

The Most Important Secrets You Must Learn in Order to Live a Happy, Healthy and Productive Life with Epilepsy

by Stacey Chillemi



Learn the strategies for overcoming myths and stigmas surrounding epilepsy by developing your inner strengths and confidence. Life doesn't have to end because you have epilepsy. It happens to be true that "where there is a will there is a way." Life is what you make it. Just because we have epilepsy does not prevent us from living a happy, healthy and productive life. No one in this life is perfect—no one on this planet is perfect. Everyone has flaws. The trick is not to dwell on our imperfections, but rather to focus on the positive qualities we each have and use them to better ourselves and the people around us.

The Obstacles People with Epilepsy Face

Most people who have epilepsy feel they're different from others who do not have epilepsy. It's hard enough physically to have a seizure (the draining effect it has on your body), but emotionally, it's devastating: the anger we feel (why me?); the sadness in your soul that it leaves you with. The limitations epilepsy puts on your life can lead to a sense of despair and helplessness. There are restrictions on your life in so many ways: things you must do (taking your medications, seeing your doctors, the EEGs, etc.), the limitations (the things your doctors ask you not to do or take part in because it can

endanger your life and the lives of others). Living with epilepsy can be extremely difficult because of the daily obstacles we face. Many individuals feel alone and powerless—they feel no one understands what they are going through and many are ashamed to talk to others about their condition. All these things can hurt your confidence and self-esteem among other things.

Myths and Misconceptions Surrounding Epilepsy

Many people still have misconceptions about epilepsy even though tremendous efforts have been made to educate society about the disorder. I have been in situations many times when I've mentioned that I have epilepsy and I encounter dramatic looks of fear or silly comments (common myths) about epilepsy. I don't get upset anymore. I do not become embarrassed or feel ashamed of my condition. What I do is educate them. I let them know what epilepsy is and I correct them, because unless we advocate and educate society changes will not happen.

Find the Key to Unlock Your Strength and Self-Confidence

The key is to reprogram your thoughts and way of thinking...mind over matter. It is amazing what you can accomplish if you simply believe in yourself.

Today, I want to discuss with you strategies and

techniques that I've used to build up my inner strength. I had one goal in mind—I wanted to move forward in life. I wanted to experience a new beginning, living life to my highest potential and proving to the rest of the world that people with epilepsy are just like anyone else. We can accomplish our goals and dreams with a positive perspective on life if we believe in ourselves.

Walk with Me on the Road to Recovery

Focus on now, the present. Say to yourself, "OK, what can I do now to strengthen myself as a person?" Focus attention on your strengths and positive qualities to accomplish your goals and dreams—and I am positive you will.

The future is waiting, so make the most of today and plan on how you are going to reach your goals. If you do not give up and you keep trying to reach for those stars, one day you will see them right in the palm of your hand, and then my friend, you can say, "I kept trying, I did not give up and I did it. I DID IT!"

Learn How to Boost Your Self-Esteem

Developing high self-esteem goes hand-in-hand with cultivating inner strength and boosting your belief in yourself.

You need to value yourself. You have qualities and talents that can make the world a bet-



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ter place. And, these talents and qualities will reveal a person you never knew existed once you let them flourish.

Everyone has special gifts

Everyone is talented

Everyone can achieve his or her dreams

The future is still to come

The present is now

The past is behind us

Your mind, body and soul hold special gifts and talents

Your mind is the workshop where you cultivate all your thoughts, dreams and wishes

Your spirit is where you hold all your strength and courage

Your soul is the spiritual body where your emotions live inside you

And your heart is the key that locks them all together as one

You have inner strength,

Courage, Wisdom, Faith, Hope

Use your gifts to your advantage

Do not let them sit and rot away

Building self-esteem is a first step towards happiness and a better life. Everyone has some degree of low self-esteem; everyone has some degree of insecurity. Working on building a high self-esteem builds your

confidence in yourself. If you have self-confidence, you will respect yourself more as a person. You will see huge improvements in your life, your relationships with your loved ones, friends and coworkers. You will be able to achieve your goals in life and obtain true happiness. You were born to be someone special. Do not let the fact that you have epilepsy stop you.

