

# ***Perfection Handbook – Epilepsy Ontario***

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Dear Teacher or Coordinator,

Thank you for your interest in *Perfection*, our play and program about epilepsy and body image. This short play and accompanying materials were developed as an awareness and outreach activity in 2004/2005 as a way to involve students of different ages in discussing issues relevant to them. It is designed for grade four and/or five students to participate in production and follow-up activities, which explore themes outlined in their Health Curriculum, including:

- i. the influence of the media on body image
- ii. identifying factors that lead to healthy relationships
- iii. understanding bullying and how it affects the bully, the victim, and bystanders
- iv. learning strategies for dealing with social and peer pressure

### **About The Play:**

*Perfection* explores these themes through the interpersonal relationships of the characters. In the play, the main character Jenny reflects upon her epilepsy and the social pressures it is creating as she is growing up. Supported by a friend that models loyal and supportive behaviour and a mother who insists on encouragement and unconditional love, Jenny gains the strength and wisdom to understand that everyone faces their own challenges. This discovery leads her to deal with her own obstacles in a healthy manner; by liberating herself from the media standards of superficial perfection and choosing instead a reality of approaching life's challenges in a healthy, socially responsible manner.

### **About The Handbook:**

Included in this handbook are two versions of the play and program *Perfection*. The first is a Reader's Theatre Script of the play intended for grade four/five students. The play should take no longer than one hour to rehearse and perform, and we hope you will also allow time for discussion and activities (which can be found in the "Grade 4 / 5 Follow-up Activities" section of this handbook). These activities aim to solidify the play's message and educate students about epilepsy.

Be sure to look for our helpful "Ideas" (marked with a light bulb) at the bottom of certain pages. These are small, extra ideas provided to help you implement the program!

In this handbook, you will also find the second version of the play and program: a full script written to be rehearsed and performed by classes of older students (grades six to twelve) for a grade four/five audience. If the play is being performed by an upper level class, encourage them to lead the discussion and activities in groups with the younger audience members. Flip to the "The Play as Presentation" section of the handbook for more information on presenting the play.

This handbook is intended to make this program easy to implement and to encourage participation and discussion with students of different ages. The most important goal of the program is to make a difference for all parties involved by touching people of different ages in ways which may increase awareness and help children to grow to maturity with confidence and respect.

Following this letter, you will find a few pages of information about epilepsy to aid you in answering any questions that you or your students may have. Please do not hesitate to contact Epilepsy Ontario at 1-800-463-1119 if you have further questions, concerns, or need suggestions or assistance with implementation of the program.

Thank you,

Alysse Rich  
Author and Program Coordinator 2004/2005

## **What is Epilepsy?**

- From <http://epilepsyontario.org> -

Epilepsy is sometimes referred to as a seizure disorder. Epilepsy is a neurological disorder — a physical condition — which causes sudden bursts of electrical energy in the brain.

These electrical discharges produce sudden, brief seizures which vary from one person to another in frequency and form.

A seizure may appear as

- a brief stare
- an unusual movement of the body
- a change of awareness, or a convulsion.

A seizure may last a few seconds or a few minutes.

Epilepsy is —

- not a disease
- not a psychological disorder
- not contagious.

## **Causes**

In approximately 60-75% of all cases, there is no known cause. Of the remaining cases, there are a number of frequently identified causes.

### **Identifiable Causes**

- brain injury to the foetus during pregnancy
- birth trauma (lack of oxygen)
- poisoning from substance abuse or environmental contaminants (lead poisoning)
- aftermath of infection (meningitis)
- head trauma (car accident, sports injury, shaken baby syndrome)
- alteration in blood sugar (hypoglycemia)
- other metabolic illness (hypocalcemia)
- brain tumour
- stroke

### **Is there a Cure?**

Although treatments are available to reduce the frequency and severity of seizures, there is no known cure for epilepsy as yet.

## **...more Facts About Epilepsy**

- From <http://epilepsyontario.org> -

### **Age**

Epilepsy can develop at any age.

About 50% of new cases of epilepsy begin in childhood and adolescence, with the highest incidence during the first few months of life. Many people who develop seizures during their childhood or adolescence tend to experience a reduction in the intensity and frequency of seizures as they approach adulthood.

There is also a sharp increase in incidence during later life, with some studies showing almost 25% of new cases of seizures occurring after age 60.

### **Prevalence**

It is estimated that 1-2% of the population have had, or will have, some form of seizure disorder during their lifetime. That's possibly as many as 1 person in 50.

### **Genetics**

In most cases, epilepsy is not inherited. Sometimes, a tendency towards a seizure disorder may be inherited but, even with this tendency, certain conditions must exist in the brain before a person will experience seizures.

### **Living with Epilepsy**

Epilepsy can carry with it a host of social and psychological problems. Friends' and family's lack of understanding about seizure disorders is often due to ignorance and/or fear. This sometimes leads to overprotectiveness or imposition of unnecessary restrictions on the individual.

Other personal issues may include insecurity, anger, frustration and depression.

### **School**

#### **General Guidelines**

Students with seizure disorders can progress through growth and developmental stages normally. They are active and are interested in the same activities as their peers. They should be encouraged to take part in all regular school activities, including sports.

#### **Problems at School**

If a student with a seizure disorder is having academic or social problems at school, assistance is available. For academic problems, ask to see the Special Education Consultant for your area, or contact your local epilepsy association.

## **First Aid for Seizures**

- From <http://epilepsyontario.org> -

In all types of seizures, the goal is to protect the person from harm until full awareness returns. If you are living with or caring for someone with a seizure disorder who has other medical problems, check with the doctor about how to respond when a seizure happens. Find out whether the doctor wants to be notified every time or just in certain circumstances. Ask whether or when you should call an ambulance and if there are any special warning signals that you should be looking for. Also note the general rule:

The less done to a person during a relatively brief seizure, the better.

### **1. Keep Calm.**

Seizures may appear frightening to the onlooker.

They usually last only a few minutes and generally do not require medical attention.

Remember that the person having a seizure may be unaware of their actions and may or may not hear you.

### **2. Protect from further injury.**

If necessary, ease the person to the floor.

Move any hard, sharp or hot objects well away.

Protect the person's head and body from injury. Loosen any tight neckwear.

### **3. Do not restrain the person.**

If danger threatens, gently guide the person away.

Agitation during seizure episodes is common.

Trying to restrain or grabbing hold of someone having a seizure is likely to make the agitation worse and may trigger an instinctive aggressive response.

### **4. Do not insert anything in the mouth.**

The person is not going to swallow the tongue.

Attempting to force open the mouth may break the teeth or cause other oral injuries.

### **5. Roll the person on their side after the seizure subsides.**

This enables saliva to flow from the mouth, helping to ensure an open air passage.

If there is vomit, keep the person on their side and clear out their mouth with your finger.

### **6. If a seizure lasts longer than 5 minutes, or repeats without full recovery ~ SEEK MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IMMEDIATELY.**

Although this rarely occurs, *status epilepticus* is life-threatening. It is a serious medical emergency.

### **7. Talk gently to the person.**

After any type of seizure, comfort and reassure the person to assist them in reorienting themselves. The person may need to rest or sleep. If the person wanders, stay with them and talk gently to them.

### **Check for a MedicAlert™ or other Medical ID Bracelet**

The bracelet or necklet may indicate the seizure type and any medication the person is taking. If you call the MedicAlert hotline, an operator can direct you in your first aid procedures and may direct you to call any emergency contacts and physicians listed in that member's file.

