

Epilepsy Support Ldn: "Great read. Quite insightful, humourous. Thank you for being so open... people lead capable, successful lives with epilepsy."

14-year EEG technician: "One of the best messages about seizures I ever read!"

others: "I laughed and cried a bit as I read. Truly appreciated." – "Thanks for insights and humour on this. I laughed and am now **wearing purple**."

Seizures – brain sparks linked to creativity?

by (wordsmith@) **Sandy Ross** 519.871.word (9673) Word's Worth

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Einstein, Socrates, Tennyson... Sandy Ross? The common thread: seizure disorder. Thankfully, mine is eased (and drug-free) by blessing of infrequency. Not so for others. I've had very few seizures in 35+ years. So sporadic, I seldom mention it. But March is **epilepsy awareness**, and I *am* a communicator – I can inform, share how it touches my life, as in:

I don't drive. No swimming solo. Showers, not baths. I won't wash a baby in a tub, or tend plants at balcony's edge. For me, minor shift disturbers. Our restrictions in life rarely match our resilience, though, nor do they match friends' kindness – so many car rides. *Thanks*.

I admit, when I read of a link between **epilepsy and creativity**, I welcomed the upside. A ray of light or levity's a gift when life gets real. The positive spin? Science, intrigued by great thinkers and **artistes who've had seizures**, theorizes a connection. So, I delude, I'm surely descendant from wordsmiths sharing the condition: Dickens, Byron, Poe, and Lewis Carroll whose 1880 diary told of an aura episode as '*moving fortifications*'. At least since their century, therapies are better. Poor Tennyson was 'treated' by having to submerge in cold baths, drink large amounts, and walk long distances in bad weather. Sounds like many the holiday I've enjoyed in England.

What do **seizures look like**? While disturbing, I'm told, don't let it reinforce outdated stigma. Mine were often nocturnal, then Mum witnessed one midday. My face (only a mother could love) "*screwed up*". The body may go rigid, shake, but is typically fine **IF** in a safe position. Seizures are rarely a medical emergency: nor was mine. I went V-shape, limbs stiff in the air, only my bottom on the floor. I prefer to consider that a minute-long stomach crunch, and count it as exercise. Once or twice, I've chewed my tongue all to hell, keeping me uncharacteristically quiet for days. (There's that upside again.) Also possible if atypical, I gather the bladder may release. Certainly I hope it won't but look, I'm over 50 – that's more likely just from a good laugh.

Science says, "*temporary bursts of **electrical activity** in the brain*". Gee, when put like that, it's power. Star Trekky. And creativity? Psychiatrist, Dr. David Bear, says epilepsy "*can play a role in creative thinking by uniting **sensitivity, insight, and sustained critical attention***". I say go with that. As Trek's Mr. Spock deadpans: most logical. So I try to embrace any episode, ups and downs, and appreciate my gifts and inspirations. Sure, it's no slogan tag line, but I like that my clients can benefit from a creative sensibility that's not just strategic – it's electric! ■

First Aid <http://epilepsyontario.org/>

- seizure may last 1-2 minutes, rarely a medical emergency – call 911 if it's 5+ minutes or recurs soon, or if person's hurt or pregnant or diabetic
- ease person to safe position but don't restrain
- gently tilt head/body to side (avoids choking)
- don't put anything in mouth of seizing person
- don't panic if a little blood's at the mouth – the tongue (can't be swallowed) was likely chewed
- speak reassuringly – s/he may be dazed for a half-hour or so then may wish to rest (that's fine)