Change Isn't Easy

It is not easy to change. Improving the quality of your life is a difficult task. Most people fear change. We become accustomed to the way we are now in the present, and we fear what change will bring. However, I assure you that you will be happier and the new you will be someone that you are going to be very proud of once you achieve that change.

In life, you really do get back what you give. The same is true of change. The more you push yourself to change, the better you will become as a person. You need to have determination. It will take time, though you will be able to see improvements just by making small changes in your life. In order to make life-long changes, you need to believe in yourself and work hard to create the improvements you desire.

You Can Do It-High Self-Esteem Is Just Around the Corner

The first stage of developing strength is learning to love yourself and your life. Be grateful for the things you have in your life. Let go of all those angry emotions inside—holding on to anger will not help you, it will only hurt you. The past is the past; you can only change the present. Love yourself enough to accept your faults and put the past behind you; focusing on your flaws will only bring unhappiness. You need to think positively and focus on your accomplishments and all the good things in your life.

To live with a happy state of mind, you need to have high self-esteem. You need to feel that you are no different from anyone else and that you can be the person you've decided in your mind to be. Reconstruct your life from this point on. Develop a lifestyle that will make you happy and bring you as little stress as possible.

■ Developing your inner strength in six steps:

1. Realizing the past is behind you. We cannot change the fact that we have epilepsy. I accept my epilepsy and I refuse to be in denial. I was in denial for far too long. I have the disorder and it is part of me. Years ago, I decided to put all my energy into learning to cope with epilepsy and live positively for the rest of my life. I am not going to waste my energy by wallowing in self-pity.

2. Strength. The development of strength in the inner body begins in the mind. The way

we think and program our minds to work helps us build mental, physical and spiritual strength. If you have the strength and motivation, you can make the present anything you want to. Let go of the negative emotions that are holding you back.

3. It does not matter what others think about you, what matters is how you think about yourself. You have to believe in yourself, develop a sense of pride in yourself. I truly believe we were all put on this earth for a reason and everything happens for a reason. We were put on this earth to love and help others, not to hurt ourselves and take our anger out on others. Unfortunately, we tend to take out our negative emotions on the ones we care about the most.

4. Knowledge is another important factor in helping yourself. Knowledge comes from experience, from being open minded. We may not always agree with other people's ideas or suggestions, yet it is always wise to listen to what others have to say. When individuals are controlling, you should feel empowered to set these people straight and tell them; "I will listen to what you have to say; however, that does not necessarily mean I am going to agree with you. I have my own mind, and I need to do what is best for me." We learn from each other and we acquire knowledge from the world around us that we should pass along to others by helping them. We need to take our experience and use it in our present life, including the mistakes we have made in life. The mistakes we have made are where we get most of

our knowledge and that ultimately helps us become stronger individuals. Studies have shown that people who have negative attitudes are more likely to live chaotic lives. They are more likely to become mentally or physically ill with extremely debilitating or life threatening illnesses. Many people have a hard time focusing on the positive because they allow their negative side to consume them...I firmly believe that focusing on the negatives will cause seizures. Say to yourself, "Okay, what have I learned from these mistakes or from my shortcomings?" Taking what you have learned and using it to help others is the best therapy. When you help, you feel a sense of accomplishment and self-worth.

