

# Ask Janet



Janet volunteering at NBTF.

**Question:** What coping strategies do you use for the changes you've experienced as a brain tumor patient?

Here are some suggestions you may find useful.

**Connect:** Share with and learn from other brain tumor patients in person, by phone, via email and/or internet.

**A "new" you:** Recovery times and treatment side effects can make returning to a former routine unrealistic. The term "new normal," mentioned at my support group meetings, helped me address post-treatment changes. Group member Mike sums things up nicely: "I hope that the new normal and the old normal are the same, or at least very close, but I need to accept that there are differences."

**Pace yourself:** One patient had to reinterpret the words time and patience, while another advises flexibility and respecting limitations. Allot extra time to finish a task, use "rest days" to recuperate, and sleep more when needed.

**Stay active:** Exercise, one survivor points out, can be therapeutic and gives you a sense of accomplishment. Check with your doctor first and don't forget to hydrate!

**Help others:** Volunteer! It's incredibly rewarding and it's a great way to give back in ways that accommodate your availability.

**Positive thinking:** Attitude makes a difference. As one patient recommends "ignore negative advice." Another shares: "I believe no matter what the changes in my physical appearance and abilities, I am still the same person within."

**Programs:** Take advantage of services in your area. My treatment center offered programs like 10-minute massages and guided imagery classes. In Pennsylvania, Andrea had access to Native American healing ceremonies as well as weekly guided meditation sessions at her treatment facility: "My life was filled with daily radiation, chemotherapy, and endless appointments," she writes. "Yet on the other hand—in the same hospital—my heart, mind and soul were being tended to by the Medicine Man."

**Resources:** For NBTF's Patient Support Network or support group info, visit [www.brainumor.org](http://www.brainumor.org) (look at "connecting and coping" under "patient info"); for brain tumor or cancer support visit ([www.braintrust.org](http://www.braintrust.org)), ([www.wellness-community.org](http://www.wellness-community.org)), and ([www.acscsn.org](http://www.acscsn.org)).

This column reflects patient experiences and opinions which are not a substitute for your doctor's medical advice.

**Next time in Ask Janet:** What "triggers" cause a seizure? Call (800.934.2873) or email Ask Janet c/o [nbtf@braintumor.org](mailto:nbtf@braintumor.org).

## How to Help During a Seizure



Brain tumors and seizures are frequently linked, as more than 33 percent of brain tumor patients report having a seizure before their diagnosis.

There are several different types of seizures that people can experience. Focal seizures and partial complex seizures involve unusual activity in a specific area of the brain. Generalized tonic clonic seizures, in contrast, may start from a focal area and then spread to the whole brain. A focal seizure usually involves a jerking of an arm or a leg, or an abnormal sensation, depending on where the seizure focus is located in the brain. A partial complex seizure may include random activities such as chewing or wringing hands, a déjà vu feeling, and consciousness with a disconnection from the environment. A generalized tonic clonic seizure includes full body jerking movements and loss of consciousness.

No special actions are needed for focal seizures. Since people experiencing partial complex seizures may be disoriented someone needs to stay with the patient, keep the surroundings safe and remain calm. Do not restrain the individual.

However, generalized tonic clonic seizures need to be watched carefully. Here are the steps for first aid for generalized tonic clonic seizures.

- 1) Clear the area around the individual, removing any hard, sharp objects. Place something soft under the head.
- 2) Do not try to stop the person's movements.
- 3) Loosen tight clothing.
- 4) If possible, place the person on his or her side so saliva can drain from the mouth.
- 5) As the person regains consciousness talk softly and remain calm.
- 6) Stay with the person until he or she becomes conscious.
- 7) Try to remember the initial activities that started the seizure and aspects about the seizure such as length of time.

If this is the patient's first seizure or if three seizures occur one after the other then 9-1-1 should be called.

After the partial complex or generalized seizure people may tired. They may want to rest. DO NOT keep the person from resting.

Seizures can be frightening, but with the right information you can provide the first aid your loved one needs to be safe. For more information, visit [www.epilepsyfoundation.org](http://www.epilepsyfoundation.org).