

Even Bach's doctors noted the reversal in his Parkinson's symptoms. "They told me to 'continue doing what you are doing because it is obvious that you are improving,'" he told Upworthy.

Bach was excited to spread the word about his amazing transformation but he had a hard time convincing people. But, ever the eternal optimist, he kept pushing forward and on March 1, 2017, he held his first Ping Pong Parkinson's sessions and "never looked back."

This led him to create Ping Pong Parkinson (PPP) a non-profit organization based at the Westchester Table Tennis Center in Pleasantville, New York.

The organization believes that playing ping pong increases neuroplasticity in the brain which fosters the creation of neurons and connections through physical exercise. Around 25 to 30 "Pongers," as they call themselves, show up at the table tennis center in Pleasantville each session and Bach believes there are over 1,000 Pongers across the world.

Over the past seven years, Bach has seen people transform through ping pong. Their "facial expression changes from when they arrive 'til they leave," he told Upworthy. "Plus some people start walking again," he says.

Bach plays ping pong two to three times a week, either at the center or on Quest.



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Quest is a great way for Bach to keep his ping pong skills sharp without having to leave the house which was invaluable during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. He also finds that playing with people from other countries helps him learn new techniques and strategies. "I learned a lot from others. Like my friend Lamine from Africa. He taught me how to play with different hands on a regular basis and challenge my brain," Bach told Upworthy.

Bach doesn't tell other Quest players that he has Parkinson's unless they ask about the PPP at the end of his username. The virtual reality technology has caught on with his fellow Pongers, who've already had a PPP World Championship played virtually over the system.

The musician is now back to playing guitar again, thanks in part to his love of ping pong. Recently, he recorded a song about his unique obsession.

#### Nenad Bach I Love Ping Pong Official Music Video



Nenad Bach I Love Ping Pong Official Music Video

[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

PPP's goal is to help people with Parkinson's improve their health and find greater joy in life. But Bach also hopes the organization will also promote the inclusion of people with neurodegenerative disorders in the Paralympic Games.

Every facet of Bach's life has been defined by optimism. As a musician, Bach has written uplifting songs with a wry sense of humor. As a peace activist, he has been recognized by one of the most influential institutions in the world. As a humanitarian athlete, he has worked to help himself and others slow the process of a debilitating neurological disease.

"I see the world that it could be rather than what it is," he told Upworthy.

To keep up with Bach and his fellow Pongers, follow the Ping Pong Parkinson page on Facebook.

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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION

EDUCATION

## Experts of science and religion come together to talk psychedelics in a free online series

By Heather Wake

07.19.22

Image courtesy of GTUx

In depth conversations held by experts and scholars. All at no cost.

We are living in a renaissance of psychedelic research, no doubt about it...particularly when it comes to medical treatment. Psilocybin and MDMA are being used to alleviate depression and post traumatic stress disorder. Ayahuasca retreats continue to become more popular as healing centers. Even my go-to yoga spot now offers a "Microdose Flow Night." What a time to be alive.

And yet, as plant medicine makes its way back into the mainstream of our modern world, traditional spiritual wisdom often seems to get lost, even dismissed, from the conversation. But what if there were a way to blend new and old ways of thinking?



psychedelics, psychedelics and religion, gtux

All images courtesy of GTUx

Graduate Theological Union (GTU) is a world leader in the study of religion and theology. Their new virtual learning program, GTUx, is a vibrant home for the exploration of spirituality and activism through online learning opportunities, all inspired by experts of spiritual, ethical, cultural and social fields.

GTUx recently launched “[Psychedelics and Religion](#)”—a first-of-its-kind online program that explores the inherent (but often overlooked) relationship between spirituality and science in hallucinogens. Plus, it’s [completely free to sign up](#).

Psychedelics and Religion Part I | [gtu.edu/x](https://gtu.edu/x)

[www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

GTUx’s “[Psychedelics and Religion, Part 1](#)” has nine easy-to-watch modules offering in-depth conversations from leading scholars in both religious and medical fields, including Michael Pollan, Celina De Leon, Ayize Jama-Everett, and many others.

The content is practical for a general audience, and particularly for those interested in using plant medicine in holistic ways.

Brian Anderson, Assistant Clinical Professor at UCSF General Hospital, and one of the GTUx speakers considers it paramount to incorporate spiritual knowledge from ancient practices into the medical use of psychedelics. This is important even if the person taking these substances doesn’t label themselves as religious.