## **Materials: What You'll Need to Get Started**

### **Reader's Theatre: Reading the Play**

- copies of script for each student (and yourself)
- highlighters or coloured pencils (for students to underline their own lines)

### **Written Activities:**

- one photocopy per student
- a writing utensil per student
- the answer sheet and glossary of terms (for you)

### **Activity #2:**

- one cue card per group
- a writing utensil

### **Activity #3:**

- a piece of paper per student
- a writing utensil per student



*Consider putting props, script, and all materials in a box or suitcase, because then you can create excitement by saying, "A whole play is in this box"!*



*Consider using minimal props such as dollar-store microphones for Lawrence and Mandy, and a remote control for Jenny. These props will aid the students in speaking loudly as actors and will help the other students to envision the action of the play.*

## **Description: Getting Started**

### **(For Coordinator or Teacher):**

1. Give an overview of the basic plot of the play, and basic epilepsy knowledge (*Epilepsy Information is provided on page 4*)
2. Assign the parts, either by:
  - i. using the sheet the night before, or
  - ii. using the sheet to look at the boy/girl ratio in the scenes and putting the students in groups on the spot (ie. “Who wants to be Jenny in this scene?” or “I need 2 girls and 1 boy for this scene”)  
(*The part assignment sheet is pages 11-12*)
3. Have each student should go through the script and underline or highlight the lines that belong to them, including the lines marked “All”.
4. Give them a few helpful acting tips:
  - Try not to hold your paper in front of your mouth – hold it further down toward your waist
  - Do not stand with your back to the audience
  - Speak loudly so everyone will know what is happening in your scene!
5. Have the students practice their scenes in groups.  
Narrators practice with their partners (ie. Narrator #1 with Narrator #2, Narrator #3 with Narrator #4, etc.).  
Students may need you to walk around to answer questions about vocabulary words, or the action of certain sections.
6. Call everyone to re-assemble as a group. Explain how the reading of play is going to work.  
**Reminder:** the lines that say “All” are for everyone in the class to shout!
7. Start the reading! Announce the new scene number when it comes up. Otherwise, try not to interrupt unless necessary.
8. Lead discussion and a follow-up activity if desired (*see pages 37-44*).



*When discussing epilepsy with the class, give them a first aid poster for their classroom (you can print the first aid page of this handbook, on page 6)*



*Think of the best way for the play to be read. Are the students going to read from their seats? Take turns going up to the front? This will depend on the classroom and how long the students have been practicing.*



*Give out a certificate to the class for their hard work (located on page 45), and praise the class for being inclusive and supportive of each other and people with epilepsy!*



## Expectations: Grade Five

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Expectations</b>
<p><b>Healthy Living:</b> <i>Growth and Development:</i></p> <p><i>Personal Safety and Injury Prevention:</i></p>	<p>-identify strategies to deal positively with stress and pressures that result from relationships with family and friends; -identify factors (e.g., trust, honesty, caring) that enhance healthy relationships with friends, family, and peers;</p> <p>-explain how people’s actions (e.g., bullying, excluding others) can affect the feelings and reactions of others; -apply strategies (e.g., anger management, assertiveness, conflict resolution) to deal with personal-safety and injury-prevention situations (e.g., swarming, threatening, harassment)</p>
<p><b>Drama and Dance:</b> <i>Knowledge of Elements:</i></p> <p><i>Creative Work:</i></p> <p><i>Critical Thinking:</i></p>	<p>-demonstrate awareness of audience when writing in role, and use the appropriate language, tone of voice, gestures, and body movements when speaking as a character in a drama</p> <p>-rehearse and perform small-group drama and dance presentations drawn from novels, poems, stories, plays, and other source materials</p> <p>-describe, orally and in writing, the differences between their own responses to a situation and the responses of a character they have portrayed -solve problems in drama and dance individually and in groups (e.g., negotiate the “best” ending to an improvisation), and evaluate the solutions</p>
<p><b>Science:</b> <i>Life Systems: Human Organ Systems, Understanding Basic Concepts</i></p>	<p>-describe the basic structure and function of the major organs in the respiratory, circulatory, digestive, excretory, and nervous systems</p>

## **Teacher Role Assignment and Evaluation Sheet**

Although the number of lines is given for each character, this is a totally flexible system. A student can play more than one part if you have a small group, and the scenes can be further divided if there is a surplus of students (ie. more than 30).

Also, please note that although a character may seem to have only a few lines, this list does not account for line length.

For best results, assign the best readers the largest parts. There are enough medium-sized parts that no one should feel insulted! Those students who show little or no interest in acting might make wonderful narrators. And remember, the genders are not very important for characters like Dad, Lawrence, and Mandy; you might need to make alterations, such as changing "Dad" to "Mom".

### **Scene One: Dad tucks Jenny into bed, her dream begins**

<b>Character</b>	<b># Of Lines</b>	<b>Student's Name</b>	<b>Evaluation/Comments</b>
Jenny	9		
Dad	4		
Narrator #1	6		
Narrator #2	6		
Lawrence	7		
Mandy	5		
Narrator #3	5		
Narrator #4	5		

### **Scene Two: Jenny and Andrew work on project (flashback)**

<b>Character</b>	<b># Of Lines</b>	<b>Student's Name</b>	<b>Mark/Comments</b>
Andrew	9		
Jenny	8		
Narrator #3	1		
Narrator #4	1		

### **Scene Three: Jenny's seizure and seizure explanation**

<b>Character</b>	<b># Of Lines</b>	<b>Student's Name</b>	<b>Mark/Comments</b>
Lawrence	3		
Mandy	3		
Jenny	2		
Narrator #5	7		
Narrator #6	7		

**Scene Four: Jenny and Natasha walk home from school (flashback)**

<b>Character</b>	<b># Of Lines</b>	<b>Student's Name</b>	<b>Mark/Comments</b>
Jenny	10		
Natasha	10		
Narrator #7	1		
Narrator #8	1		

**Scene Five: Hosts and Jenny discuss Natasha**

<b>Character</b>	<b># Of Lines</b>	<b>Student's Name</b>	<b>Mark/Comments</b>
Jenny	5		
Lawrence	5		
Mandy	5		
Narrator #7	1		
Narrator #8	1		

**Scene Six: Samantha bullies Jenny**

<b>Character</b>	<b># Of Lines</b>	<b>Student's Name</b>	<b>Mark/Comments</b>
Samantha	6		
Natasha	11		
Jenny	7		
Narrator #7	2		
Narrator #8	2		

**Scene Seven: Jenny takes charge, wakes up**

<b>Character</b>	<b># Of Lines</b>	<b>Student's Name</b>	<b>Mark/Comments</b>
Mandy	3		
Lawrence	4		
Jenny	10		
Dad	4		
Narrator #7	4		
Narrator #8	4		
Narrator #1	1		

Perfection:  
A Reader's Theatre Production

**A Note To The Actors:**

**This is the page where you read about your character.**

**Are you playing someone mean or nice?**

**Young or old?**

**Loud or quiet?**

**Make sure that you know what your character is like so that you can say the lines the way that your character would say them!**

**Jenny:** A smart and friendly girl with epilepsy who is 11 years old.

**Dad:** Jenny's caring and encouraging Father. He is very supportive to his daughter and tries to help her make good decisions.

**Lawrence and Mandy:** Two very fake and exaggerated TV show hosts. They think that they are giving good advice, but they are very pushy and care too much about appearances. They are loud and bossy.

**Andrew:** A funny, helpful boy in Jenny's class. They joke around together while they are working on a school project.

**Natasha:** A very loyal friend. She and Jenny have been friends for a long time, and they know each other very well.

**Samantha:** Another girl in Jenny's class. She is bossy and mean, and she teases other kids. She always wants to get her way.

**Narrators:** These roles are very important. You are not a character in the story, but your job is to tell everyone what is happening. Make sure that you use a loud, clear voice!

## Scene 1:

**Narrator #1:** One night when Jenny was being tucked into bed,

**Narrator #2:** She turned to her father and sadly said:

**Narrator #1:** She wondered if she was perfect enough,

**Narrator #2:** Would she have friends, do well in school, and all that stuff?

**Narrator #1:** Jenny was worried about her epilepsy,

**Narrator #2:** And that is how her crazy dream came to be.

**Narrator #1:** She worried about how she would fit in,

**Narrator #2:** And that's where this story is about to begin!

**Narrator #1:** So this is the story of how Jenny's family and friends

**Narrator #2:** Proved to her that in the end,

**Narrator #1:** Everyone has problems, big or small,

**Narrator #2:** And no one is perfect, after all.

**Jenny:** Dad, do you ever wish I was more perfect?

**Dad:** Never! You know I love you just the way you are. But why are you asking me? Is it because of what happened with Andrew?

**Jenny:** Yeah, I'm kind of embarrassed, I guess. (*frustrated*) If I was normal, it never would have happened. And then more people would like me.

**Dad:** I don't know anyone who doesn't like you. And everyone is different. You know that.

**Jenny:** (*not convinced*) Yeah, I guess. Goodnight, Dad.

**Dad:** Goodnight, Jenny. You'll feel better in the morning.

**Jenny:** I hope so.

*Dad turns off the light.*

**Dad:** Sweet dreams.

**Narrator #3:** When Jenny's Dad turned off the light

**Narrator #4:** Jenny fell asleep without a fight

**Narrator #3:** That night she had an incredible dream

**Narrator #4:** In front of her, she saw the strangest scene.

**Narrator #3:** First she saw a television show's set

**Narrator #4:** And two people that she had never met.

**Narrator #3:** She was a little bit frightened, I think you should know

**Narrator #4:** To be on a reality TV show!

**Lawrence:** Hello, and welcome to the newest reality show, Mr. and Mrs. Perfect! I'm your host, Lawrence – but you can call me “Perfect”. And as always, I'm here with my beautiful co-host, Mandy!

