

news

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Famous stammerers include Gareth Gates, top right and Grease is the Word contestant Danny Rhodes, above right. Inset is Yinka Dolan



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Reporter Vicki Stockman talks to stammerer Yinka Dolan about her personal battle with the condition and how she plans to help others

“It's a vicious circle but it's all about mind over matter”

TALKING is a skill that people take for granted.

Yinka Dolan is only too aware how something as simple as talking can cause so much fear and anxiety.

She wants to start a new support network especially for people who have a stammer.

Statistics show that one adult in every hundred has a stammer and many can feel isolated because of it.

The 41-year-old, from Paddington, has had her own personal battle against her stammer, which developed in her teens.

Yinka said: “It probably started at high school.

“I was a bit of a nervous child. “A lot of children grow out of it but I didn't.”

Some people who stammer may seem to have no problems speaking, which is called a covert stammer.

Although it wasn't obvious to friends, Yinka felt differently about her stammer.

She added: “People didn't always realise – I was covert – I was like a swan; outside, I was calm on the surface but underneath my legs were paddling like mad.”

But for others the stammer can be obvious, where a person gets stuck on a letter or syllable that causes them to have prolonged pauses.

Yinka continued: “In today's society communication is a key link so it can be quite demoralising. It can open up problems when you are trying to go for jobs.

“Stammerers will avoid asking for certain things. Little by little you have to stop avoiding situations.”

In the past 20 years the programme support officer has studied extensively to improve her own stammer and, by starting up the group she hopes to pass on the use-

ful tips she has gained from speech therapists and experts.

The first step she believes is to overcome the fear of stammering.

“It becomes a deep rooted problem almost like being afraid of spiders. It is like a vicious circle, it is all mind over matter,” she said.

“A lot of people who stammer don't even want to admit to it, it's something they are ashamed of.”

The self-help group will be open to adults and parents of children with a stammer are also welcome to go along.

Yinka concluded: “We can help you, support you and give you advice on how to cope.

“If you don't want to speak the first time you attend you can just observe and when you feel able to contribute, you can.”

For more information about the stammer support group, e-mail yinka at dolanfamily@ntlworld.com or call 0797 4808 816.

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