
An Epileptic Seizure

Epileptic seizures: when the neurons in the brain become disrupted by a sudden, large excitement of surrounding neurons producing abnormal messages. I knew none of this when I was diagnosed with epilepsy at the age of four years old. All I understood was I was repeatedly waking up in a hospital bed with my family over me. This disease wasn't something you could prepare for, rather it would flare up at seemingly the most unwanted times.

The nature of this disease made me seem perfectly normal to many of the other kids, little did they know that I was being terrorized by my brain without even knowing it. As I became slightly older people would ask me if I remembered what happened during my seizures and I would quietly respond that I didn't. Questions like these made me fear I had something wrong with me and that I'd never experience that childhood euphoric feeling of "fitting in." The first time I had a seizure I remember lying in bed watching television with my parents. I would continue to lie in bed that day, only it wasn't in my house. Instead four-year-old me lied quietly in a hospital bed, lullabied by the sound of the heart monitor. It was then I infamously recalled hearing the word "epilepsy" come out of the doctor's mouth. I had no idea what it meant for me, all I could understand was that something wasn't right. After this first incident I was prescribed medication I later learned was called "Depakote." This is a drug that helps alter chemistry in your brain tissue in order to prevent seizures. Although this may sound extremely helpful, it came with some unintended side effects. Not to mention, it was a large pill prescribed to a young girl so every night my mother would have to crush it up on top of yogurt or ice cream to serve to me. Aside from that and upon looking back at my childhood I realized this medicine was the reason many teachers described me as a "day-dreamer."

Since this medication alters brain chemistry, it can cause confusion and lack of concentration. I found it difficult to pay attention in class, retain information and sometimes to even hold conversations. This made academics a lot harder for me and forced me to have to work harder than other kids in order to get the same results. I didn't know this was a side effect of the medicine, so again I felt defeated and as if I wasn't normal. However, I didn't let any of this stop me. I knew that if I ever wanted to beat this disease that I'd have to stay strong and do what was needed. I continued taking the medication I hated so much. I continued attending EEG screenings to map electroactivity in my brain, which forced me to stay up all night. I continued to study harder and try my hardest to focus to maintain quality grades. Most importantly though, I continued to keep my head up. I knew I needed to stay positive during this situation in order to make the best of it and I really feel like I have accomplished that.

I thankfully "grew out" of my epileptic seizures at the age of thirteen despite doctors telling me that "there was a high medical chance I wouldn't beat it." This meant I couldn't drive a car, get my license or operate any sort of machinery. I would have to live the rest of my life knowing there was a chance that I would have one of those unpredictable seizure episodes. However, through my dedication to beat this disease and maybe a little bit of luck, epilepsy wasn't able to defeat me. Honestly, in a way I'm thankful to have gone through an abnormal childhood experience because it taught me the values of hard work and perseverance. Most importantly, it taught me to be humble and thankful about everything I have been given in my life.