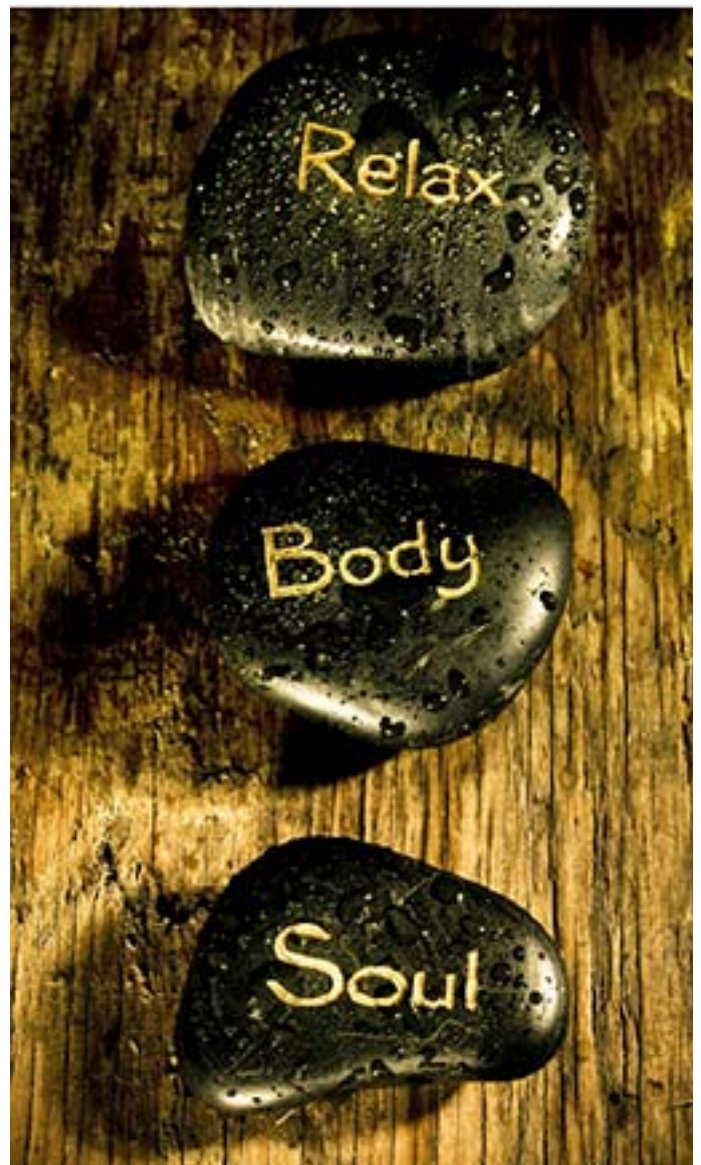
5. Confidence. Our confidence comes from our self-esteem. To have high self-esteem you need to get to the point in life where you start to do things to make yourself happy by focusing on the future, creating direction in your life. Begin by planning short-term and long-term goals for yourself and your confidence level will rise. It worked for me. When I started accomplishing some of my short-term goals, I had more self-respect. I developed a greater sense of pride and my inner strength and self-worth increased.

6. Wisdom. Your wisdom always leads you to the right answers. It is up to each of us to learn to understand our inner self and to follow the signals it sends out to us. Listening to what your inner self has to say is essential. For example, have you ever felt like you

had a feeling something was the right thing to do? You need to learn to understand your mind, so you can understand your inner soul and all the wonderful things it is capable of doing. When we listen and act on the signals of our body, it gives us a stronger understanding of our body as a whole.

It Is Time for Some "Me" Time

We feed our body food to survive on a daily basis. Spiritually we need to feed our body with love, understanding and different forms



