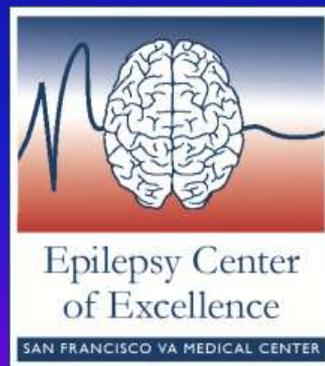


Epilepsy: Coping With Seizures and Stress

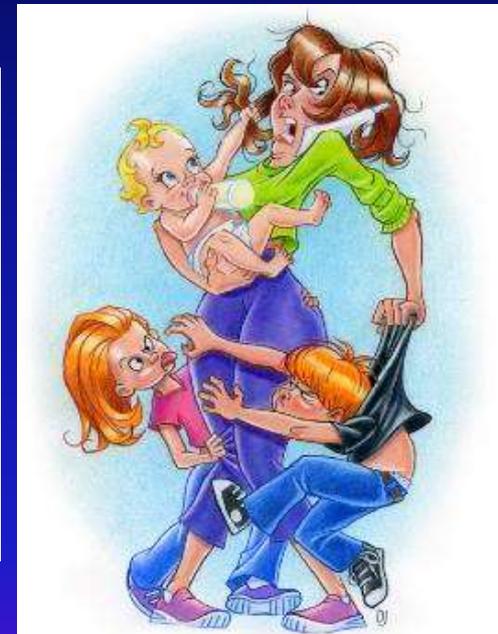
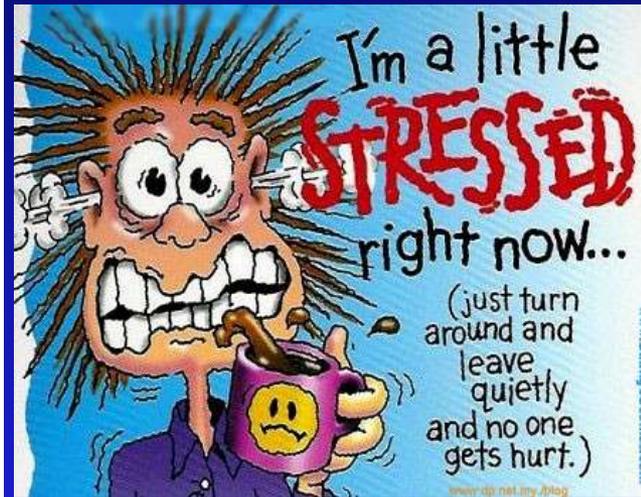
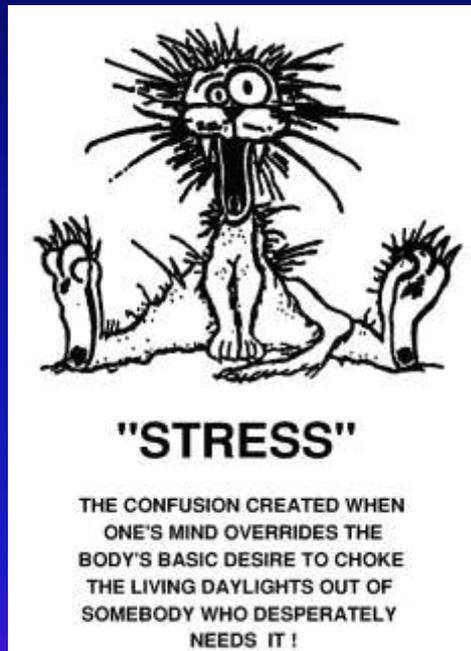
GILBERT A.W. WOO, MS, MFTI
MENTAL HEALTH THERAPIST



Outline

1. Let's talk about stress!
2. Mind and body
3. Emotional health
4. Seizure Stress Cycle
5. Stress management
6. Mental health support
7. Q & A
8. Jeanette Hilgert, LCSW
Caregiver Support Coordinator
SFVA Social Work Services

Raise your hand if you know what this feels like...



Common Stressors of Having Epilepsy

Life can be a daily struggle.

Seizures happen anytime / anywhere.

Feels like a constant state of alert / hyperarousal.

Affects loved ones (family, partners, children, parents, friends, etc.)

Body hurts.

Head hurts.

Taking medications.

Side effects.

Lack of control.

Lack of independence.

Can't drive.

Can't work.

Can't go to school.

Can't concentrate / focus.

