

Knowledge is Power: Understanding the Impact of Epilepsy Surgery

Lynn K. Paul

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≡ HEMISPHERECTOMY ≡



Understanding the Impact of Epilepsy Surgery

What are seizures?

- Electrical storms in the brain.

What is epilepsy?

- Repeated seizures and abnormal electrical patterns that typically happen when part of the brain is damaged or malformed.

The problem with epilepsy

Interrupted thinking

- During seizures, parts of the brain that are storming are not doing their regular functions – i.e., not generating speech, not laying down memories, not directing attention, etc...

Damaged brain cells

- Seizures are way more powerful than everyday brain activity. and like lightning or a monsoon, seizures can overload our infrastructure to a degree that it is permanently damaged.

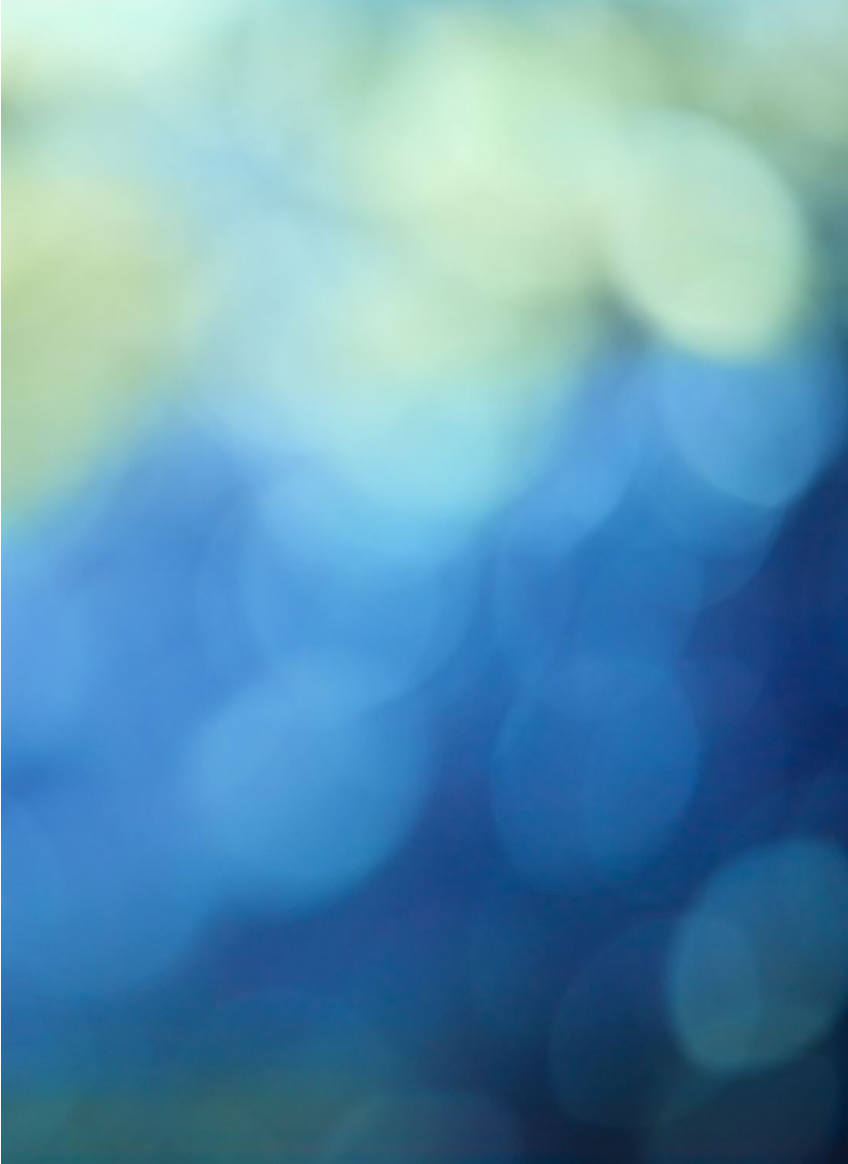
Overcrowding & limited resources

- Like refugees from a storm, activities of damaged / removed areas are taken over by alternate brain areas. To take on extra activity, brain areas may sacrifice less critical functions.

