

Gareth Gates gave me my

MY LIFE BACK

your health



Daniel Bell, 32, spent his life struggling with a stammer until he saw Dancing On Ice star Gareth Gates on TV...

I wasn't born with a stammer, it just came on when I started school and it continued despite regular speech therapy.

But the big problems really started when I did my A-levels at Cirencester College.

I was right out of my comfort zone and being around new people and having to make friends made the stammer worse.

By the time I finished college, the idea of going away to university absolutely terrified me, so I got a job in a clothes shop instead.

It was around this time I met Claire. She was a friend of a friend and we clicked straight away.

For the first couple of weeks she never even guessed I had a stammer because I'd become so skilled at hiding it. I'd avoid certain words and situations I knew would start me off.

I knew I wanted to marry Claire the first time we met, but the thought of a big church service, with people staring at me as I read my

vows, scared me to death. So when the time came we opted to get married abroad on the Greek Island of Skiathos with eight of our family and friends.

Although the day was perfect, it still upset me to know the reason I'd opted to go abroad was because I was frightened.

But I'd become a master of avoidance techniques. If we went out for a meal, I made Claire order and I often went for jobs through people I knew so I wouldn't have to explain my stammer.

Then I landed a job at a health service provider which meant I had regular meetings with the NHS.

I would worry for days before each one because I knew that when I was under pressure just saying my name could take up to five minutes.

The idea of having children terrified me because I was sure I'd pass on my stammer to them.

Then one night I was watching Jonathan Ross interview Gareth Gates. It was the first time I'd seen him on TV since Pop Idol and I couldn't believe how normal Gareth's speech sounded.

He put it down to the McGuire Programme, a treatment for people who stutter.

Because of Gareth's success, I made enquiries and asked my company if they would fund it.

They were more than happy to help and within a month I was on the intensive four-day course.

The morning I started it took me nearly five minutes to say my name and address, but by the end of the day I was sailing through it.

The difference was amazing. Now you can't even tell I used to stammer. I order in restaurants and I've headed a five-hour meeting.

And instead of being scared about being a dad, I can't wait to start a family.

Thanks to Gareth and the McGuire Programme I've got my life back.



'I was scared to have children in case they had my stutter, now Claire and I can't wait'



Daniel started to stutter at school

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