“Survey data suggests that people who identified as atheist or agnostic after having a high dose psychedelic experience might change...having some form of new spiritual beliefs or convictions that they did not have before. This is something I’ve

“mystical” realm. It’s sort of like being dropped into a brand new country without a map or translator.

Religious scholars, however, are fluent in mystical language. Dr. Sam Shonkoff, Taube Family Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies at the GTU, and panel leader, hopes that their contribution might rekindle a sense of “awe” into our modern view of psychedelics, in the fullest sense of the term.

“There’s a really desperate need to slow down and think carefully and critically about what it means to tap into these very powerful substances that are associated with very rich cultural traditions and to not take that lightly,” he explained.



Dr. Sam Shonkoff, Taube Family Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies at the GTU

“I think that people who study the histories and phenomenologies of religion and spirituality are importantly situated to help us think more carefully and critically about where we are and where we’re going in relation to psychedelics.”

Participants of “Psychedelics and Religion” will learn about psychedelics in relation to mysticism, mental health, and chaplaincy, and how to better integrate their profound transformational experiences into everyday life. By the end of the program, they might discover that when it comes to plant medicine, science and spirituality actually do complement one another.

Part 1 of this free online offering is already available, which you can check out by [clicking here](#). It’s guaranteed to be a good trip.

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MENTAL HEALTH



# Drew Barrymore's unbridled joy over simple things holds a lesson for us all

Her zest for life is infectious.

By Annie Reneau

07.19.22

@boyinquestion/Twitter

Drew Barrymore's joy is contagious.

Drew Barrymore's enthusiasm for the simple things is adorable, but it's even more delightful when you know what she's experienced in her life.

The actress got her start as a young child actor in the 1980s in films such as "E.T." and "Firestarter" and has had quite an extraordinary journey. Her struggles with drug addiction started at a startlingly young age, getting her blacklisted in Hollywood at the age of 12 due to her marijuana and cocaine habits. Her issues with her mother, who institutionalized Barrymore at 13 and from whom Barrymore emancipated herself at age 14, have also been well documented.

Barrymore, now 47, has come a long way since then. She has managed to repair her relationship with her mother, free herself from drug addiction and give up alcohol completely as well. She has two children of her own, a successful production company, a cruelty-free makeup line, a few books under belt and her own talk show.

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# American Medical Association president explains how abortion laws are already causing harm

'These decisions turn out to be quite complicated in a lot of instances.'

By Annie Reneau

07.19.22

Photo by Gayatri Malhotra on Unsplash

Abortion is a part of reproductive healthcare.

The Supreme Court decision to [overturn Roe v. Wade](#) has created a ripple effect of confusion and frustration in the medical field as doctors struggle to navigate the nuances of providing lifesaving care to patients under new state laws prohibiting abortion.

Who would have guessed that legislators criminalizing reproductive medicine—especially when they have no medical training or expertise in what can impact a pregnancy—could backfire? Who would have thought that politicians making decisions about what healthcare a person can and can't receive could lead to increased risks for patients?

Dr. Jack Resneck Jr., the president of the American Medical Association (AMA), knows more than the vast majority of us about why medical care should be left to medical professionals and the harm that stringent abortion laws can lead to.

"These decisions turn out to be quite complicated in a lot of instances," Resneck [told journalist Chris Hayes](#). "So trying to make hard and fast rules in legislative bodies that apply the same across the board is just incredibly dangerous for patients."

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# Jon Stewart's hilariously savage 3-minute rant against Chicago-style pizza never gets old

"It's not pizza, it's a casserole."

By Tod Perry

07.19.22

via Foix Productions/YouTube

Jon Stewart's rant against Chicago-style pizza.

In late 2013, the cities of New York and Chicago were embroiled in a feud over which one had the taller building. At the time, Chicago's Willis Tower was the tallest skyscraper in the country, but it was challenged by the newly built One World Trade Center in Manhattan.

The One World Trade Center building was erected in the footprint of the World Trade Center.

The Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat determined that the [One World Trade Center building](#) was taller because it had a spire on top that was part of the building's permanent architecture. Whereas the Willis Building was topped with antennae deemed to be a nonpermanent part of the structure.

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JON STEWART



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