



Supporting Colleagues with Epilepsy in the Workplace

Epilepsy is a neurological condition that affects millions of people worldwide. In Malta around 1 in every 100 people has epilepsy. It can be challenging, especially in a work environment. As responsible and empathetic co-workers, it's crucial to educate ourselves and understand how to support our colleagues who may be dealing with this condition.

First and foremost, it's essential to be aware of what epilepsy is. Epilepsy is characterised by recurrent seizures, which are sudden, uncontrolled electrical disturbances in the brain. These seizures can vary in severity and may manifest in various ways, including convulsions, muscle twitches, or staring spells. It's important to remember that epilepsy is not a mental illness, and those with epilepsy can lead productive lives.

Here are some ways to create an inclusive and supportive workplace for colleagues with epilepsy:

- 1. Educate Yourself:** Take the time to learn about epilepsy, its triggers, and common seizure types. Understanding the condition will help reduce misconceptions and fear.
- 2. Respect Privacy:** Colleagues with epilepsy may not wish to disclose their condition. Respect their privacy and don't pry into their medical history unless they choose to share it.
- 3. Be Prepared:** In the event of a seizure, remain calm and ensure the person's safety. Clear any dangerous objects from their vicinity and guide them gently to the ground if necessary. Do not hold them down or put anything
- 4. Flexible Work Arrangements:** Depending on their specific needs, and your role at work, consider offering flexible work hours or arrangements to accommodate medical appointments and/or recovery periods after a seizure.
- 5. Communication:** Encourage open communication. Ask your colleague with epilepsy if they have any specific needs or if there are triggers in the workplace that can be addressed.
- 6. Raise Awareness:** Promote epilepsy awareness within the workplace by organizing educational sessions and/or distributing informational materials. This can help reduce stigma and foster a supportive environment.

in their mouth. After the seizure, offer support as needed.



Here are some questions to think about:

- Do you feel like you have to say yes to everyone's requests?
- Do you feel responsible for others' feelings and problems?
- Do you love to the point of forgetting yourself and your limitations?

If you answered yes to any of the above, you need to reflect and learn when and how to say no in order to enjoy healthy relationships and take responsibility for your choices.

Boundaries impact all areas of our lives:

- Physical boundaries help us determine who may touch us and under what circumstances.
- Mental boundaries give us the freedom to have our own thoughts and opinions.
- Emotional boundaries help us to deal with our own emotions and disengage from the harmful, manipulative emotions of others.
- Spiritual boundaries give us the freedom to believe in what we want and to set clear limits for living authentically while respecting others.

Having clear and healthy boundaries can support our emotional well-being. This can be simply described as retaining positive influences within

7. **Emergency Response Plan:**

Management should ensure that the workplace has a clear emergency response plan for seizures. Designated individuals should be trained in first aid and CPR, and make sure they know what to do during a seizure.

8. **Advocate for Inclusivity:**

Advocate for policies and practices that promote inclusivity for individuals with epilepsy. Encourage your workplace to provide reasonable accommodations, such as adjustable lighting or workspace arrangements.

What are Boundaries?

Boundaries are guidelines for how we interact with others, to ensure that everyone feels safe, valued, and understood. They define the parameters of healthy relationships. Boundaries help us to define who we are and what we are not, and to take responsibility for our own life choices. It provides the parameters to know where you end and where someone else begins. Lack of boundaries portray unclear expectations which may lead to unhealthy and toxic relationships.

By being informed and empathetic, we can create a workplace where colleagues with epilepsy feel safe, respected, and supported. Ultimately, fostering an inclusive environment, benefits everyone and strengthens the bonds within the team, leading to a more productive and compassionate workplace. With the existing anti-seizure medications, 70% of cases are controlled and people with epilepsy can lead a normal life. If you would like to receive training regarding epilepsy and seizure first aid at your workplace, contact the Caritas Malta Epilepsy Association at maltaepilepsy@gmail.com.





ourselves and keeping harmful influences out. For example, we hold on to our self-worth (inside) and keep away from the things that cause us harm (outside) such as substance abuse, and abusive relationships. However, negative life experiences might reverse the function of boundaries and keep the bad in and the good out. These might reflect experiences that harmed us when we felt helpless, threatened or shameful. In these instances, we would need to learn to reverse our boundaries and be able to let the bad out and the good in, rather than let the bad continue to poison us on the inside.