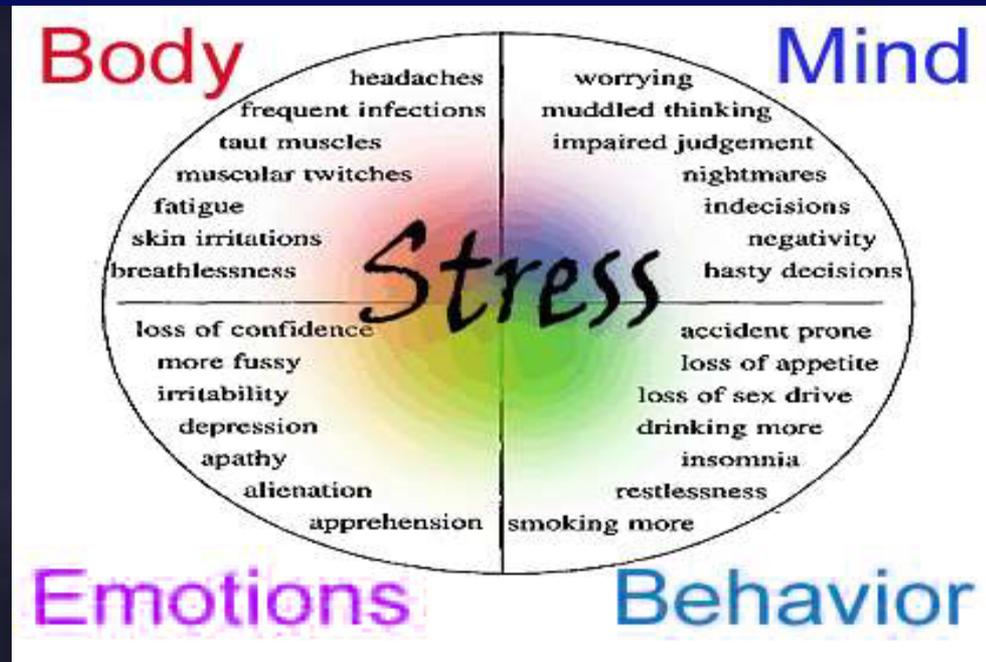
Bad memory.

Loss of energy.

Loss of motivation.

And many many many more...

Mind and Body



True or False?

People with epilepsy and seizures are more prone to psychological, behavioral, and emotional problems.

Emotional Health

The most common mental health disorders experienced by people living with epilepsy:

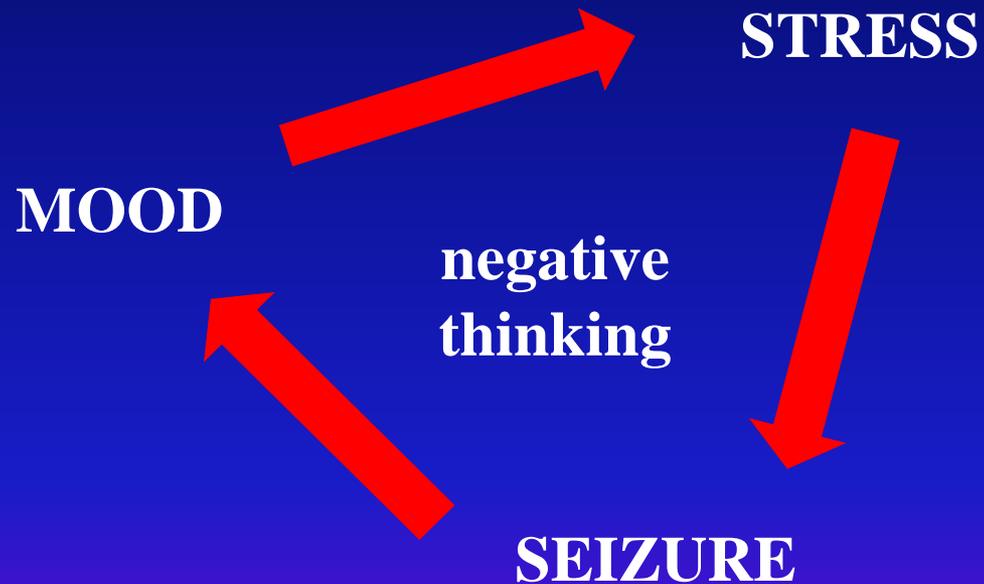
- 1) Depression
- 2) Dysthymia
- 3) Anxiety
- 4) Bipolar disorder
- 5) ADHD (more prominent in children and adolescents)
- 6) Personality disorders

WHY?