**Mandy:** Wow, Lawrence, it's quite a show we have for today.

**Lawrence:** That's right, Mandy. And just wait until you see the first “project”. She's a girl from <insert name of your school> in *desperate* need of a bit of perfection. Why, I hear she isn't even considered cool at school.

**Mandy:** Oh my goodness, Lawrence. Sounds like we have a lot of work ahead of us today! But don't worry, viewers, we can add perfection to *anyone's* life!

**Lawrence:** We sure can! Now, let's introduce today's project. Jenny, come on out!

**Jenny:** What's going on? Am I dreaming?

**Lawrence:** You sure are! ...*Dreaming* that you could be perfect!

**Mandy:** You poor thing. I can't believe that you have any friends at all.

**Jenny:** Hey, wait a minute, I –

**Lawrence:** Don't you worry, Jenny. We're going to help you become the most perfect person at school.

**Jenny:** But... (*Jenny stops to think*) Well, okay. I guess I probably need some help.

**Mandy:** You sure do!

**Narrator #3:** All of a sudden, something strange was in her hand

**Narrator #4:** And she wondered if it was part of a plan.

**Jenny:** What's this remote control for?

**Lawrence:** Well, this is *your* show! We're here to give you suggestions for becoming perfect. In order to do this, we need to look at some parts of your daily life.

**Mandy:** So, when we say “Roll the tape!”, you press ‘play’ and we'll all watch a scene of something that has happened to you in the past few days. It will be a memory of yours, played out for everyone to see. Got it?

**Jenny:** I think so...

**Lawrence:** Ready, audience? We'll all say “Roll the Tape” on the count of three. One, Two, Three....

**All:** (*shout!*) **ROLL THE TAPE!**

## Scene 2:

**Narrator #3:** All of a sudden, Jenny saw herself joking around with Andrew

**Narrator #4:** While they were working on a project with markers and glue.

**Andrew:** I don't think the colours of our bristol board match.

**Jenny:** Are you kidding? This will be the best display board in the class!

**Andrew:** (*being sarcastic*) Yeah, the best purple and yellow board...

**Jenny:** Exactly!

**Andrew:** Hey, remember at the beginning of the year when you told the class how to help you in case you have a seizure?

**Jenny:** Yeah, of course.

**Andrew:** I thought that was really cool of you. You explained it without being too shy.

**Jenny:** Thanks, Andrew. It's really important, because I still have seizures sometimes. I need everyone to understand so that people can help me and I won't get hurt.

**Andrew:** My brother says that his friend has seizures, too. But when he has them, he just looks like he's staring into space, and then he doesn't remember anything.

**Jenny:** That's an absence seizure. Other people have different seizures, too. Even though I fall on the ground and shake, some people look like they're staring, and some people wander around. Everyone's seizures look different because everyone's brain is different.

**Andrew:** Yeah. I bet mine's really squishy and gross and makes noises when I move around like this! *Andrew makes gross squishing noises and Jenny laughs.*

**Jenny:** Ew, Andrew, that's sick!

**Andrew:** Seriously though, I think both our brains have had some trouble coming up with matching colours. Are you *sure* purple and yellow will look good?

**Jenny:** Well maybe, as long as you let me do all the letters. You suck at bubble letters. Besides, *you* picked these colours!

**Andrew:** (*laughing*) Yeah, I guess. But *you* are terrible at gluing. *Everything* is sticky! I can't touch anything without getting stuck to it!

**Jenny:** Oh, come on. Can you pass me the blue marker?

**Andrew:** Sure, if I can unstick it from the floor! (*Looking for the marker*) Do you want the light blue or dark blue? Jenny? Jenny, are you alright?

### **Scene 3:**

**Narrator #5:** All of a sudden, Jenny fell to the floor

**Narrator #6:** Her whole body shook, he'd never seen that before.

**Narrator #5:** Jenny was having a seizure, but it wasn't scary for Andrew.

**Narrator #6:** He was prepared and knew just what to do.

**Narrator #5:** He called out for her Dad, he was the adult around

**Narrator #6:** He stayed calm the whole time, and moved the sharp objects that he found.

**Narrator #5:** He put something soft under her head, what a friend!

**Narrator #6:** And waited until the seizure reached its end.

**Narrator #5:** Andrew was brave and Jenny's dad helped as a guide.

**Narrator #6:** When the seizure had finished they rolled her onto her side.

**Narrator #5:** They stayed with her and knew just what to say.

**Narrator #6:** She was a bit confused, but they told her "everything's okay".

**Narrator #5:** Then that scene faded and she was back on the TV show set

**Narrator #6:** She knew her reality show dream wasn't over just yet....

**Lawrence:** What was that all about, Jenny? That was not perfection. That was not even normal.

**Mandy:** And that outfit! What were you thinking? Do you really think Andrew will want to go out with you when you dress and act like that?!?

**Lawrence:** The only solution is for you to *never* act that way again. Does that sound like a plan or what, Mandy?

**Mandy:** That is the perfect first step to perfection!

**Jenny:** But wait, I... I can't help it. I have epilepsy.

**Lawrence:** Epilepsy?

**Jenny:** It's a disorder in my brain. It's not my fault. Everyone's brain sends signals to their body, and sometimes the signals in mine get mixed up. And then I have a seizure like that. I don't have them often anymore, but sometimes I do. And anyway, I don't want Andrew to date me, he's just my friend.

**Mandy:** (*being sarcastic*) Yeah...sure, Jenny. Whatever you say. Isn't she funny, audience?!? Don't worry, she's a challenge, but I still think we can help her! Let's look at another clip! Ready, everyone? One, two, three...

**All:** ROLL THE TAPE!

## **Scene 4:**

**Narrator #7:** Jenny saw herself with Natasha, her best friend

**Narrator #8:** Walking down the street after school had come to an end.

**Jenny:** What are you doing in a bit? Do you have any plans?

**Natasha:** I don't think so.

**Jenny:** Do you want to walk to the corner and get slushies?

**Natasha:** Um, sure! But I'll have to call my mom from your house, okay?

**Jenny:** Okay.

**Natasha:** Are you sure that you're feeling well enough? I heard about your seizure yesterday.

**Jenny:** Yeah, I'm fine now. You know me, I'm tired for a little while, but then I'm back to my normal self!

**Natasha:** That's true. I just wanted to make sure that you didn't hurt yourself during your seizure.

**Jenny:** No way. Andrew was really great.

**Natasha:** Did he remember everything he was supposed to do?

**Jenny:** Yeah, he moved all the sharp things out of the way and called for help. He knew not to put anything in my mouth, and just to put something soft under my head. Other than that, he just let me have the seizure, just like I told everyone to do.

**Natasha:** Did he roll you over like we learned?

**Jenny:** Yup, he even remembered to roll me on my side after my seizure. But by then my Dad had come downstairs anyway. He was really brave.

**Natasha:** He looked proud about doing such a good job. I'm really glad he remembered what to do; I know how important it is to stay calm just so you can remember how to help.

**Jenny:** I guess you've learned something from being friends with me for so long!

**Natasha:** Yup, now I'm a pro! I'll see you at your house in 10 minutes?

**Jenny:** Sure.

**Natasha:** Okay, perfect! I'll see you soon.

## **Scene 5:**

**Narrator #7:** Then all of a sudden the flashback was gone

**Narrator #8:** The reality show was going to go on....

**Mandy:** Wasn't that pathetic, folks? Poor Jenny, you really do need our help! We got here just in time!

**Lawrence:** That's for sure.

**Jenny:** I don't get it. What was pathetic?

**Lawrence:** Oh Honey, you're so imperfect that you can't even tell! First of all, just look at that friend! That awful hair, that messy look...can't she buy better clothes than those hand-me-downs? And what do you think you are doing hanging out with someone who has to (*using a baby voice to make fun of her*) call their Mommy?

**Mandy:** That *is* pretty lame...And talking about that seizure? You really should never speak about something weird like that. You'll just draw attention to it.

**Jenny:** But Natasha is my best friend, and I don't care how she is dressed. I know her family can't always afford fancy clothes. I like her because she's nice, and funny, and if she has her own way of dressing, why should that bother me?

**Lawrence:** Because it's not cool! Hanging out with *imperfect* people like that will not help you be perfect. Or even a little bit cool, for that matter.

