



**EPILEPSY  
FOUNDATION**  
Greater Southern Illinois

and



**EPILEPSY  
FOUNDATION**  
Greater Southern Illinois-Southern Region

## Presents the September 2020 Social Monthly Support Group

**Activity:** The last "Drive-In Movie" of the Year.

**Where:** Epilepsy Foundation of Greater Southern Illinois Office  
3515 North Belt West  
Belleville, IL 62226

**Telephone:** 618-236-2181

**When:** September 23, 2020  
7:00pm to 10:00pm

*Beverages and snacks will be provided. Please bring a lawn chair. If you do not have a lawn chair, a folding chair will be provided.*

*Social distancing guidelines will be in place. Masks will be required. Transportation and space is limited. First Come First Serve. Please RSVP to Janet Shearrer at (618) 236-2181 ext. 114 or [janets@epilepsygsil.org](mailto:janets@epilepsygsil.org) before, September 16, 2020. No reservations will be accepted after this due date.*

Sponsored by the St. Clair County Mental Health Board, Madison County Mental Health Board, and the Illinois Department of Human Services.







and



## Presents the September 2020 Educational Monthly Support Group

**Topic:** Therapies to Reduce Stress

**Presenters:** Janet M. Shearrer and Diane Suszko, Epilepsy Educators

Learn the different types of therapies that may lessen seizure activity including massage and pet therapy as well as music therapy.

**Where:** Tele-Conference Call

**When:** September 28, 2020  
1:00pm to 2:30pm

RSVP to Janet Shearrer at (618) 236-2181 ext. 114 or [janets@epilepsygsil.org](mailto:janets@epilepsygsil.org) before September 21, 2020

Attendance prizes

Sponsored by the St. Clair County Mental Health Board, Madison County Mental Health Board, and the Illinois Department of Human Services.







# EPILEPSY FOUNDATION

## Greater Southern Illinois

### ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES

Living with epilepsy and managing its impacts often involves more than just gaining seizure control. Finding a good quality of life is important, and for some people this can be helped through the use of complementary therapies. However, it is important to remember that complementary therapies **should never replace use of anti-epileptic drugs (AEDs)**.

Stress, anxiety, and lack of sleep can be seizure triggers for some people with epilepsy. In some cases, the use of complementary therapies may have a positive effect on these symptoms, and therefore potentially help reduce seizure activity. Some common complementary therapies include acupuncture, massage, aromatherapy, relaxation techniques (yoga and meditation), homeopathy, and herbal medicine. Other complementary therapies include music therapy and pet therapy.

It is important to remember that complementary therapies cannot cure or control epilepsy, and it is a good idea to discuss any of these approaches with your doctor before using them. They are also not an alternative to your regular treatment approach, and you should not stop taking your anti-epileptic medication if you choose to pursue using complementary therapies as well.

#### **MASSAGE THERAPY**

Many types of massages are available. General massage therapy is offered by a masseuse, while manipulative therapy is provided by an osteopath or chiropractor. Massage is often used to reduce tension, assist with relaxation and minimize stress. As stress can be a seizure trigger for some people, massage may have a relaxing and calming effect which may therefore assist in seizure control in some way. However, for some people a state of deep relaxation can have the opposite effect and trigger a seizure. If you want to start having massages, be sure to speak to your doctor about it and whether there is a chance it may affect your seizure activity.

If you try massage, be sure to let your therapist know that you have epilepsy, what medications or other medical treatments you use, and what to do in the event of a seizure.

## **MUSIC THERAPY FOR EPILEPSY**

Based on findings presented at the 123<sup>rd</sup> Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, the brains of people with epilepsy appear to react differently to music than the brains of people without the disorder. In roughly 80% of epilepsy cases, seizures appear to start in the temporal lobe. Because music is processed in the auditory cortex in the same area of the brain, Charyton and colleagues, of The Ohio State University, were interested in studying the effects of music on the brain of people with epilepsy.

From September 2012 to May 2014, researchers measured, via EEG, the brainwave patterns of 21 people with epilepsy and compared the data to that of individuals without epilepsy. The study participants listened to 10 minutes of silence, followed by a random selection of either John Coltrane's "My Favorite Things" or Mozart's Sonata for Two Pianos in D major. This was followed by 10 more minutes of silence, the other of the two musical pieces, and a final 10 minutes of silence.

Brainwave activity was significantly higher while both groups of subjects were listening to music. Researchers noted that the brains of people with epilepsy synchronized more with the music than in people without the disorder. The synchronization did not trigger seizures and occurred in the frontal cortex and temporal cortex.

According to Charyton and colleagues, "We speculate that music may be useful to enhance electrical activity specific to the frontal and temporal cortices." While researchers do not believe music can replace current epilepsy treatment, it is possible that music can be used in conjunction with traditional therapy to help prevent seizures. Stress can trigger seizures and many of the patients with epilepsy reported feeling relaxed after listening to the music. Further studies are planned.

## **PET THERAPY**

Physical health pet therapy lowers blood pressure, improves cardiovascular health, releases endorphins (oxytocin) that have a calming effect, diminishes overall physical pain, and the act of petting produces an automatic relaxation response, reducing the amount of medication some folks need.

Mental health pet therapy lifts spirits and lessens depression, decreases feelings of isolation and alienation, encourages communication, provides comfort, increases socialization and sense of community, reduces boredom, decreases anxiety, helps children overcome speech and emotional disorders, creates motivation for the client to recover faster, and reduces loneliness.

Literacy support pet therapy helps children focus better, improves literacy skills, provides non-stressful, non-judgmental environment, increases self-confidence, reduces self-consciousness, and encourages the love of reading in specific and learning in general.

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