Overwork & burnout

- The remaining healthy brain tissue not only takes on the activities of lost areas, it aids healing and recovery of the entire system and it doesn't have any other backup.





Benefits of seizure reduction . . .

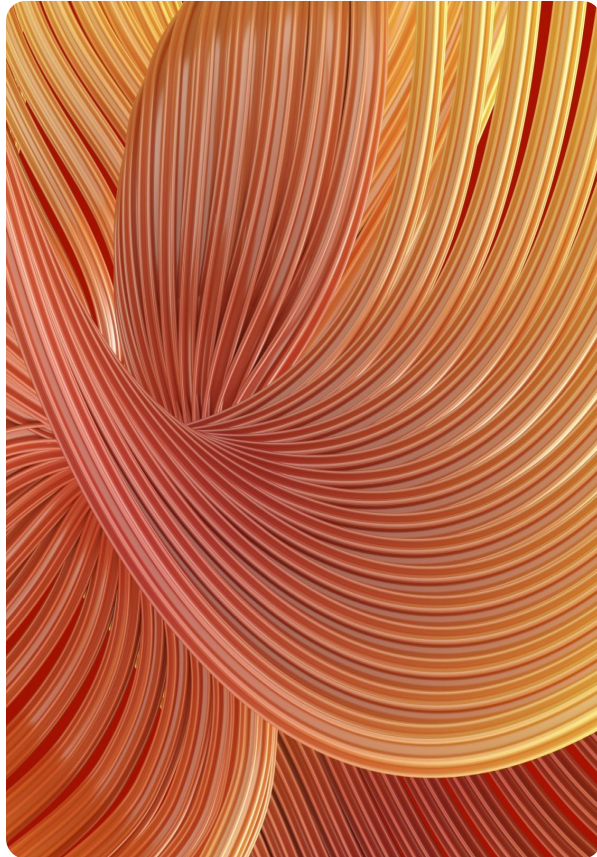
Less cognitive interruption = better focus and learning ... improvements compound over time.

Fewer storms = less additional brain damage

Brain areas develop new expertise = this may allow them to resume de-prioritized activities

Less time in crisis = more time for building up reserves and resilience

Greater predictability = more opportunities to participate in travel, school, work, etc ...



Common challenges following epilepsy surgery

Motor Weakness

Hemiplegia with secondary joint & muscle complications: require devices & assistance



Vision & Sensory Limits

Loss of visual field; impaired visual tracking; disrupted sensory perception.



