

Living Well With Epilepsy

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Learning Objectives

By the end of this session the learner will be able to :

- Identify the impact and historical span of epilepsy over past eras and cultures
- Define living well with epilepsy
- Pinpoint the Challenges to living well with Epilepsy
- Explain the physical, emotional, situational and environmental adjustments necessary to live well with Epilepsy

Background

- For centuries, epilepsy has been seen across all classes, cultures, and nationalities.
- Affects those that are highly celebrated as well as those that are not
- Known to challenge those who are highly educated as well as those that are not

Implications?

- There are probably many more famous people that were and are affected by epilepsy
- Many may not reveal it in public because of the ongoing stigma associated with the condition

Living Well With Epilepsy: Defined

- To know
- To utilize
- To consistently & collaboratively manage

Living well with Epilepsy: Characteristics

- Knowledge
- Motivation
- Determination

Living well with Epilepsy: Applying the Characteristics

- Physiology
- Personal Manifestation
- Personal/effective/ Management

Living well with Epilepsy: Understanding Challenges

- Unpredictable
- Life changing
- Management

Living well with Epilepsy: Emotional Adjustments

- Denial
- Fear
- Isolation

Living well with Epilepsy: Physical Adjustments

- Honing in on Body Cues
 - Smells
 - Sensations

Living well with Epilepsy: Physical Adjustments (cont.)

- Consumption
- Food
- Drink

Living well with Epilepsy: Activity Adjustments

- Physical activity
 - Exercise

Living well with Epilepsy: Situational Adjustments

- Avoidance
 - Emotional stressors
 - Physical stressors

Living well with Epilepsy: Adjustments at Home

- most common place for seizure-related accidents
- bathing and cooking place the person with seizures at greater risk for injury

Living well with Epilepsy: Bathroom Hazards

- Mirrors
- Sinks
- Shower doors
- Bathtubs
- Hard floors

Living well with Epilepsy: Bathroom Alternatives

- Door locks vs. signs
- Showers vs. bath tubs

Living well with Epilepsy: Kitchen Hazards

- Ovens
- Burners
- Sharps/ knives

Living well with Epilepsy: Kitchen Alternatives

- Food preparation
- Cooking
- Cleanup

Living well with Epilepsy: Work Environment Adjustments

- Discuss potential risks
 - Job Responsibilities
 - Environmental
 - Equipment

Living well with Epilepsy:

Driving Adjustments

- Do not drive until you and your medical team have determined that it is safe to do so
- notify your physician if your seizure condition has deteriorated.
- Be aware of your state and national laws about seizures and driving.

Having epilepsy does not mean that you:



You can!

cannot live an extraordinary life

cannot live a full typical life

cannot follow your dreams

have a mental handicap

Having Epilepsy and living well with It, Does Mean That:

- The individual must possess a willingness to learn about their diagnosis
- The individual must have positive expectations
- The individual must be confident in their own capabilities of managing and maintaining positive behaviors & outcomes
- The individual must be willing to make lifestyle adjustment

Pearls

- Essential steps in living well with epilepsy are to:
 - gain an understanding of the diagnosis
 - have the desire and know how to properly manage Epilepsy
 - make necessary adjustments or lifestyle changes
 - When swimming, people with epilepsy should always be accompanied by an informed companion.
 - Should you feel a seizure coming on while driving, it's best to stop in the road and remain in the car. Pull over only if you are sure you can make it safely.
 - It is not legal for an employer to ask about disabilities, medical conditions or what medications you are taking.

Pearls

- Should you disclose your epilepsy on a job application? Generally, no.
- Employers are, however, allowed to ask whether you have any conditions that would prevent you from fulfilling the duties of the job, and if you do, you should answer honestly.
- For discriminatory issues visit the Job Accommodation Network's web site at www.jan.wvu.edu.
- Check with your Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to find out about the law in your state, or check the Epilepsy Foundation website at: www.epilepsyfoundation.org/answerplace/Legal/transit/drivelaw

Resources

- Many people with epilepsy are able to live active lives, and require few to no restrictions on their lifestyle. If there are limitations in performing activities that are important to you strategize and think creatively to participate.
- Community associations may also have volunteers that can assist you with tasks.
- Within the Veteran Health system we have designated Epilepsy Centers of excellence located in all four regions of the united states. In addition, the American Academy of Neurology and the Epilepsy Foundation may also provide listings of physicians who specialize in this area.

Resource Links

- Epilepsy Foundation:
epilepsynorcal.org
- Family Caregiver Alliance:
caregiver.org
- www.epilepsy.va.gov

Questions



References

- Hughes J (2005). A reappraisal of the possible seizures of Vincent van Gogh. *Epilepsy & Behavior* 6 (4): 504–10.
- Reynolds E (2001). The impact of epilepsy on Graham Greene. *Epilepsia* 42 (8): 1091–3.
- Chowdhury FA, Nashef L, Elwes RD. (2008) Misdiagnosis in epilepsy: a review and recognition of diagnostic uncertainty. *Eur J Neurology*, 15:1034- 42.