

ROLE MODEL

John O'Hurley



Renaissance man John O'Hurley is best known as J. Peterman on *Seinfeld* and for his *Dancing With the Stars* success. But Hurley has taken on another role that many fans may not know about: He is a passionate spokesperson for epilepsy awareness, a cause to which he has a very personal connection.

In 1970, O'Hurley's 17-year-old sister died from complications resulting from a seizure. His sister's death altered his life forever. "It changed the dynamic of our family," he says. "We experienced a profound sense of grief. We saw our parents grieving, and everything changed from that day on."

KEY TERMS

Brain teaser

Depending on which area (lobe) of the brain a seizure takes place, different activities and parts of the body can be affected.

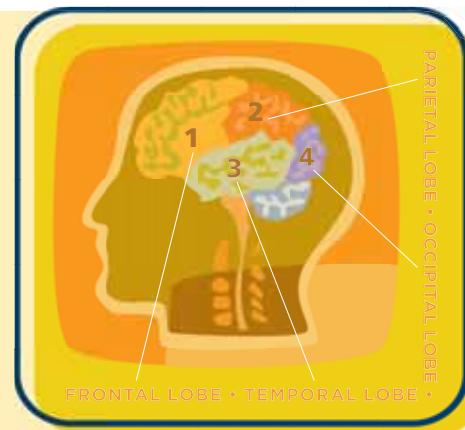
Take this quiz to test your knowledge about how the brain works.

1. Which activities are *not* controlled by the brain's frontal lobe?

- A. Reason and emotions
- B. Speech
- C. Movement
- D. Sight

2. Which important activity does the occipital lobe control?

- A. Your ability to work
- B. Your ability to taste
- C. Your ability to see
- D. Your ability to walk



3. If your seizure causes *déjà vu* and intense feelings of fear or joy, which lobe is seizing?

- A. Temporal lobe
- B. Parietal lobe
- C. Occipital lobe
- D. All of the above

4. Which lobe allows us to know if something is hot or cold?

- A. Temporal lobe
- B. Parietal lobe
- C. Occipital lobe
- D. Frontal lobe

4. **B** The parietal lobe decodes sensory information. Seizures in this area are often characterized simply by changes in mood, unpleasant smells or tastes, *déjà vu* or a sudden intense feeling of fear or joy.

3. **A** Seizures in the temporal lobe can lead to slurred speech, an inability to respond to others, sudden changes in mood, unpleasant smells or tastes, *déjà vu* or a sudden intense feeling of fear or joy.

2. **C** The occipital lobe is responsible for vision. Although rare, occurrences of seizures that begin in this lobe cause the person to see strange colors or bright flashing lights or to hallucinate.

Answers: 1. D The frontal lobe manages reasoning, planning, speech, movement, emotions and problem-solving. Partial seizures in this area may result in wild movements or muscle weakness.

Since his sister's death, O'Hurley has become involved in the lives of countless others who have epilepsy as honorary chair of the Epilepsy Foundation of San Diego County and through the work he does funding his local epilepsy youth camp. O'Hurley hopes to remind people with epilepsy of one key point: "You are not your circumstances. You are a person with epilepsy, and epilepsy is not you. Don't let it debilitate you in any way." —Emily Soares

Want to know more? In mid-October, go to www.EpilepsyAdvocate.com for an exclusive interview with John O'Hurley.

DID YOU KNOW?

Epilepsy Time Line

Throughout the centuries, people have struggled to decode the complexities of epilepsy. But it was not until the late 19th century that physicians began to develop an understanding of the disorder. Here are key dates in the history of epilepsy.

► 1857

The first hospital for the "paralyzed and epileptic" is founded in London.

► 1860s

Sir John Russell Reynolds is among the first to challenge the theory that epilepsy is concurrent with mental illness.

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► 1873

Neurologist Hughlings Jackson hypothesizes that seizures can be traced to irregular brain activity.

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► 1881

Sir William Gowers classifies seizures as "grand mal," "petit mal" and "hysteroid."

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► 1904

Neurologist William Spratling coins the word *epileptologist* and is now regarded as the first epileptologist in the U.S.

(NEWS & NOTES CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)