

ZEN

FINDING PEACE
• AND HAPPINESS IN
• STRESSFUL TIMES



As I was performing surgery in the OR recently, a medical student approached me to let me know that I had delivered her a quarter of a century ago. Although I've been delivering babies of the babies that I delivered for several years, this was another milestone to remind me that time flies. This realization of the aging process might lead to anxiety and stress but should bring joy, peace, and calmness...Zen.

Stressful times surround us with political division, war with Ukraine and its uncertainty, cost of living escalation, unethical and malicious competitors, sick family and friends, and crime in our hometown that we haven't seen before. With these added stressors in life, prioritizing personal well-being and happiness is of utmost importance.

Traditional management of stressors includes maintaining communication with loved ones and ensuring basic needs of food, hydration, restful sleep, outdoor exercise and mindfulness with meditation are being met. All these management strategies are important, but the last basic need of mindfulness and meditation is often overlooked.

Finding joy and happiness requires mindfulness in which we are fully present and aware of what we're experiencing without judgment and interpretation. One's own actions are guided by intuition rather than by conscious effort. In the zen of gardening, becoming zen requires realization that you become one with the plants, lost in the rhythm of the tasks at hand. In the zen of surgery, becoming zen requires realization that you become one with the patient with the meticulous repetitive rhythm of the tasks at hand. In the zen of sports, becoming zen requires realization that you become one with the sport, focused solely on the ball, puck, bar or beam in front of you. A zen life is filled with simplicity, mindfulness, calmness, while experiencing life directly.

Everyone has experienced life directly without knowledge of zen. The simplicity of staying present and non-judgmental in times of uncertainty is a learned talent. Focus on the present. Be mindful of what brings joy and a feeling of peace. Find the zen.

As I age gracefully, I remember arriving in Rapid City as the first female OB/GYN, constructing a path for professional women to care for women in the Black Hills. I remember delivering more than 8,451 babies, small miracles over time. I remember performing surgery that produced life-changing comfort and peace for my patients and colleagues. I remember countless clinical encounters of providing simple insight or medication that results in life-changing happiness and joy. I remember my aspiring children, striving for perfection in all they do. I remember the unrelenting support of my family and friends who have always been present. I remember experiencing life directly, and the journey that brings peace and happiness.

I'm humbled by the opportunities that allowed me to deliver the babies of the babies that I delivered so many years ago. I'm grateful to learn this journey is about using our talents to help others. We must find peace and happiness. As we continue on this journey of life navigating these stressful times, we must find joy in the simple things and that state of zen.



7236 Jordan Drive,
Suite 100A, Rapid City, SD



Rochelle Christensen
MD, FACOG
ACOG District VI Secretary
ACOG Past SD Chair