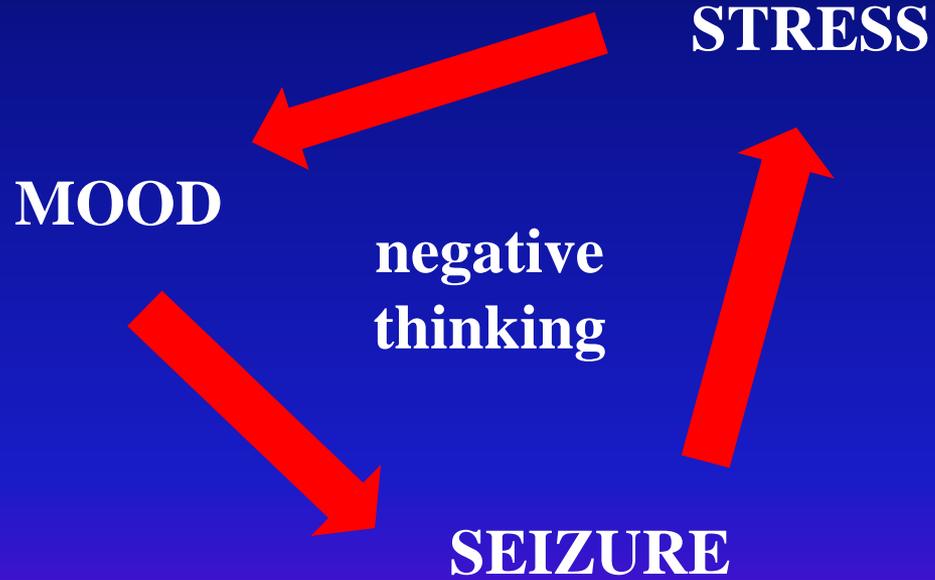
3 Likely Answers

- 1) Epilepsy and seizures may change the way certain brain chemicals, neurotransmitters (e.g., serotonin), function. These neurotransmitters are directly responsible for feelings, emotions, and behaviors.
- 2) Medications
- 3) **Stress** (personal, home, family, relationships, children, financial, work, school, etc.) can lead to unhealthy coping behaviors

Seizure Stress Cycle (SSC)



SSC



Stress Management

-THE BASICS!

- Sleep / Rest
- Physical Activity / Exercise
- Nutrition / Diet

-Identify your triggers

- What tends to cause your seizures?
- What (or who) tends to bring about stress in your life?

Stress Management

-Relaxation exercises

- Deep breathing

- Somatic (Body) techniques

 - Yoga, Tai Chi, Progressive Relaxation, Massage, Acupressure, etc.

-Mindfulness techniques

- Meditation

- Mental imagery

 - Pleasant relaxing scene at the start of your seizure to make them less intense

- Self-awareness

 - Check in with your inner dialogue; be present in the here and now only

Stress Management

-Create a daily/weekly routine and stick to it

-Organize your life

-Set priorities; set short-term and long-term goals

-Manage your time/schedule

-Make lists, keep a calendar, plan ahead

-Positive Outlook

-Recognize the things you can't change and don't focus on them

-Recognize the things you have already changed and can change

-Sense of humor

-Help support others

-Join a group/club or volunteer

-Take up a hobby that you're good at and enjoy doing

Mental Health Support

ASK FOR SUPPORT WHEN YOU NEED IT!

- Talk to someone about...
 - your stress, problems, worries
 - the disappointment you feel after a seizure
 - your frustration at having to pace yourself slower than others
 - the feeling of not being “normal” like everyone else
 - the anger or irritation you get from having to take all of your medications and their side effects

DON'T BE AFRAID TO GET PROFESSIONAL HELP!

- Psychotherapy (counseling)
- Support groups

Psychotherapy

Types

Psychoanalytic (Freud), psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioral, mindfulness-based, short-term, long-term, etc.

Modalities

Individual (child, adolescent, adult), couples, family, group

Counselors

-Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Marriage and Family Therapist, Psychologist, Psychiatrist

*****Find the right counselor for YOU*****

Group Support

Living With Epilepsy

Open to all adults with epilepsy *and* any caregivers, families, and friends.

Every 2nd Monday of the month

11am-12:30pm

SFVA Epilepsy Center

This Monday 9/12

Take Home Message

People living with epilepsy can lead a **healthy** and **happy** life!

- Think positive
- Build a supportive environment
- Practice self-care
- Be patient with yourself; change doesn't happen over night

Thank you!

