

DIY biohacker community gathers to compare implants as they seek cybernetic reality

The annual Grindfest meetup sees biohackers display implants and augmentations.

As magician and biohacker Anastasia Synn approaches her home, she tries to open the front door and finds it locked. She gently grazes her hand onto the lock, and suddenly she's inside. This is no magic trick. Synn has a microchip implanted into the web of her hand acting as a digital key to her home, and she gave ABC News a demonstration. It's just the first of 52 implants she's had surgically placed, making her a Guinness World Record holder for most technological implants in the body.

ABC News met Synn and other biohackers at the May 2024 Grindfest, an annual meetup of biohackers that's been happening for the last decade in Tehachapi, California. One attendee said she was an interface designer, another said they had a master's in human anatomy. They all had the same mission, to merge with machines. Some referred to themselves as "transhumanists."

"A transhumanist is someone who has decided that they want to transcend what humanity is capable of at this time," Synn told ABC News. "So whether that be with installing electronics under your skin so that you can unlock your front door, or taking nootropics to live longer and stronger, they all sort of fall underneath the umbrella of transhumanism."

That thinking is the reason for the name of the event.

"My hot take on the implants is to proceed with caution. There's risk of infection leaving it in the body, risk of inflammation, scar formation, long term effects," ABC News Medical Correspondent Dr. Darien Sutton said. "And then what do you do with that device when you want to get it removed? What happens when there are complications that we simply can't treat because we have devices in our body and we can't properly diagnose because the imaging is not compatible?"

Synn acknowledged the tradeoff.

"I have to sacrifice some modern medical technologies because of my implants, so I can no longer get an MRI," she said.

Synn was married to fellow magician The Amazing Johnathan, who died in 2022. Some of her implants serve as memories. Using her phone, she scanned a microchip installed above her heart.

"This is the moment I married my best friend," her phone declared, before their wedding video began to play.

She then scanned a part of her arm and his memorial service began to play. Wiping away tears, she explained one implant is a heart-shaped locket containing his ashes. It's also a magnet so "he can perform his favorite magic trick from the great beyond."

Observing other grinders in attendance, one man swiped his ring-adorned hand across his face and his prosthetic eye glowed with a green laser. He told ABC News he has several prosthetic eyes for different occasions.

Another attendee, Asya Davydova Lewis, showed off her colorful nails where she attached magnets and microchips as a way to test them out before implanting them beneath her skin. They had varying functions, including an NFC chip that goes to her website and an LED light.

Quinn Mooney, an electrical engineering student known in the group as Moon Man, has a magnet implanted at the end of his finger that he says helps him to identify different wires in his job. He said his current project is designed to help his diabetic father.

"I'm trying to do blood glucose using vibrations with a small passive implant," Mooney said.

"This is biohacker Disneyland," Lepht Anonym said. "This is the place where you can have some wacky idea and someone will go 'No actually we can make that real and we'll do it now.'"

Nathan Rousseau Smith, abc news, March 27, 2025