**Jenny:** I'm starting to think that might not be what I want...

**Mandy:** Of course it's what you want. So, our current list of tips is... get nicer clothes, find a cooler and prettier best friend, stop having seizures - and if you have them, for goodness sake, don't talk about them!

**Jenny:** But my doctor told me that it's good to talk about them. There are lots of different types of seizures, and if I hadn't told my class at school how to help me when I have mine, then Andrew wouldn't have known what to do. I could have really hurt myself!

**Mandy:** But right now, you're hurting your chance for perfection.

**Jenny:** I guess....

**Lawrence:** You guess?!? Of course we're right. That's what perfection *is*, my dear.

**Mandy:** Let's look at one more clip and we'll see if we can add more to our list of perfect suggestions! One, two, three...

**All: ROLL THE TAPE!**

## **Scene 6:**

**Narrator #7:** This flashback took place at recess a few days before

**Narrator #8:** Jenny and Natasha bounced a ball back and forth.

**Narrator #7:** Jenny bounced the ball a bit too high over Natasha's head,

**Narrator #8:** So the ball was caught by Samantha instead!

**Samantha:** Here you go, Natasha.

**Natasha:** Thanks.

**Samantha:** Hey, Nat, I'm setting up a game of foursquare. Do you want to play?

**Natasha:** Yeah, sure! With me and Jenny, you'll only need one more person. And we can use our ball.

**Samantha:** Actually, I just meant you. I said, "Do YOU want to play?"

**Natasha:** (*confused*) Well, I'm already playing with Jenny.

**Samantha:** Oh yeah? Well, I'm organizing the game, so I get to choose. And I don't want to play with Jenny.

**Jenny:** Why can't I play?

**Natasha:** Don't listen to her, Jenny. Let's just forget it. Ignore her and we'll play just the two of us.

**Samantha:** You know, I WAS thinking of inviting Alex to play...

**Natasha:** ...Alex?

**Jenny:** Nat, I know you like Alex. You can go play with them.

**Natasha:** No way! It doesn't matter. I would never ditch you like that.

**Samantha:** Alright, that's your problem. I'll just see if Alex wants to play with *me*.

*Samantha exits.*

**Jenny:** Nat, you didn't have to do that. You don't have to stay with me. You've liked Alex for so long!

**Natasha:** Yeah, but I *don't* like Samantha. She's so bossy, and she thinks she's so cool.

**Jenny:** Yeah. But she asked you to play. That was pretty nice. I wonder why she didn't ask me.

**Natasha:** Well....She's not really a great friend. She's been saying mean things about you since your seizure the other day. She's always saying you're crazy, and she told some of our class that you're contagious and they could catch it.

**Jenny:** But that's so silly! I'm not crazy; I just have seizures. And you can't catch epilepsy. That's like saying you could catch someone's blue eyes, or their height.

**Natasha:** I know, and I told everyone not to listen to her. But she's so mean. I think she's just scared because she doesn't understand it. You know, I found out that her mom and dad are getting divorced.

**Jenny:** Really? That's sad. Maybe she's afraid people will make fun of her. I guess everyone has something that they are dealing with.

**Natasha:** Yup. But that's no excuse for her to be mean to you! I'm just sorry she didn't want to play with both of us.

**Jenny:** I don't really care. I'm just happy to have a friend like you who will stand up for me and not ditch me for anything.....even Alex.

**Natasha:** Don't worry. I know that if people were making fun of me, you'd stand up for me, too!

## Scene 7:

**Narrator #7:** The flashbacks are over, the last clip is through.

**Narrator #8:** Now we'll find out what Jenny will do....

**Mandy:** Well, that little film clip makes me feel even stronger that you need to get rid of Natasha.

**Lawrence:** I agree. If you didn't hang out with her, you could try to become Samantha's best friend. Then everyone would listen to you like they listen to her.

**Jenny:** What are you talking about? That clip just proves how nice and loyal Natasha is. It shows she's a good friend. Didn't you see how she stuck up for me when Samantha was mean?

**Mandy:** I don't know about that. I really liked that Samantha girl. She's a model of everything you should try to be: she is smart, she takes charge, she's pretty, boys like her, and I bet she has tons of friends.

**Jenny:** Yeah, maybe, but she's also mean and talks behind people's backs. And she has problems, too, she just hides them. I'd rather have only a few good friends if it means I don't have to hide things from them.

**Lawrence:** Look, Jenny –

**Jenny:** / think that film clip shows that *no one* is perfect, and everyone is dealing with something. But it's how you deal with your problems and how you treat other people that counts.

**Lawrence:** Isn't she funny, audience? Now listen, Jenny. If there were no such thing as perfect people, then how could we be here?

**Jenny:** I bet you have problems and just hide them by being mean and judging people like me – you're just like Samantha! And you're *not* really here – you're just a dream. You're *my* dream.

**Narrator #7:** Jenny remembered her special tool

**Narrator #8:** The remote control – now she wouldn't be fooled!

**Narrator #7:** She picked it up and thought about pressing 'power'

**Narrator #8:** That would cancel their show and this made them sour.

**Mandy:** Now Jenny, don't cancel our show! Just think: how will you become perfect? How will we help other unfortunate people become perfect?

**Jenny:** All this is making me realize that no one needs to be perfect. Everyone just needs to be the best they can be. And for me, that means being nice to my friends, and dealing with my epilepsy in the best way possible: by teaching other people about it and trying to understand their problems, too.

**Lawrence:** Mandy, this project is getting out of control!

**Jenny:** You bet it is. Because now, / am in control...And I say this dream is over!

**Narrator #7:** She pressed the button, the dream was broken,

**Narrator #8:** and before she knew it, she was being woken.

**Dad:** Jenny? Jenny? Jenny, wake up! You've slept in – my goodness, you're sleeping so heavily. Do you feel better?

**Jenny:** Yeah, I think so.

**Dad:** I'm so glad to hear that, Honey. Natasha is waiting for you downstairs; she says you made plans to go to the park this morning. Maybe you two would like to have some breakfast first? I don't think she's eaten yet, so I told her to wait for you.

**Jenny:** Okay, thanks!

**Dad:** I'm so glad you're back to your normal self. You know, Jenny, I was really worried about you last night. I felt like you were trying to fit someone else's definition of perfection...I don't know where you got that idea from.

**Jenny:** Yeah, I guess I was.

**Dad:** You know, sweetheart, I was thinking...there *isn't* really a definition of perfection. So it's more important to meet your own goals and be the best person you can.

**Jenny:** I know, Dad. I think I finally figured out that perfection is just a dream.

**Narrator #1:** So that was the end of Jenny's crazy dreams

**Narrator #2:** Where she learned that perfection is not what it seems.

**Narrator #3:** She has new ideas now about who she wants to be

**Narrator #4:** She's not embarrassed about her epilepsy

**Narrator #3:** Because she knows everyone has problems, big or small

**Narrator #4:** And no one is perfect, after all.

Dear Teacher,

Thank you for selecting this play as an activity for your class! We are certain that your production will be a success, and wish to thank you for your help in spreading awareness about epilepsy. In this section, you will find the upper level version of the play *Perfection*, designed for performance by students in grades six to twelve, for an audience of grade four and five students. The play can be adapted for performance in classrooms, but would be wonderful at assemblies in a gymnasium setting. It is probable that your class has more students than there are characters, so you will need to decide whether you want to have groups rehearse different versions of the play, or to only have one cast and assign the rest of the class other positions, such as:

- Director(s) – someone who sees the play as a whole, and helps the actors to find the reasons for their actions by telling them where to move and helping them say their lines to convey the meaning; oversees all elements of the production.
- Stage Manager(s) – someone who is very organized and facilitates communication between all the other members of cast and crew by making calendars, lists, and attending rehearsals to take notes on what the director says
- Props Person/People– in charge of finding the props required and keeping track of them, making sure that they are in the right place, etc.
- Costume Person/People – in charge of finding (or creating) the right costumes, altering them, keeping track of them, etc.
- Public Relations – in charge of advertising and keeping open communication with schools (and teachers) where the play is intended to be performed.  
*(if you have not already connected with an elementary school classroom in which to perform, see the Public Relations letter templates located on pages 25-26)*
- Technicians – people who plan and implement technical elements of the show, such as lights and sound (including music); be sure they know what facilities the performance space has!
- Set Designers/Builders – after examining the script and speaking with the director, these people plan the set, find all of the elements (or build them) and transport them to the performance space.

