

Since I was diagnosed with epilepsy, I've basically been on the same medication to control my seizures, but at my last annual appointment with my neurologist she decided it was time to change to another medication. We discussed the risks of taking Depakote during my child bearing years and the huge possibility of birth defects to my child. With my mother by my side, my neurologist and I decided it was best to change to a medication called Keppra now before I would leave to go to college in a year. We decided it was in my best interest to have the support of my family and close friends at home, if the medication shouldn't work and I would resume seizure activity. The possibility of having seizures again terrified both me and my mother. We were brought to tears. The thought of having any seizure activity after being seizure free for so long was terrifying to both of us. In addition to having to worry about seizure activity, if the medication wasn't effective, I was told that I could no longer drive during the transition period. At this point, I had my driver's license for several months and grew to be a very independent senior in high school. My parents had literally just bought me my own car days before my doctor's appointment. I think the loss of my driving privileges was more devastating to me than the possibility of resuming seizure activity. My independence was being taken away in my senior year of high school. How do you explain to your friends that suddenly you are unable to drive and your parents now have to bring your school and social events. I would see all my friends driving themselves and I couldn't go to the places I wanted to without my parents taking me or asking for a ride. I even had to ride the school bus again! As an independent 17 year old, this was horrifying to me, but I decided to face it head on. When my peers would ask me why I wasn't driving, I would be honest with them. Only my closest friends knew of my condition. I was so surprised to learn that my peers were so understanding and curious about epilepsy. I took the opportunity to speak freely about my condition and answer their questions.

It was only recently that I discovered the Epilepsy Foundation. Unfortunately, I live in a rural part of the NYS and to the best of my knowledge there aren't any active epilepsy education programs or fundraisers in my tri county area. I would like to change that in the future. Epilepsy education is important. The son of a co-worker of mine was recently diagnosed with epilepsy and I've been sharing my knowledge and experiences with her. I just received my first newsletter from the Foundation and I plan to share it with my co-worker and suggest that she become a part of your mailing list as every bit of knowledge is important.

I've been an honor student my entire high school career. I've been a member of the National Honor Society since 10th grade. I take my education very seriously. My years of being under medical care have inspired me to become a healthcare provider. I intend to pursue a 4 year degree in nursing and perhaps even become a nurse practitioner.

Epilepsy has hurt me emotionally in the past and can be a burden, but it has made me a stronger person. It has made me realize that I can do anything I put my mind to. Epilepsy is a part of my life, but I won't certainly won't let it control my life.