My name is Luiza Oliveira Gatto, I’m 16 years old, I’m a Brazilian student.

My epilepsy started about 4 years ago, with absence seizures. When the seizures became more frequent, I went to a neurologist. At the beginning he was not sure if I had epilepsy or just anxiety. He asked me to do a couple of exams. I was having some fainting spells but my parents and I thought it was just low pression. In 2019 January, I had my first convulsion that made me go straight to the hospital. I was hospitalized for 5 days in the children's ICU, where I did many exams. I can’t remember my hospitalized time because of the strong medicines I was taking. The only few things I can remember of are: the nurses who took care of me with great care and patience; the nutritionist from the hospital asking about my favorite foods and my family members coming to visit me. I am very grateful to have those people in my life, that are so caring and take so good care of me.

At that moment we had no more doubts that I had epilepsy. When I found out, it was a big shock, and since the subject is still not talked about, - because of the prejudice over the disease - I thought my life was over. I began to research about the disease and about people who also had it. On YouTube I found some videos of doctors explaining about the disease. Therefore most of the videos were using a lot of medical terms, making it harder to understand. I couldn’t find what I was actually looking for. I just wanted to know, in a common way, what having epilepsy really means. How does the person feel? What are the consequences of a seizure?
I remember thinking: “Just like me, there are thousands of people that need help. So why don’t I make a video about it?”
Being such a communicative and expressive person, made me develop my interest in video-making. I talked about the idea with my family, but even with their support, the plan was put aside. Sometime latter my boyfriend and my sister started asking me daily to record the video, both of them also thought the information was important.
After a few months I finally recorded the video, and posted it on my YouTube channel. Everyone I knew and even people I didn't know where impacted by my video. I started receiving many “thank you” messages. Also, lots of people started sharing their own stories with me along with the constant expression of gratitude. It’s hard to describe how motivated and happy I was.
My boyfriend, seeing this, started spreading my work to several epilepsy centers that he had found on Instagram and ended up sending a message to ABE (Brazilian Epilepsy Association). First the Association called me to record an episode of a program. After that, we recorded a podcast. After all those jobs, they invited me to do a performance: a simulation of a seizure at the subway. At the end of the day, I ended up staying and being part of many of their projects.
Today I am proud to say that I am part of ABE. Nowadays I still post about epilepsy on my YouTube and Instagram account; I lead a youth group with epilepsy and present some programs and meetings of people with epilepsy. I am happy to make such a difference spreading awareness around the subject of epilepsy. The fight to overcome the prejudice is more than necessary, so we can show people that there is no reason to be scared of. I want to say for the people with epilepsy: “be brave and fight for our rights.” My work teaches me a lot, not only about epilepsy, but about people, about life, but most of all, about how helping others, is always going to be the right way to live