The people in these positions can also act as discussion and activity facilitators on the day of the show. It might be beneficial to have a question-and-answer period with the whole audience, and then to have discussion and activities in small groups. The materials for discussion and activities are located in the “Grade 4 / 5 Follow-up Activities” section. Please note that if you plan to have your students facilitate discussions and activities, it may be important to review active listening and facilitating skills in your class, and predict some issues that may arise so that your students feel prepared to answer questions and handle a group.

Again, thank you for your support. If you require more materials, or have comments or questions, please feel free to contact Epilepsy Ontario at 1-800-463-1119.

Sincerely,

Alysse Rich - Author and Program Coordinator 2004/2005

SOLICITATION LETTER: TEMPLATE

DATE

Dear (PRINCIPAL) and Staff,

We are currently offering an exciting presentation for grades four and five students that is both entertaining and educational. Student volunteers have been working diligently and are proud to offer a new program, *Perfection*. *Perfection* is a short scripted play which is designed to aid in presenting some themes from the grade four and five Ontario Health curriculum, including bullying, media and self-image, and building healthy relationships.

The play's story is about a young girl's experiences with epilepsy, acceptance, and growing up. The lessons presented in the play not only help to spread awareness about epilepsy, but its themes are applicable to all students in the formative years of their education.

The student volunteers have worked diligently to rehearse the script and assemble this half hour show. It can be adapted for performance in either a classroom or at an assembly. The short presentation is free of charge, however, a donation to support the program would be greatly appreciated. In addition to the short play, the actors provide a brief question-and-answer period after the show to answer any questions about epilepsy or other issues that are examined in the play. The actors and crew are also available to lead follow-up activities in the classrooms following the performance.

To book a performance or discuss any question or concerns, please contact \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

Sincerely,

(YOUR NAME)

THANK-YOU LETTER: TEMPLATE

DATE

Dear (PRINCIPAL) and Staff,

Thank you for inviting us into your school for the presentation of *Perfection*. We hope that you found it a valuable and worthwhile experience for your staff and students. We are always grateful for the opportunity to spread awareness regarding important issues such as epilepsy, self-confidence, and body image.

We would like to thank the students and staff for their interest and attention. We hope that they gained a better understanding of epilepsy and that the show provided the momentum for further discussion and activities. .

Thank you again for your time and generous support.

Sincerely,

(YOUR NAME)

# Perfection

Alysse Rich

*This is the version of the script intended for actors in grades 6-12 to perform for an audience of grade four and five students. The follow-up activities for the audience can be found in the section entitled “**Grade 4 / 5 Follow-up Activities**”.*

*Production Notes: This script includes instructions for the lighting of the show. However, it is probable that most Elementary School production spaces are not equipped for these technical requests. Instead, the Director may choose to work with tableaux or freezing to direct the audience’s attention toward the action.*

## Characters:

**Jenny:** A smart and compassionate young woman with epilepsy, in approximately grade four or five. Although normally emotionally strong, she is experiencing a crisis in confidence due to her recent seizure in the presence of a classmate. The actor that takes on this part must be sure to do thorough research about epilepsy in order to realistically portray a seizure. She should also investigate what it is like for a young person to have epilepsy in order to understand the stigmas and struggles Jenny faces.

**Mom:** A caring and supportive maternal figure. She has a close relationship with her daughter Jenny, and has been exceptionally supportive to Jenny as both a parent and a role model.

**Lawrence and Mandy:** Exaggerated versions of superficial, self-indulgent television hosts. Both are transparent, stubborn, interfering, and closed-minded. They truly believe that their advice is a gift to less ‘perfect’ people.

**Andrew:** A humorous, good-natured boy in Jenny’s class. As they work on a school project, they joke around by teasing each other (in a non-offensive manner).

**Natasha:** The model of a loyal friend. She and Jenny have a long history of friendship which should be apparent to the audience. Her parents are not as wealthy as those of her friends, and she does not place much value in aesthetics and superficiality.

**Samantha:** Another girl in Jenny’s class. Generally the ringleader in teasing and minor bullying. She enjoys her power by flaunting it and making others squirm when she doesn’t get her way. In fact, her cruelty masks insecurity about herself and her home life (though she must not be portrayed too sympathetically).

*Lights up.*

*Jenny is being tucked into bed by her mother DR. Lighting is only of that area – soft edges, indicating domesticity and warmth.*

Jenny: (*agitated*) Mom, do you ever wish I was more perfect?

Mom: (*comforting*) Never! You know I love you just the way you are.

*Pause.*

Why are you asking me? Is it because of what happened with Andrew?

Jenny: Yeah, I'm kind of embarrassed, I guess. (*frustrated*) If I was normal, it never would have happened. ...And then more people would like me.

Mom: I don't know anyone who doesn't like you. And everyone is different. I know you know that.

Jenny: (*not convinced*) Yeah, I guess. 'Night, mom.

Mom: Goodnight, Jenny. You'll feel better in the morning.

*Lights dim.*

Mom: Sweet dreams.

*Jenny rolls over. (Lights remain dim on Jenny sleeping until otherwise indicated.) Lights come up on UC, revealing a platform/riser. Lawrence stands on the platform, gaudily dressed and speaking arrogantly, directly to the audience (of students). Everything about this 'dream sequence' is over-the-top, stylized, and artificial.*

Lawrence: Hello, and welcome to the newest reality show, Mr. and Mrs. Perfect!

*Someone holds a sign from beneath the riser: "Applause". Sound of canned applause. If children in audience do not applaud, Lawrence may gesture, encouraging them to obey the signs.*

I'm your host, Lawrence – but you can call me "Perfect". (*Sign: "Laughter", accompanied by canned sound*) And as always, I'm here with my beautiful co-host, Mandy!

*Mandy enters, "Applause" sign again. Mandy is gorgeous, done up, and smiling radiantly. She laughs and blows kisses.*

Mandy: Wow, Lawrence, it's quite a show we have for today.

Lawrence: That's right, Mandy. And just wait until you see the first "project". She's a girl from <insert name of school> in *desperate* need of a bit of perfection. Why, I hear she isn't even considered cool at school.

Mandy: (*feigning shock*) Oh my, Lawrence. (*abruptly cheerful*) Sounds like we have our work cut out for us today! But don't worry, viewers, we can add perfection to *anyone's* life!

Lawrence: We sure can! Now, let's introduce today's project. Jenny, come on out!

*"Applause". Lights up on Jenny's bed. She sits up, bewildered. She is holding a remote control. Shocked, she climbs the stairs up to the riser. She looks out-of-place in her typical sleeping gear - pyjamas, messy hair, rubbing her eyes. However, her attire must be easily adaptable so that she can change swiftly between scenes by adding or removing an article (ie. jacket, sweater, etc.).*

Jenny: What's going on? Am I dreaming?

Lawrence: You sure are! ...*Dreaming* that you could be perfect! ("*Laughter*")

*Mandy begins to tug at Jenny's clothes, touch her hair, etc. She casts sympathetic looks toward the audience.*

Mandy: You poor thing. It's a wonder you have any friends at all.

Jenny: (*defensively, trying to get Mandy away from her*) Hey, wait a minute, I –

Lawrence: Don't you worry, Jenny. We're going to help you become the most perfect person at school.

Jenny: But –

*She pauses to think.*

Well, okay. I guess I probably need some help.

Mandy: You sure do!

Jenny: (*indicating remote*) What's this for?

Lawrence: Well, this is *your* show! We're here to give you suggestions for achieving perfection. In order to do this, we need to look at some parts of your daily life.

Mandy: So, when we say "Roll the tape!", you press 'play' and we'll all watch a scene. Got it?

Jenny: I think so...

Lawrence: Ready, audience? On the count of three: (*he motions*) One, Two, Three.... (*sign:*)**ROLL THE TAPE!**

*Immediate blackout on platform, lights up on DC.*

*Jenny makes a quick change to her costume and goes down to the floor during blackout. The scene: Andrew and Jenny are working on a project at Jenny's house. They are joking around, surrounded by a mess of markers, glue, books and papers.*

Andrew: I don't think the colours of our bristol board match.

Jenny: (*teasing*) Are you kidding? This will be the best display board in the class.

Andrew: Yeah, the best purple and yellow board...

Jenny: Exactly!

*They go back to their work.*

Andrew: Hey, remember at the beginning of the year when you told the class how to help you in case you have a seizure?

Jenny: Yeah, of course.

Andrew: I thought that was really cool of you. You know, to explain it without being too shy.

Jenny: Thanks, Andrew. It's really important, because I still have seizures sometimes. I need everyone to understand so that people can help me and I won't get hurt.

