I've had epilepsy for thirty years. I started having nocturnal complex partial on-set seizures when I was seventeen and a first-year student in college. I did not know I was having seizures in my sleep. I would wake up for class and feel very tired with a cut tongue; everything I ate would sting, which perplexed me for weeks. I also felt like I had been beat up because my body was extremely sore.

After ignoring my symptoms while struggling to attend classes I finally called my mom. She didn’t like what I was describing to her and decided to drive three hours to the university and another three hours back to Staten Island. I had never been very sick before, so I wasn’t worried. However, the news of my strange symptoms alarmed my mom. She wanted me home to see a doctor, but I was reluctant to leave school. I had a Bio midterm the next day and that was more important to me than a sore body and tongue. When we arrived home, I was still annoyed with her and went straight to bed.

I had a seizure in my sleep that night in the room I shared with my younger sister Erin. We still had bunk beds, and I slept in the top bunk. Erin saw me have a seizure in the middle of the night. At first, she just heard noises but when I didn’t stop, she got out of bed to yell at me. She didn't know it was a seizure. She had never seen a seizure and I was famous for having nightmares. Erin knew it was something bad, but was too young and uninformed to presume to know what my body was going through. So was my family including me.

At breakfast I complained to my parents about my sore tongue, but I hardly remembered that day. “Not remembering” would soon become part of my life.

After seeing my pediatrician and receiving a clean bill of health I felt vindicated. My mom and I got into the car, and I turned to right to grab my seatbelt. The next thing I knew I was in an ambulance travelling full speed towards a hospital. Finally, an answer as to why I had been feeling so crappy!! I spent the next 2 weeks in the ICU. The doctors couldn't control my tonic-clonic aka grand mal seizures. I had been in a car accident four months prior, had no seatbelt on and my head shattered the windshield. I never had an x-ray after the accident and was sent home.
Once I was stabilized for a week, I was able to go home with a lot of medication. I had to convince my parents (actually I begged them) to let me go back to college, which was three hours away.

I graduated in four and a half years. I moved from my apartment in Staten Island to NYC. I worked as a computer systems engineer for eight years. Then, I went to school to become a Veterinary Technician, lived and worked in Boston as a surgical Vet Tech. I was fired from the animal hospital because I was unable to make it into work after a morning seizure. now am unemployed because of epilepsy.

Over the past thirty years, I've had many drug changes, seizures that lasted for hours, have been in and out of the hospital for tests more times than I can remember, and have had five brain surgeries. They resected part of my right temporal lobe in 2003 and in 2004 they replaced the part of my skull that never fused back after those first three surgeries. In 2008, after experiencing years of headaches, I had more x-rays, MRIs, CT-scans. All of the tests indicated that my new methyl methacrylate, titanium skull had rippled. I had my last surgery in March 2008 to fix my fake, plastic skull :-). I still have headaches and because of the numerous amounts of surgeries (and cutting of my scalp), I have developed a tumor of dead nerve cells at the incision site. My cranioplasty is the reason why I still have daily migraines that no doctor has been able to cure.

I still have complex partial on-set seizures and take 6 different types of drugs, 8 times a day. Epilepsy has changed my life but for the better. I don't try to control things that I know I can't, I don't worry about the small problems in life because I know how bad things can get in comparison and I certainly never ask myself "Why me?" Instead, I say "Why not me?" because epilepsy has taught me that despite the pain and suffering I go through, things could be much worse. I am a devoted epilepsy advocate and have started my own charity to help others seeking answers.

I have written four books about my life with epilepsy. I call it *‘My Moment’* series- *My Moment of Impact, My Moment of Madness, My Moment of Salvation and My Moment of Survival.*

Epilepsy has given me an arcane glimpse of the universe; my epilepsy may not get better but how I have learned to deal with it certainly has. Epilepsy forced me to see the truth, deal with the consequences and I have acquiesced. I am lucky to have a loving family and many friends that support me.

That's my story and I'm sticking to it!!! :-)

Kerri