



Maggie DeGrossi
Miami, FL
Born 1973
Diagnosed 1978

"I want to help others understand that a disease does not define a person. I am not an epileptic; I am a person who lives with epilepsy."

When Maggie DeGrossi was only five years old, she was diagnosed with epilepsy. Soon after, she remembers having a seizure when she was on the playground with her best friend Sabrina. Sabrina's mother was there and, after the seizure, forbade the girls from playing together. Maggie was devastated and could not comprehend why she was no longer permitted to see her friend. Teachers in school did not help—they sent Maggie to the principal's office when she had a seizure, which made her again feel like she was being punished for a medical condition she could not control.

Growing up with epilepsy was sometimes difficult for Maggie. For example, her mother was naturally very protective and did not allow Maggie to participate in activities after school. As she got older, however, Maggie became determined to live life on her terms and not allow epilepsy to limit her. When she was in high school, Maggie wanted to join her school's volleyball team, but her mother was too afraid. After summoning her courage, Maggie confronted her mother and convinced her to let her play on the team. It was a defining moment for Maggie—she realized that if she was determined, she could overcome obstacles and achieve her goals.

Maggie went on to college and graduated with a bachelor's degree in psychology. Through it all, she collaborated with her doctor and tried various combinations of epilepsy medications to control the complex partial seizures that she experienced. To learn more about epilepsy and different types of seizures, see [About Epilepsy](#).

Several years ago, Maggie found a combination of medications that allowed her to achieve seizure freedom with minimal medication side effects. As a result, she was finally able to get her driver's license—in Florida, people living with epilepsy are not able to get a license unless they have been seizure free for at least six months and have a recommendation from their doctor. Getting her license was one of the most important milestones of Maggie's life and has given her much greater freedom.

Today, as an Epilepsy Advocate, Maggie is speaking out to help people realize that it is possible to live well with epilepsy. For more information, see [About Epilepsy Advocate](#). Maggie points out that there is not a lot of information about epilepsy available to the Latino community, and so Latinos living with the condition must overcome additional challenges. Because Maggie worked so hard to achieve her goals, she is now confident and passionate about helping others overcome obstacles in their lives—whether epilepsy or another medical condition or disability—and hopes to inspire others by sharing her journey.