



Madison's Story: Back from the Brink

Years of dealing with debilitating, 24-hour pain in her foot that physicians eventually diagnosed as reflex sympathetic dystrophy (RSD) was taking an emotional toll on high school student Madison MacCormick. One of the side effects of RSD is anxiety. One day in math class, Madison experienced a seizure, the first of many. Some days, she'd have up to five seizures and, in between each one, she would wake up screaming in horrific pain.

Madison saw physicians, specialists, psychologists and therapists who finally told her to "deal with it."

Her seizures got to the point that Madison could only attend school part of the year. "I had a chronic headache, 24/7, and they had no idea why," Madison says. "I was so irritated by everyone around me at all times and my mom and I would get in really bad fights."

Beacon of Hope

After two years of varying diagnoses, CHOC referred the MacCormicks to Jerry Weichman, Ph.D., at the Teen Brain Program. Madison underwent comprehensive psychological, neurological and psychiatric evaluations with the Program's integrated team of specialists. She also had a neuropsychological exam.

"Once her evaluations were complete, all four doctors on the case came together for a group consultation," says Dr. Weichman. "Everyone had

independently identified what was more than likely the cause of her seizures and the data collected on the neuropsychological exam confirmed our collective hunches: Madison suffered from extreme anxiety due to an 'I have to' problem and, when she didn't do well academically, her stress and anxiety would skyrocket. Madison was experiencing pseudo seizures as her mind and body reacted from high stress rather than seizures resulting from epilepsy or other neurological conditions."

Turning Toward Well-Being

Upon the start of her treatment, Madison had four seizures the first week and two seizures the second week. By end of the first month, her prescriptions kicked in and she was using the tools she learned in therapy to combat her stress and anxiety. She did not have seizures that week. Today, Madison has been seizure-free for nearly three years, despite her full load of college classes and a part-time job.

Madison was relieved to finally talk with someone who believed her and gave her real tools to calm her anxiety. "Dr. Weichman was the first one who treated me like a human being," she says. "He taught me it's 'here and now' and gave me techniques to stay in the moment and not freak out about my future. He made me more aware of myself."