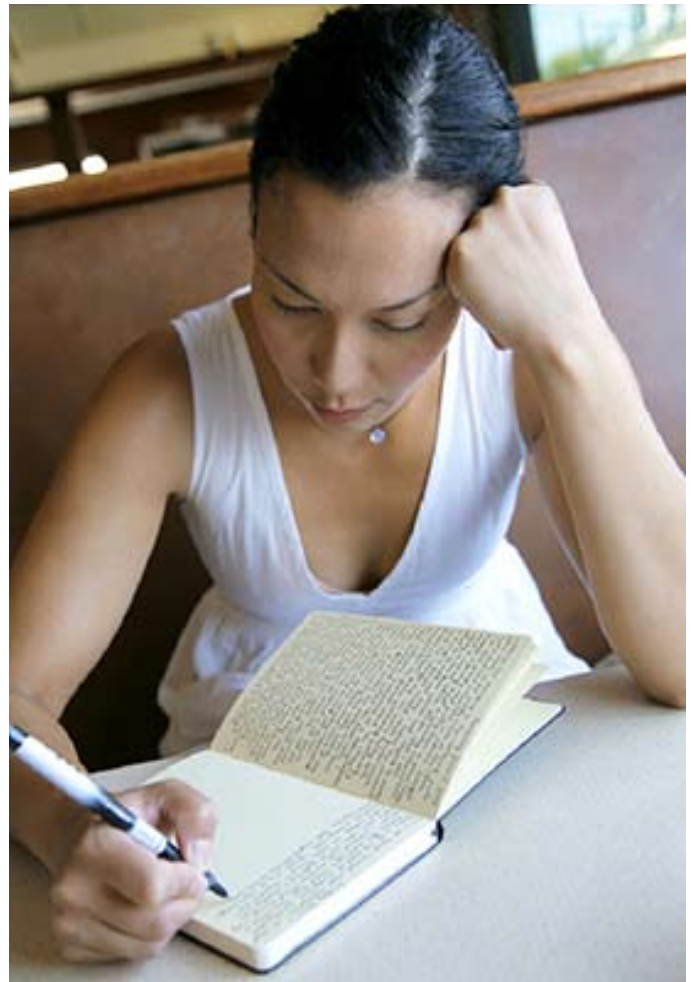
of relaxation, such as meditation. I strongly suggest to everyone that you start with at least five minutes each day with some type of relaxation exercise. Take a moment sometime during the day or evening to release the tension that has built up. Each week you should add five minutes until you get to an hour each day. When you do these things, you increase your level of strength, wisdom, knowledge and confidence—you feel as though you can conquer the world.

Once you accept yourself, you can better cope with the world around you and realize the fact that you can do everything you expected to do in life. But, to do that, you first have to love who you are and be proud of the person you have become. There are many things in life you are capable of doing, but you must develop the motivation and the will to get out there and JUST DO THEM!

■ **Ten steps to increasing self confidence:**

1. Begin a journal. Ask yourself what is making you feel like you cannot get to the place in life that you want to reach. Write any thoughts that come to mind. Also, write down what self confidence means to you.

2. Remember the past is over; you can only change the future. Write down ten positive things about yourself. Go through your journal and look at all the positive things about yourself. Concentrate on your strengths. These are the reasons you should love yourself and have high self-esteem and confi-



dence in yourself. Give yourself credit for everything positive about yourself. Remember, you are somebody special.

3 Accept yourself and learn to love yourself for the person you are. Everyone has his or her own unique qualities and characteristics. Do not compare yourself to others.

4. Understand yourself mentally, physically and spiritually. Take some time to relax yourself by yourself.

5. Be ready. Self confidence comes more easily to the person who is sure they're ready.

Once you accept yourself, you can better cope with the world around you and realize the fact that you can do everything you expected to do in life.

6. Strengthen your inner self. Write down in your journal what you will be able to do once you acquire the confidence you need.

7. Begin changing what you do not like about yourself. Concentrate on the positive things about yourself, but recognize how you want to be different.

8. Notice the change in your self-esteem and self confidence. Reward yourself each time you do something that makes you feel proud...go out some place or take it easy for the day.

9. Learn how to give and take. Confidence is being able to find a balance between giving help to people and accepting help when you need it.

10. Have a tremendous amount of pride in yourself. Remember, you are number one!

The Wake-Up Call

"I am who I am and I am proud of my achievements and myself. I may not be able to jump out of an airplane or ride a motorcycle; but epilepsy is definitely not going to stop me from achieving my goals in life and turning my dreams into a reality."