Andrew: My brother says his friend has seizures, too. But when he has his, he just looks like he's staring into space, and then he doesn't remember anything.

Jenny: Yeah, everyone's seizures look different – everyone's brain is different.

Andrew: Yeah. (*trying to gross her out*) I bet mine's really squishy and gross and makes noises when I move around like (*he makes gross squishing noises with gestures*)

Jenny: (*laughing*) Ew, Andrew, that's sick!

Andrew: Seriously though, I think both our brains have had some trouble coming up with matching colours. Are you *sure* purple and yellow will look good?

Jenny: Well maybe, as long as you let me do all the letters. You suck at bubble letters. Besides, *you* picked these colours!

Andrew: (*laughing*) Yeah, I guess. But *you* are terrible at gluing. *Everything* is sticky! I can't touch anything without getting stuck to it!

Jenny: Oh, come on. Can you pass me the blue marker?

Andrew: Sure, if I can unstick it from the floor! (*Looking for the marker*) Do you want the light blue or dark blue? Jenny? Jenny, are you alright?

*Jenny begins having a tonic-clonic seizure. She emits a small cry and falls to the ground, shaking. Andrew remains calm. He calls to her mom, moves objects out of the way, and puts a sweater under her head. Her mom helps him roll her onto her side when the seizure ends. Jenny recovers slowly, confused.*

Mom: (*soothing*) Jenny, it's Mom. Don't worry, everything's okay.

*Lights fade to black on scene. Jenny returns to the platform 'dream sequence'. Lights up on platform.*

Lawrence: *(shaking his head)* Tsk, tsk, tsk. What was that, Jenny? That was not perfection. That was not even normal.

Mandy: And that outfit! What were you thinking? Do you really think Andrew will want to go out with you when you dress and act like that?!?

Lawrence: The only solution is for you to never act that way again. Does that sound like a plan or what, Mandy?

Mandy: That is the perfect first step to perfection!

Jenny: But wait, I... I can't help it. I have epilepsy. It's a disorder in my brain, it's not my fault. Everyone's brains sends signals to their bodies, and sometimes mine get mixed up. And then I have a seizure like that. I don't have them often anymore, but sometimes I do. And anyway, I don't want Andrew to date me, he's just my friend.

Mandy: *(disbelief, condescending)* Yeah...sure, Honey. Whatever you say. *(she laughs nervously, overcompensating)* Isn't she funny, folks?!? Don't worry, she's a challenge, but I still think we can help her! Let's... *(awkward, frazzled pause)* look at another clip! Ready, audience? *(motions)* One, two, three...*(sign:)* ROLL THE TAPE!

*Jenny and Natasha are walking along the sidewalk. It is a beautiful afternoon; school has just ended. They are singing a popular song, or laughing, etc - any activity or inside joke that indicates their close friendship. Natasha is dressed in a worn sweater or jacket - not at all stylish.*

Jenny: What are you doing in a bit? Do you have any plans?

Natasha: I don't think so.

Jenny: Do you want to walk to the corner and get slushies?

Natasha: Um, sure! But I'll have to call my mom from your house, okay?

Jenny: Okay.

Natasha: Oh, wait! I forgot, I have to babysit for my sister. Is it okay if she comes with?

Jenny: Yeah, of course. Maybe I'll see if my sister wants to come, too.

*Pause.*

Natasha: Are you, uh, sure that you're up to it? I heard about your seizure yesterday.

Jenny: Yeah, I'm fine now. You know me, I'm tired for a little while, but then I'm back to my normal self!

Natasha: That's true. I guess I'm just checking that you didn't hurt yourself during your seizure.

Jenny: No way. Andrew was really great.

Natasha: Did he remember everything he was supposed to do?

Jenny: Yeah, he moved all the sharp things out of the way and called for help. He knew not to put anything in my mouth, and just to put something soft under my head. Other than that, he just let me have the seizure, just like I told everyone to do.

Natasha: Did he roll you over like we learned?

Jenny: Yup, he even remembered to roll me on my side after my seizure. But by then my mom had come downstairs anyway. He was really brave.

Natasha: He looked proud about doing such a good job. I'm really glad he remembered what to do; I know how important it is to stay calm just so you can remember how to help.

Jenny: I guess you've learned something from being friends with me for so long!

Natasha: Yup, now I'm a pro! Okay, I'll go get my sister. I'll see you at your house in 10 minutes?

Jenny: Sure.

Natasha: Okay, perfect! I'll see you soon.

*They exit in separate directions. Lights down on DC, Jenny returns to platform. Lights back up on platform.*

Mandy: Wasn't that pathetic, folks? Poor Jenny, you really do need our help! We got here just in time!

Lawrence: That's for sure.

Jenny: (*confused*) I don't get it. What was pathetic?

Lawrence: (*sympathetically*) Oh Honey, you're so far gone you can't even tell! First of all, just look at that friend -

Mandy: That awful hair, that messy look...can't she do better than hand-me-downs?

Lawrence: And what do you think you are doing hanging out with someone who has to (*patronizing voice*) call their mommy, and brings along their sister?

Mandy: That *is* pretty lame...And talking about that seizure? You really should never speak about something weird like that. You'll just draw attention to it.

Jenny: But Natasha is my best friend. And I have known her sister since she was born; I don't mind if she comes along. And I don't care how Nat is dressed. I know her family can't always afford fancy clothes. I like her because she's nice, and funny, and if she has her own way of dressing, why should that bother me?

Lawrence: Maybe because it's not cool?!? Hanging out with *imperfect* people like that will not help you be perfect. Or even a little bit cool, for that matter.

Jenny: I'm starting to think that might not be what I want...

Mandy: Of course it's what you want. So, our current list of tips: get nicer clothes, find a cooler and prettier best friend, stop having seizures - and if you have them, for goodness sake, don't talk about them!

Jenny: But my doctor told me that it's good to talk about them. There are lots of different types of seizures, and if I hadn't told my class at school how to help me when I have mine, then Andrew wouldn't have known what to do. I could have really hurt myself!

Mandy: But right now, you're hurting your chance for perfection.

Jenny: I guess....

Lawrence: You guess?!? Of course we're right. That's what perfection *is*, my young friend.

Mandy: Let's look at one more clip and we'll see if we can add more to our list of perfect suggestions! (*motions*) One, two, three...(sign:) ROLL THE TAPE!

*Jenny and Natasha are bouncing a ball back and forth. They are on the playground, which is indicated by their carefree mood, and perhaps background sounds. Jenny bounces the ball high over Natasha's head, and it is caught from behind her by Samantha.*

Samantha: Here you go, Nat.

Natasha: Thanks, Samantha. (*She turns to go back to her game*)

Samantha: Hey, Nat, I'm setting up a game of foursquare. Do you want to play?

Natasha: Yeah, sure! With me and Jenny, you'll only need one more person. And we can use our ball.

Samantha: Actually, I just meant you. I said, "Do YOU want to play?"

Natasha: (*confused*) Well, I'm already playing with Jenny.

Samantha: Oh yeah? Well, I'm organizing a game, so I get to choose. And I don't want to play with Jenny.

Jenny: (*hurt*) Why can't I play?

Natasha: Don't listen to her, Jenny. Let's just forget it.

*They continue their own game, ignoring Samantha.*

Samantha: You know, I WAS thinking of inviting Alex to play...

*The ball is caught, bouncing abruptly stops.*

Natasha: ...Alex?

Jenny: Nat, I know you like Alex. You can go play with them.

Natasha: *(throwing the ball again, determined)* No way - it doesn't matter. I would never ditch you like that.

Samantha: Alright, that's your problem. I'll just see if Alex wants to play with *me*.

*She exits.*

Jenny: Nat, you didn't have to do that. You don't have to stay with me. You've liked Alex for so long!

Natasha: Yeah, but I *don't* like Samantha. She's so bossy, and she thinks she's so cool.

Jenny: Yeah. But she asked you to play. That was pretty nice.

*Pause.*

I wonder why she didn't ask me.

Natasha: *(gently)* Well....Sam's not really a great friend. She's been saying mean things about you since your seizure the other day. She's always saying you're crazy, and she told some of our class that you're contagious and they could catch it.

Jenny: But that's so silly! I'm not crazy; I just have seizures. And you can't catch epilepsy. That's like saying you could catch someone's blue eyes, or their height.

Natasha: I know, and I told everyone not to listen to her. But she's so mean. I think she's just scared because she doesn't understand it.

*Pause.*

You know, I found out that her mom and dad are getting divorced.