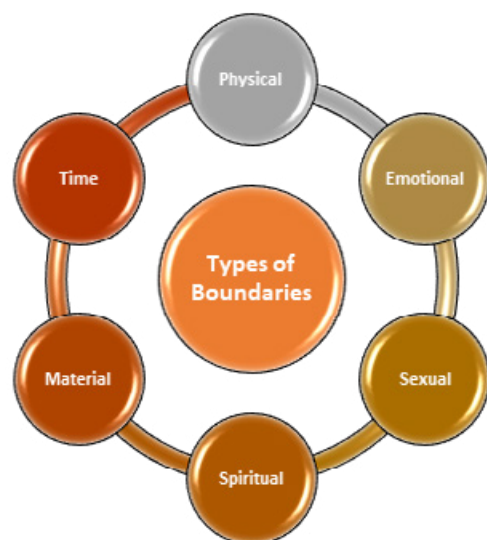
Sometimes, physically removing yourself from a situation such as a toxic relationship will help maintain boundaries. We need to learn to put limits on what we endure and to take care of ourselves. Self-care means that we need to walk-away either physically or at least emotionally from those who continue to hurt us and to create a safe place for ourselves. Removing ourselves from the

situation will also cause the one who is left behind to experience our loss in the hope that this may urge them to change their behaviour.

Just as you expect others to respect your boundaries, it's important to respect the boundaries of others. Understanding and honouring the limits set by others can foster mutual respect and can strengthen

relationships by demonstrating empathy and consideration.

Overall, boundaries are essential for creating fulfilling relationships, maintaining emotional well-being, and cultivating a strong sense of self. While setting and enforcing boundaries may initially feel challenging, the long-term benefits far outweigh any temporary discomfort.



Adapted from
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Motivation

Motivation is the driving force to act. The good news is that motivation is a skill which can be improved upon by understanding ourselves, our goals and how we can best achieve them. Here are some tips on how to increase and maintain motivation:

- **Understand the importance for motivation:** Motivation can be intrinsic and/or extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation refers to the drive to pursue a goal out of personal interest and satisfaction, while extrinsic motivation refers to the external rewards and pressures to pursue that goal.
- **Set clear and achievable goals:** Having specific goals and understanding the importance of pursuing them, helps you to understand the purpose and underlying motivation. Having clear goals increases motivation by providing a sense of direction and progress.
- **Learn what motivates you:** Notice what factors enhance or hinder your motivation and learn how you can achieve the best results.
- **Be determined:** Understand that setbacks and obstacles are inevitable, but they do not define your ability to succeed. Keep pushing forward despite challenges.
- **Challenge yourself:** Set challenging but achievable goals that push you out of your comfort zone. Embrace the opportunities for growth and learning that come with overcoming new challenges.



- **Cultivate curiosity:** Approach tasks with a sense of curiosity and wonder. Explore new ideas, perspectives, and possibilities to keep your interest piqued.
 - **Practice mindfulness:** Do not allow distractions to throw you off course. Instead, set clear boundaries, prioritise tasks, and stay focused on your goals.
 - **Stay flexible:** Be willing to adapt your goals and plans as necessary. Life is unpredictable and being flexible allows you to adjust to changing circumstances without losing sight of your ultimate objectives.
 - **Learn from failure:** Embrace failure as an opportunity for growth and learning. Analyse what went wrong, extract valuable lessons, and use them to improve your approach moving forward.
 - **Celebrate progress:** Acknowledge and celebrate your progress along the way, no matter how small. Celebrating milestones boosts morale and reinforces positive habits.
 - **Stay inspired:** Read books, watch videos, and/or listen to podcasts related to your goals. Surrounding yourself with inspiration can keep your motivation levels high.
 - **Stay committed:** Stay committed to your goals and the process of self-improvement. Consistent effort and dedication are essential for long-term success.
- By actively engaging in these practices and strategies, you can learn to cultivate and strengthen your motivation skills over time. Remember that motivation is a skill that can be developed and refined with practice, persistence, and self-awareness.

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