Cognitive Difficulties

Inconsistency across cognitive skills.
Impairments which may or may

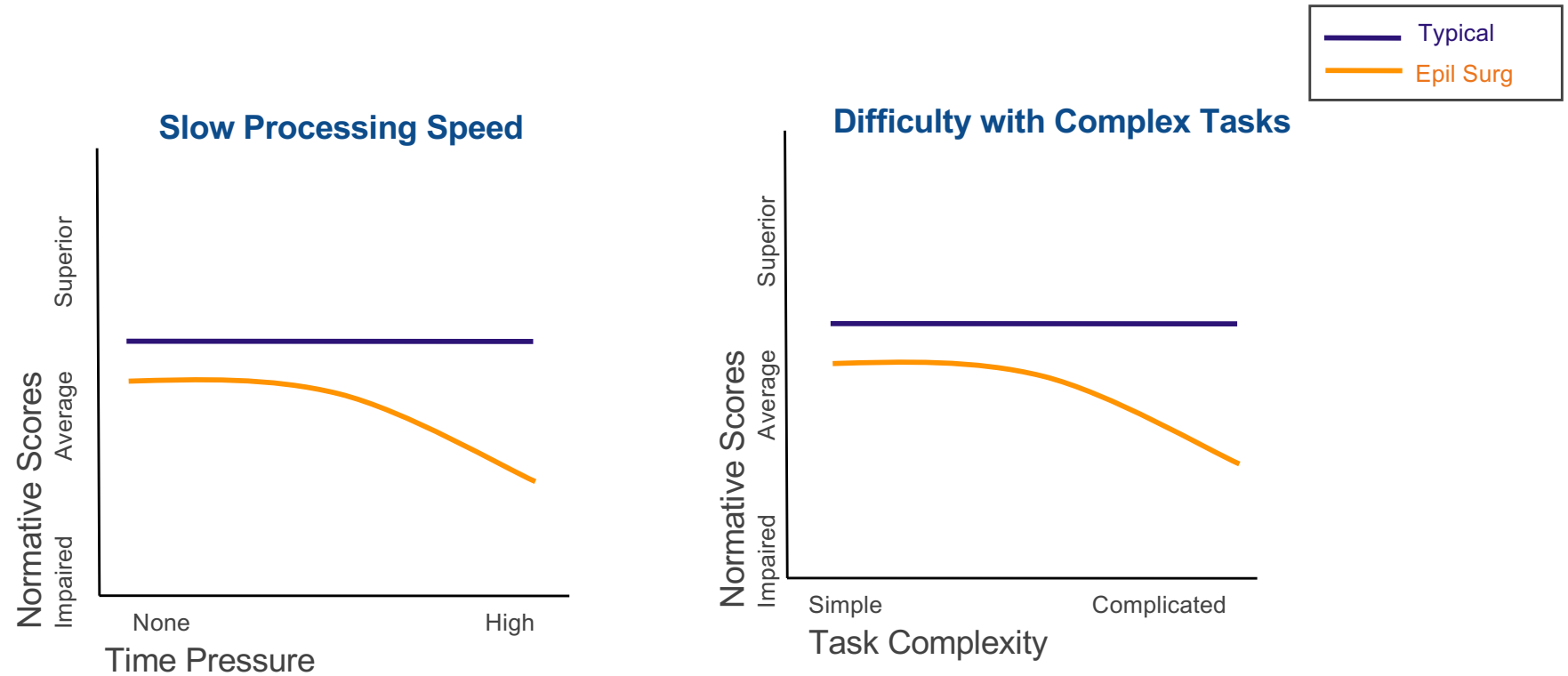


Overtaxed Energy & Endurance

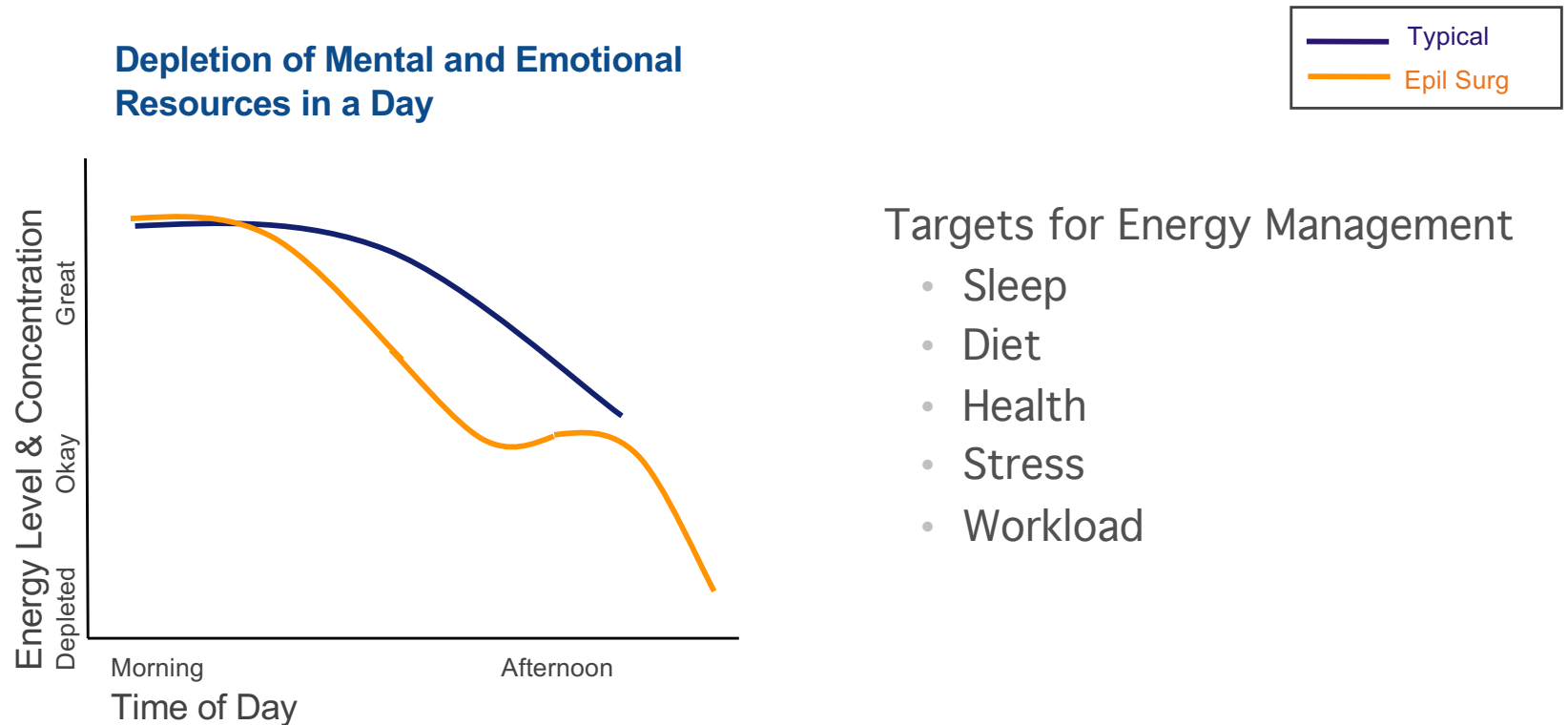
Compensating for weakness, coping with discomfort and advocating for yourself is tiring!



Challenges after Epilepsy Surgery



Challenges after Epilepsy Surgery: Managing Energy & Endurance





LIFE HACKS

A life hack is a simple strategy or tool that simplifies everyday tasks, so they use less effort. This leaves more energy for dealing with issues that are less familiar, more complicated issues or more FUN!

Visual cues → See it to Remember it



Make information visible so your brain doesn't have to hold it.

- Sticky notes
- To-do lists
- White board
- Color-coding to help direct your attention
- Always put keys in the same place / on the same hook
- Use a paper calendar and put it somewhere you see it daily - include important events (e.g., work schedule)
- Put things by the stairs to help you remember to take them up/down.

Energy / Stress Management



Plan ahead to reduce overwhelm before it starts.

- Plan meals for the week
- Use a checklist for grocery shopping staples
- Take healthy snacks! (e.g., crackers, dried fruit, nuts)
- Prep for each day the night before (e.g., choose clothes, pack bag)
- Schedule recovery time after a big event
- Build your support systems through consistency during low-stress times

Focus



Use your environment to support your attention.

- Music or background noise?
- OR silence?
- Fidget toys
- Walking meetings
- Remove distractions such as pop-up notifications on computer
- Activate “focus” options on your phone to stop notifications and ringer during tasks

General Life Management



Small systems reduce daily decision-making.

- Store things where you use them (e.g., cleaning products under each sink)
- Put things back right after you use them – that way you'll know where they are the next time you need them
- Use ONE system for notes & lists
- Create a routines and rituals for daily activities to minimize effort and decision-making
- If something takes less than 2 minutes - do it now!
- Finish what you are working on before you move on to something else
- Practice gratitude

Independence requires a balance of

Freedom



Responsibility

Reminders for Living Your Best Life After Epilepsy Surgery

Epilepsy & surgery are a fact of your life.

They are not an excuse.

They are an explanation

Taking responsibility for our weaknesses—and managing them well—helps us avoid crises and frees our energy for living!!