Jenny: *(surprised)* Really? That's kind of sad. Maybe she's afraid people will make fun of her. I guess everyone has something that they are dealing with.

Natasha: Yup. But that's no excuse for her to be mean to you! I'm just sorry she didn't want to play with both of us.

Jenny: I don't really care. I'm just happy to have a friend like you who will stand up for me and not ditch me for anything.....*(teasing, love-sick voice)* even Alex.

Natasha: Don't worry. I know that if people were making fun of me, you'd stand up for me, too.

*Bell rings, signalling the end of recess. They exit. Lights out on scene, up on platform.*

Mandy: Well, that little film clip makes me feel even stronger that you need to get rid of Natasha.

Lawrence: I agree wholeheartedly. If you didn't hang around with her, you could try to become Samantha's best friend. Then everyone would listen to you like they listen to her.

Jenny: What are you talking about? That clip just proves how nice and loyal Natasha is. It shows she's a good friend. Didn't you see how she stuck up for me when Samantha was mean?

Mandy: I don't know about that. I really liked that Samantha girl. She's a model of everything you should try to be: she is smart, she takes charge, she's pretty, boys like her, and I bet she has tons of friends.

Jenny: (*figuring out her opinion as she speaks – thinking out loud*) Yeah, maybe, but she's also mean and talks behind people's backs. And she has problems, too, she just hides them. I'd rather have only a few good friends if it means I don't have to hide things from them.

Lawrence: (*attempting to cut her off*) Look, Jenny –

Jenny: (*not allowing him to interject*) I think that film clip shows that *no one* is perfect, and everyone is dealing with something. But it's how you deal with your problems and how you treat other people that counts.

Lawrence: Isn't she a hoot, folks? Now Jenny, listen. If there were no such thing as perfect people, then how could we be here?

Jenny: I bet you have problems and just hide them by being mean and judging people like me – you're just like Samantha! And you're *not* really here – you're just a dream. (*revelation*) You're *my* dream.

*Jenny threatens them with the remote; she aims at them as if to hit the power button.*

Mandy: Now Jenny, don't cancel our show! Just think: how will you become perfect? How will we help other unfortunate people become perfect?

Jenny: All this is making me realize that no one needs to be perfect. Everyone just needs to be the best they can be. And for me, that means being nice to my friends, and dealing with my epilepsy in the best way possible: by teaching other people about it and trying to understand their problems, too.

Lawrence: Mandy, this project is getting out of control!

Jenny: You bet it is. Because now, *I* am in control...And I say this dream is over!

*Jenny aims the remote at Lawrence and Mandy and 'turns them off'. Abrupt blackout on the platform.*

*Jenny returns to her bed as in the beginning of the show. Lights up DR; Her mom is waking her. It is apparent that Jenny is feeling happier and more self-confident than during their conversation the night before.*

Mom: Jenny? Jenny? Jenny, wake up! You've slept in – my goodness, you're sleeping so heavily. Do you feel better?

Jenny: Yeah, I think so.

Mom: I'm so glad to hear that, Honey. Natasha is waiting for you downstairs; she says you made plans to go to the park this morning. Maybe you two would like to have some breakfast first? I don't think she's eaten yet, so I told her to wait for you.

Jenny: Okay, thanks.

*Jenny begins to get up.*

Mom: I'm so glad you're back to your normal self. You know, Jenny, I was really worried about you last night. I felt like you were trying to fit someone else's definition of perfection...I don't know where you got that idea from.

Jenny: Yeah, I guess I was.

Mom: You know, sweetheart, I was thinking...you can't define perfection; it's just an image. So it's more important to meet your own goals and be the best person you can.

*They begin to exit.*

Jenny: I know, Mom. I think I finally figured out that perfection is just a dream.

*Fade to black as they exit.*

## Discussion Questions:

1. What did Jenny learn from her dream? Was it what Mandy and Lawrence wanted her to learn?
2. Do you think it was a good idea that Jenny told everyone she had epilepsy at the beginning of the school year? Why or why not?
3. There are many different kinds of seizures. Some people just look like they are confused, and some people fall on the ground and shake like Jenny did. Can you remember what you should do to help if you see this happening?
4. What made Natasha a better friend than Samantha? What things did she do for Jenny that were helpful?
5. Think about a problem that you have. When you struggle with something, do you ever take it out on other people by being rude or teasing? What are some better ways to deal with problems?
6. When Jenny talked to her mom about her problems, it made her feel better. Can you think of some problems in a family that it would be good to talk about?
7. When Jenny watched television, it made her want to look and act different. When you watch television, does it ever make you wish that you could look or be a different way? If she hadn't had that dream, what are some things you would recommend for Jenny to do to feel better about herself?



*If you wish to further evaluate your students on their work in this program, use these questions on a quiz or test.*

## Activity #1: Improvisational Scenarios

These scenarios can be acted out in groups and then performed and/or discussed as a class.

1. Samantha comes back to Jenny later. She says “Give me the ball right now, or I’m going to tell everyone you’re crazy and that they’ll catch epilepsy if they come near you.” What should Jenny say? What can she do?
2. Jenny has another dream about Mandy and Lawrence. They say “Why haven’t you taken our suggestions yet? You are still the same old Jenny.” What should she tell them? What has she learned?
3. Andrew’s mom hears about Jenny’s seizure. She doesn’t want Andrew to play with Jenny anymore because she thinks Jenny is too weird and dangerous. What would Andrew tell his mom? What can he and Jenny do?



*If they are acting out the scenarios for the rest of the class, encourage everyone to get involved! Have two or three students act as narrators (as in the Reader’s Theatre play) so that the audience will know the background of the group’s scenario.*

## **Activity #2: Scenario-Solving**

1. Each group thinks of a problem they might encounter as students and in the community. They write a scenario on a cue card. (ie. Jimmy always pushes Tom at recess, or Shirley offers Farzana a cigarette)
2. The cards get exchanged to a different group.
3. Each group writes a solution to the scene on the card.
4. The groups read their scenario to the rest of the class, and act out their advice (alternatively, they can simply read their solutions).

### **Activity #3: Something New**

In this activity, students have the opportunity to share something that makes them different, and allows them to feel pride in being unique. Emphasize that they should think of something *positive* – something that makes them stand out and feel good about themselves. Aside from encouraging confidence and self esteem, this activity is also an opportunity for students to learn something new about their peers.

To Start:

Tell the students: In the end of the play, Jenny was proud of who she was. This activity is for us to learn about each other and be proud of the special things about ourselves, too!

1. Students think of something special about themselves. It can be funny, interesting, sentimental, etc. Give examples: “I have been to Korea”, “I have a step-mom”, “I have a baseball award”. Tell them to be as creative as possible!
2. Each student writes their trait on a piece of paper, which is put into a hat. The teacher re-distributes the papers, so that each student has someone else’s trait.
3. The students get up out of their seats and mill about in the classroom, asking their peers if they have the trait on the piece of paper (“are you the person who has a baseball award?”), until they find someone who says “yes”.
4. Once they find the person described on their sheet, they sit in a circle. When everyone is seated, they take turns saying both the name of the person whose sheet they received and their special trait. (ie. “Yip-wing has a baseball award”)
5. Reflect on the process with discussion. Keep the discussion positive!  
Was anyone surprised by someone’s special trait?  
Impressed?  
How does it feel to share something about yourself? Did you feel shy? Embarrassed?  
Proud?  
What do you think happens when people feel safe to share?