Epilepsy is definitely an obstacle, but we can overcome obstacles if we keep fighting the battle and never give up. As Vince Lombardi once said, "The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, but rather a lack of will."

Remember, always hold on tight to your beliefs, always focus on your goals, and make sure you strive for your dreams. If you believe and fight hard, you will be able to turn your dreams into a reality. A new beginning now awaits you.

*There comes a time when the meaning
of life begins to make sense*

*At first we may not understand why
things happen the way they do*

The sky at first may look dark

*The path one needs to walk down may
be hard to see*

*Remember the stars are the brightest
when the nights seem the darkest*

Look up at the stars and make a wish

One wish

Never let a disorder control one's destiny

Move forward

Never move backwards

Plan a positive, fulfilling future

*Never let your tragedy control your mind,
body and soul,*



*Never give up
Be in control
Accept yourself
Accept your disorder
Love yourself now and forever
Developing a disorder
Makes you feel barricaded against
a corner
Giving up is not an option
The present is now
Today is a new day
If you stay down life will pass you by
Therefore, each time you fall
Help yourself get up
Fight the battle
Win your battle
To win the battle all you need to do is try
Winning the battle is teaching
yourself how to live a healthy productive life
Helping you cope
Life may not always be what you
planned it to be*

*The road you travel may have some
u-turns involved
Do not fear
For change can be good
Follow the path that was destined for you
The sun is now shining
You can now see your path
There is a plan, a destiny that awaits you
Do not question your destiny
Do not ask questions such as "why me?"
Follow life's journey—the one that has been
planned for you
Do not be afraid
Take one day at a time
Be proud of who you are
Walk with courage and your head up high
Believe in yourself
Focus on the positive
For the footsteps embedded in the ground
of your new path will become the solid
foundation to your future*

■ **Things to Remember:**

- 1. Listen to your inner voice and follow your heart.** Your heart knows what is best for you.
- 2. Focus on the positive, believe in yourself, strive for the best, and always expect the best because you deserve it.** Just because you have epilepsy, it does not mean that you do not deserve the best.
- 3. Give to others.** The satisfaction of helping others will boost your self-esteem. Once you develop an inner strength and learn to help yourself, then you need to try to be a mentor to others who suffer from epilepsy.

Everyone carries an inner beauty, strength and intelligence. It lies deep within us just waiting to come out and flourish for the world to see.

The key is to learn how to help yourself, then go out into the epilepsy community, and teach others how to live with their epilepsy from a positive perspective. Using the knowledge you've gained will teach others how to cope with the disorder. If we stay strong, others with epilepsy will stay strong too. Saying no is not an option. Don't say you can't because you can—you have the inner strength to accomplish anything in life. Everyone carries an inner beauty, strength and intelligence. It lies deep within us just waiting to come out and flourish for the world to see. Grandma Moses once said, "Life is what we make it, it always has been, always will be."

Self-confidence all boils down to how we feel about ourselves. Our self-confidence develops from the moment we are born, and everything we experience in our life will have some type of impact on it. Many of us tend to judge how well we are doing in life by what society thinks or what the people who surround us think.

In order to gain self-confidence, you need to believe in yourself. If you believe in yourself then you can succeed in anything you put your mind to. You may not succeed the first time you try, but you have to keep

trying until you do succeed. Nothing comes one-two-three; results come with dedication, determination and hard work. Achievements only come to those who strive hard to get them. You get nowhere in life if you do not push yourself. You need to create a lifestyle that is right for you and nobody else. Do not settle for anyone else's lifestyle or for a lifestyle that is beneath your standards.

I just want to let you know how wonderful you really are...

Stacey Chillemi is a mother of three, a wife and writer. Her journey and reason for being is defined each day by the happiness in her children's eyes and the people with epilepsy she has helped through her writing. Through her experience with epilepsy she has learned to accept her limitations and to change the way she looks at things. Through her writing she is able to help others and just knowing that is reward enough.