

MEDI-FILE

AN EAR infection GAVE ME epilepsy



Mum and Dad and me

It feels great to help others

Stacey overcame her obstacles to help others

Stacey Chillemi, 50

Waking up on the floor, I groaned. 'You're okay, love,' my mum Tina, then 29, said.

I was 13 and had suffered an epileptic seizure.

The condition had developed from an ear infection when I was five.

Doctors prescribed penicillin, but back at home, Mum found me choking and turning blue.

Shocked, she and my dad, George, then 33, had rushed me to hospital where tests revealed I had encephalitis.

After being placed in an induced coma, doctors said

I was unlikely to survive, and I'd be brain damaged and paraplegic if I did.

Four days later, though, I woke up asking for Macca's!

Thankfully, I could walk and talk just like before, but it had caused epilepsy.

I took medication for it but I'd have seizures around once a month.

Sadly, as soon as I hit my teens, the episodes became more frequent.

By the time I was at university, I was having up to nine a month.

One day when I was driving with my boyfriend Michael, then 19, I sensed a seizure about to happen.

He grabbed the steering wheel, stopping us from hitting a pole.

'You're going to have to stop driving,' my doctor said afterwards.

At the time, no-one knew much about epilepsy.

Feeling fed up, I wrote to a epilepsy magazine, asking how other people coped. The response I got was amazing and it was great to know that I wasn't alone.

Still, the seizures

continued, but I focused on living my life.

Michael and I got married and I started working for network

television shows.

One day, when I was 25, I had a seizure at work.

Sadly my workplace wasn't sensitive to my condition so I left.

I started working for a herbalist, and began looking into natural remedies and alternative medicines.

Michael and I also had our first baby, a boy also called Michael, followed by daughters Alexis and Anastasia.

Sharing my experience and story with others, I wrote a book called *Epilepsy, You're Not*

Doctors said that I was unlikely to survive

Alone. The response was overwhelming.

You've saved my life, one woman wrote to me.

It felt great to be able to help people who had been suffering just like me.

I've become an epilepsy coach, life coach and motivational speaker, even appearing on television.

My condition has given me the chance to help others empower themselves and be resilient in the face of challenges.

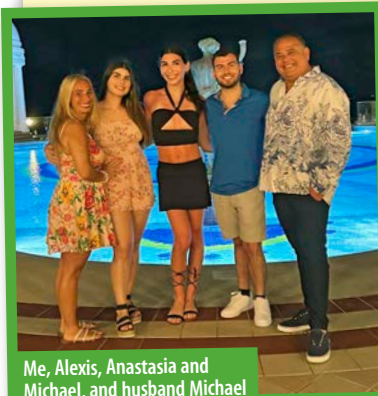
Who would have thought epilepsy would change my life for the better? ●

See staceychillemi.com for more

EPILEPSY

- A neurological disorder, epilepsy's symptoms include seizures caused by disruption of the electrical activity in the brain.
- Causes include genetics, head trauma, stroke and infection of the brain.
- Around 250,000 Aussies, and up to 50,000 Kiwis, live with epilepsy.

AS TOLD TO OLIVE CLARK



Me, Alexis, Anastasia and Michael, and husband Michael