# Perfection Word Search Activity!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Z S Q G I P O T M D Z S H A A Y H D A X N H T N X  
N K V E F B I L B D Q B R X B U N K I Z N O S A E  
O W A Y Z Q A H E P I L E P S Y U N R W N X L O D  
Z X H R E C E P S W N M A A E K W M E I X L W N E  
Q N Z L X N S U C D A O W L N T M E C J L X K A I  
P D E Z U O J J Y T N D B D C T R C D C G J W I P  
E C N E D I F N O C Y E T J E N L J I R Z D V D Y  
T Z X A X T U T V S Y C I R R O U M A E R D G E P  
G B Q G B C N R E I W L R R N S I H L R Z N H M D  
V D G C R E O C J R L K A I F E R H O F I V K V X  
R V P O E F H Y S F U N C X H I H X Z Y X R U K K  
T X I F W R I F M U S W E Y V W F U L K Y A N C T  
E R Z Y H E S B I H B B Q Z W N W L L S X F U I S  
N T V A M P P G F U D Q N A H S U V E K I H J K J  
D G J F S W M P A F I M G C D B V I C I N P C O R  
B D H Z X A T L U U J X O E F K Z E J D R L N W W  
A P L D M R M Y O P I L J Y P U C C R T V N S X V  
J Z C P L A M A C C U Z G W R V X R J L B N I K X  
T C T I R G U A N M M N V E H S E V H O C A J W R  
U P T W H G M P L T D F R O V I Y B O N L P C V D  
D Y A P S T K F X E H L N C Q D P R P G D M E C K  
P M I M L Y B A Y J I A Y C H S P S U G B M M M P  
D P Z U C P U C Q P F J U Q Y T A E U F W D Z V V  
Z D M T X U K O E G M A T R E L F H L L Y D B I K  
U C J X M S T K K D I Q H Y U Q G Q K E V H I W K

## Words to Find:

ABSENCE

BULLYING

CALM

CONFIDENCE

DREAM

EPILEPSY

FRIENDSHIP

JENNY

MEDIA

PERFECTION

SAMANTHA

SEIZURE

TONIC-CLONIC

(Created by [Puzzlemaker](#) at [DiscoverySchool.com](#))

## Perfection Word Search Activity! Solution

```

+ + + + + P + + M + + + + + A Y + + + + + T + +
+ + + + + I L + + + + + B + N + + + + O + + +
+ + + + + A H E P I L E P S Y + N + + N + + + +
+ + + + + C + + S + + + + + E + + + E I + + + + +
+ + + + + N + + + D + + + + N + + + C J + + + A +
+ + + + + O + + + + N + + + C + + C + + + + + I +
E C N E D I F N O C + E + + E + L + + + + + D +
+ + + + + T + + + + + I + + O + M A E R D G E +
+ + + + + C + + + + + R N + + + + + N + M +
+ + + + + E + + + + + I F + + + + + I + + + +
+ + + + + F + + + + + C + + + + + Y + + + + +
+ + + + + R + + + + + + + + + + L + + + + +
+ + + + + E + + + + + + + + + + L + S + + + + +
+ + + + + P + + + + + + + + + + U + E + + + + +
+ + + + + S + + + + + + + + + + B + I + + + + +
+ + + + + A + + + + + + + + + + Z + + + + +
+ + + + + M + + + + + + + + + + U + + + + +
+ + + + + A + + + + + R + + + + + + + + + +
+ + + + + N + + + + E + + + + + + + + + +
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**(Over,Down,Direction)**

DREAM(22,8,W)

MEDIA(24,9,N)

ABSENCE(15,1,S)

EPILEPSY(9,3,E)

PERFECTION(6,14,N)

BULLYING(16,15,NE)

FRIENDSHIP(15,10,N)

SAMANTHA(5,15,SE)

CALM(6,4,NE)

JENNY(20,5,NW)

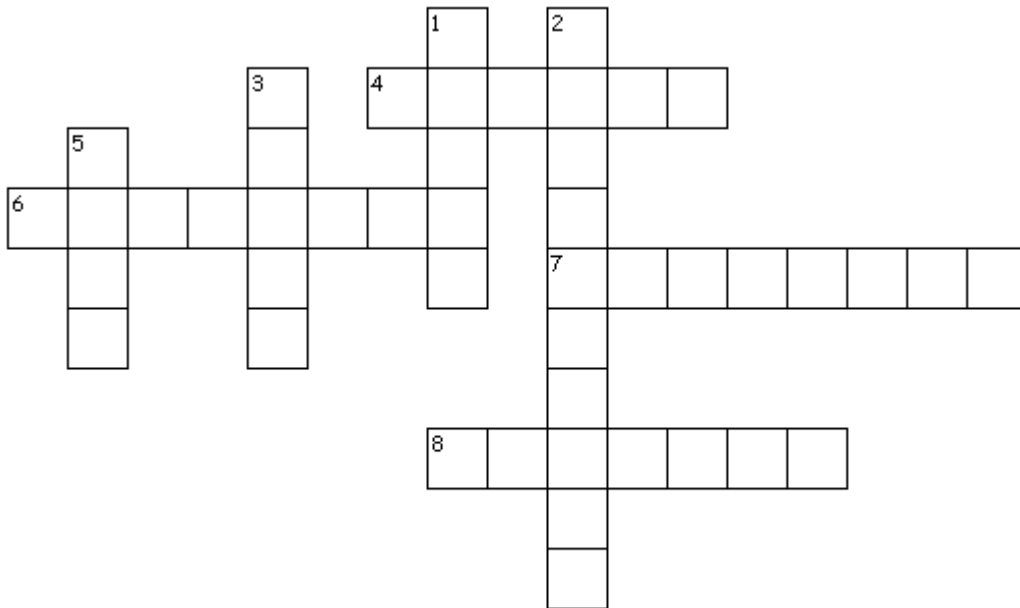
SEIZURE(20,13,SW)

CONFIDENCE(10,7,W)

TONIC-  
CLONIC(23,1,SW)

## Perfection Crossword Puzzle!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



### Across

4. In the play, Natasha helps Jenny because she is a good \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The name of the character who is a bully.
7. A disorder in Jenny's brain.
8. When the brain's signals get mixed up, it can cause a \_\_\_\_\_ in a person with epilepsy.

### Down

1. Mandy and Lawrence were in Jenny's \_\_\_\_\_ while she slept.
2. The name of the play.
3. The character in the play who has epilepsy.
5. If you see someone having a seizure, it is important to stay \_\_\_\_\_.

(Created by [Puzzlemaker](#) at [DiscoverySchool.com](#))

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## Perfection Crossword Answer Sheet!

### **Across:**

4. FRIEND
6. SAMANTHA
7. EPILEPSY
8. SEIZURE

### **Down:**

1. DREAM
2. PERFECTION
3. JENNY
5. CALM

## **Glossary of Terms in Word Search and Crossword Activities:**

**Absence (pronounced as if in French):** The type of seizure that Andrew mentions (he says his brother's friend has this type). In an absence seizure, epileptic activity occurs throughout the entire brain. It is a milder type of activity which causes unconsciousness without causing convulsions. After the seizure, there is no memory of it. Absence seizures are short, usually lasting only 2-10 seconds. They are very mild, and may go unnoticed by parents and teachers.

**Bullying:** Intimidating and harassing another person (you can give playground examples). This is what Samantha does to Jenny.

**Confidence:** Refers to a major theme of the play. Jenny gains self-confidence by the end, and proves it by 'turning off' Mandy and Lawrence.

**Dream:** Jenny sees Lawrence and Mandy in a dream, where they appear to her as if they are on the set of a reality television show.

**Epilepsy:** A neurological disorder. *(See pages 4-6 of this package for more information)*

**Friend/Friendship:** A major theme of the play. Natasha models good friendship – loyalty, openness, caring – and Samantha does not.

**Jenny:** The main character of the play. She has epilepsy, and learns important lessons about herself and who she wants to be.

**Media:** Methods of mass communication, such as the TV show Jenny dreamt she was on. It is important to discuss the way that the media influences what people want to look and act like.

**Perfection:** The title of the play. Perfection (especially what the media deems 'perfection') is not a good goal to have, because everyone is different and has to face different obstacles. It is more important to be the best person you can.

**Samantha:** A bully in the play. She does not want to play with Jenny because she has epilepsy, and she tries to lure Natasha from Jenny. Later, Jenny realizes Samantha has problems, too.

**Seizure:** There are over 40 different types of seizures which are classified in different ways. *(See pages 4-6 of this package for more information, or visit <http://epilepsyontario.org>)*

**Stay Calm:** A First Aid tip discussed in the play. Staying calm and calling an adult for help are the most important things a child should remember when they see someone have a seizure.

**Tonic-Clonic:** This is the type of seizure experienced by Jenny, the main character. In a generalized tonic-clonic (*formerly called grand mal*) seizure, the person will usually emit a short cry and fall to the floor. Their muscles will stiffen (tonic phase) and then their extremities will jerk and twitch (clonic phase). Bladder control may be lost. Consciousness is regained slowly. After a seizure, the person may feel fatigue, confusion and disorientation. This may last from 5 minutes to several hours or even days. Rarely, this disorientation may last up to 2 weeks. The person may fall asleep, or gradually become less confused until full consciousness is regained.

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*Use these new terms as spelling words for the week!*

# Certificate of Appreciation

This is to certify that the Grade \_\_\_\_\_

class of \_\_\_\_\_

Completed the Epilepsy "Perfection" program  
on

\_\_\_\_\_

We appreciate your helping in promoting  
awareness about epilepsy.

Always be proud to be you!

\_\_\_\_\_  
Alysse Rich, Epilepsy Ontario