

Meet Vikesh

A Communication Hub resource

(Gentle upbeat music)

1

00:00:15,760 --> 00:00:19,480

So, at the age of 28,

2

00:00:19,480 --> 00:00:23,560

I went to my first self-help support group meeting

3

00:00:23,560 --> 00:00:27,880

when I was living in Florida for people who stutter.

4

00:00:27,880 --> 00:00:31,280

And that was the first time I was in a room

5

00:00:31,280 --> 00:00:33,120

with other people who stutter.

6

00:00:33,480 --> 00:00:36,120

And it blew my mind.

7

00:00:36,160 --> 00:00:38,960

That one, there was an entire a segment of the population

8

00:00:39,000 --> 00:00:40,760

where I thought I was the only one.

9

00:00:40,760 --> 00:00:46,160

So for 28 years, I lived in a bubble, in isolation, complete isolation,

10

00:00:46,200 --> 00:00:48,760

where I thought, I'm the only one that talks like this,

11

00:00:48,760 --> 00:00:52,800

so I'm going to do everything I can to suppress it.

12

00:00:52,840 --> 00:00:59,680

And that first meeting was a light bulb moment,

because it said: oh, okay.

13

00:00:59,680 --> 00:01:03,880

So, there are other people that have had similar experiences.

14

00:01:05,800 --> 00:01:07,960

And then six months later,

15

00:01:07,960 --> 00:01:13,120

one of my best friends and roommate at the time,

16

00:01:13,120 --> 00:01:14,720

I kept lying to him every month.

17

00:01:14,760 --> 00:01:19,440

I'm going to this bookstore called 'Barnes and Nobles'.

18

00:01:19,440 --> 00:01:22,240

And then after six months, I also go to the meetings.

19

00:01:22,240 --> 00:01:25,680

So I felt good going to the meetings, but I still felt bad lying.

20

00:01:26,040 --> 00:01:27,680

It's one of my best friends. I told him.

21

00:01:27,680 --> 00:01:29,440

I said, "Look, I got to tell you something."

22

00:01:29,480 --> 00:01:31,280

"I have not been going to Barnes and Nobles."

23

00:01:31,320 --> 00:01:32,120

He's like, I know.

24

00:01:32,120 --> 00:01:33,520

"How do you know?"

25

00:01:33,520 --> 00:01:35,360

"Because you don't read."

26

00:01:35,360 --> 00:01:37,640

"So, I figured you were going somewhere else."

27

00:01:37,640 --> 00:01:39,880

And then when I told him where I was going,

28

00:01:39,880 --> 00:01:43,560

he's like, this is where I get emotional,

29

00:01:43,560 --> 00:01:47,760

he said, "Why'd you lie?"

I said, "Because I stutter."

30

00:01:47,760 --> 00:01:52,320

He said, "But I've always known you stuttered, so why'd you lie?"

31

00:01:52,320 --> 00:01:55,120

So, I still remember that moment.

32

00:01:55,240 --> 00:02:02,640

I couldn't believe that all of my efforts to be the CIA operative in the world of stuttering,

33

00:02:02,640 --> 00:02:06,760

all of those efforts actually were unsuccessful,

34

00:02:06,760 --> 00:02:10,920

because the more people I told, the more friends.

35

00:02:10,920 --> 00:02:14,400

Obviously, my mom knew, but I had never spoken to her about it.

36

00:02:14,400 --> 00:02:17,640

My brother obviously knew, but we'd never spoken about it.

37

00:02:17,640 --> 00:02:21,360

But the more people I started telling in my friend circle,

38

00:02:21,400 --> 00:02:23,960

in my employment circle, they all knew.

39

00:02:24,320 --> 00:02:25,920

They had always known.

40

00:02:25,920 --> 00:02:34,400

*It was me who had fooled myself into thinking
that I could keep this a secret.*

41

00:02:34,400 --> 00:02:39,840

And, I guess it was those small conversations.

42

00:02:39,920 --> 00:02:44,080

I mean, I'm 47 now, so it's been 19 years since that first meeting,

43

00:02:44,240 --> 00:02:48,840

and it's a journey, right? And it didn't happen overnight.

44

00:02:48,920 --> 00:02:54,320

But the more I told people and the less they cared,

45

00:02:54,320 --> 00:02:58,760

the more it validated that this was okay,

46

00:02:59,200 --> 00:03:03,920

that this way of speaking is not wrong or right,

47

00:03:04,120 --> 00:03:07,640

because that's what I grew up thinking

48

00:03:07,640 --> 00:03:10,240

that-that-that society wanted,

49

00:03:10,240 --> 00:03:14,480

is that fluency is right and stuttering is wrong,

50

00:03:14,480 --> 00:03:18,360

and I will do whatever I can to not stutter,

51

00:03:18,400 --> 00:03:25,080

because that's not right, and it's taken time.

52

00:03:25,080 --> 00:03:31,680

It's taken acceptance to accept that this is not shyness.

53

00:03:31,680 --> 00:03:35,200

For anyone that knows me now, I am far from shy.

54

00:03:35,200 --> 00:03:41,240

This is not anxiety or nervousness.

55

00:03:41,240 --> 00:03:44,440

This is a thing that we call stuttering.

56

00:03:44,440 --> 00:03:51,320

And then it took confidence, and I began to build confidence in myself,

57

00:03:52,000 --> 00:03:55,320

irrespective of my speech, just in myself as a human,

58

00:03:55,320 --> 00:04:00,760

in myself as a husband, as a father, as a son, as a brother,

59

00:04:00,760 --> 00:04:05,640

just in my life. I just began to build confidence in myself.

60

00:04:07,160 --> 00:04:11,560

And the more I did that,

the less I cared about what people thought.

61

00:04:11,560 --> 00:04:14,680

And I know everyone cares about what people think, right?

62

00:04:14,720 --> 00:04:16,000

We dress a certain way,

63

00:04:17,200 --> 00:04:18,480

we walk a certain way,

64

00:04:18,480 --> 00:04:19,800

we talk a certain way,

65

00:04:19,800 --> 00:04:22,040

because we do care what people think.

66

00:04:22,120 --> 00:04:28,880

Unfortunately, when it comes to stuttering, that can have a much bigger impact, I think,

67

00:04:28,880 --> 00:04:31,640

because it can get us to hold back,

68

00:04:31,640 --> 00:04:34,160

it can get us to hide in the bathroom,

69

00:04:34,160 --> 00:04:37,640

because we don't want to make that phone call,

70

00:04:37,840 --> 00:04:40,680

because it's just going to be too difficult.

(Gentle upbeat music)