



## My Story

I don't remember life without seizures. They've always been *part of life*. Growing up I had a great support system through family and friends who helped ensure I never felt...different or disabled.

Sure, epilepsy caused its problems, and still does. I missed soccer tournaments, vacations, even AP exams. I had to drop out of college for a semester, and I cannot count the number of times I've lost the privilege to drive a car.

But those bumps in the road don't define my life. I re-enrolled in college a semester later and finished on time. I graduated law school. I've had a successful law career. I'm married with three great children. I just became a published author.

Many have encouraged me: "You did all of that despite having epilepsy."

While I appreciate their intention, I now realize that "despite" is the wrong word. Epilepsy isn't some villain that stands in my way with ever-increasing hurdles to vault. No, epilepsy is an ever-present part of my life that shapes me each day. For those who find me gritty and determined, epilepsy had a lot to do with that. If I can empathize with the disabled or disenfranchised, epilepsy had something to do with that as well.

I would never wish epilepsy on anyone, but I'm thankful for who it has helped me become. If I could share any encouragement with the epilepsy community, it would go something like this:

You have a unique and powerful view of the world that very few can offer. It's that view that helps you overcome barriers that many will concede to. Your own struggle will help you empathize with others in a world that so desperately needs empathy. And even when your body breaks, and you can't move, and the insides of your cheeks bleed, and you rub the skin off your forehead, and you can't remember your name or the date...even then...you are valuable.

I've created a fictional character, Chance Dawson, whose epilepsy becomes a superpower needed to save his family and potentially the whole world. It's my hope that Chance's story will help encourage children with epilepsy, or any disability, to understand their importance in this world. Until recently, I had no idea this online community of epileptics and their caretakers existed. I'm so thankful to have found them, and look forward to engaging more.