‘I’m actually present in my daily life and that’s incredible’: Breakthrough brain implant treats both epilepsy and OCD

American Amber Pearson used to wash her hands until they bled, terrified by the idea of contamination from everyday items, a debilitating result of her obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD).

But the repetitive rituals of her condition are largely consigned to memory, thanks to a revolutionary brain implant that is being used to treat both her epilepsy and her OCD.

“I’m actually present in my daily life and that’s incredible,” the 34-year-old told AFP.

“Before, I was just constantly in my head worrying about my compulsions.”

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Pearson’s doctors offered her the 32-millimeter (just over an inch-long) device to treat her debilitating epileptic seizures, confident it would be able to detect the activity that causes the episodes and deliver a pulse to interfere with them.

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Doctors worked with Pearson to see exactly what happens in her brain when she gets trapped in an obsessive loop.

The technique involved exposing her to known stressors – in this case, seafood – and recording the electrical markers.

In this way, they could effectively isolate the brain activity associated with her OCD.

They could then configure her implant so that it would react to that specific signal.

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