

## IBE golden light awards 2021 – Adi Vaknin-Aviram

My name is Adi Vaknin-Aviram, an Israeli writer, bibliotherapist and a PhD doctorate in literature. My first book, the novel "Aura" was published in last March. The book tells the story of Gabi, a young woman living with epilepsy. Gabi experiences her auras like a dream. During these dreamlike auras she hears a mysterious melody that vanishes as soon as the seizures stop. Gabi believes that within this melody lies the solution to all of her problems: the melody will make the epilepsy go away and thus she would finally be able to start living her life independently. With that notion in mind, Gabi embarks on a thrilling journey around the world in search of the elusive melody. Along the way she comes across new people, falls in love and reflects on her life; her goals, her dreams and her needs. The story offers a sincere glance into the unique experience of living with epilepsy, backed with reliable medical information confirmed by doctors, as well as touches upon topics of diversity and inclusion in a refreshing perspective



The story of Gabi was inspired by my own experiences as an epileptic. I was diagnosed with epilepsy when I was 7 year old, with tonic clonic and absence seizures. To combat my epilepsy, I had to take balancing medicines every day, and I am "lucky" to have experienced only one seizure in the last 15 years. During those years, I did not let the fear of the epilepsy to hold me back: I got a BA in psychology and literature and later an MA in bibliotherapy, traveled around the world, lived in the dessert, worked in agriculture fields, got married, gave birth to a beautiful daughter (her soon-to-be little brother is on the way!) and wrote *Aura* alongside publishing many short stories and poems in different magazines. I never let the epilepsy to stop me from dreaming, learning and enjoying my life, even though there were many challenges along the way. And as I reflect back on my journey so far, I can honestly say that the epilepsy has shaped my identity, it has given me a unique and mature perspective on life

When I was 8, not too long after my first seizure, I was diagnosed as a gifted child. In contrary to the grim news of the epilepsy, this new discovery has encouraged me to believe in myself. Because of my own experience, I truly believe that every epileptic person can find their silver lining in such a condition, their one discovery to give them strength and a sense of independence. I hope that my book raises awareness among the readers and shed a light on the experience living with epilepsy. And no less importantly: that Gabi's story gives hope and encouragement to anyone who struggles and who is in need of uplifting

Besides writing the book, I take part in many social events that aim to raise awareness about epilepsy: in lectures, reading meetings and conferences, as well as publishing articles on my personal blog and collaborating with EYAL association and other activists

I am proud to say that I was involved in every production stage before publishing the book, and I was fortunate to collaborate with the best editors, designers, proofreaders and printers. I ran a successful crowd funding campaign (which covered almost all of the expenses of the project) and I still spend a lot of time working on getting new audiences to

read the book and learn about epilepsy. I know that this is only the beginning, but I am optimistic that my book will offer a personal point of view and raise awareness about the topic. And hopefully, that *Aura* gets translated and published overseas, so it can spread the word all around the world