# Man shares his journey with Bell's Palsy in new Channel 4 series



A 41-year-old man from Derbyshire has shared his personal journey with Bell's Palsy, a condition that significantly affected his self-image and confidence after he was diagnosed as a teenager. Gary Parsons, then just 18 years old, awoke one morning to discover that he had "lost his smile" overnight due to this rare form of facial paralysis.

Gary, who is a leadership mentor, speaker, and consultant, is now featured in the new Channel 4 series Love My Face. The programme focuses on individuals with facial differences and aims to provide insight into their lives and available treatment options. The episode featuring Gary is set to air on Thursday, April 17, at 11.05pm.

Explaining his experience, Gary recounted how the sudden change impacted his life: “I was always entrepreneurial, building computers and designing graphics for friends, family, and even my teachers from a young age," he said. However, the diagnosis forced him to confront a new reality. “When I woke up at 18 with one side of my face paralysed, everything changed. It knocked my confidence and made me question how people would see me."

Despite the fact that approximately 70 per cent of Bell’s Palsy cases result in a full recovery within three to six months, Gary's condition did not improve, leading him to grapple with his self-perception for more than two decades. He described a daily struggle, stating, “I couldn’t cope with seeing myself in the mirror... It became a daily battle."

In a bid to shield himself from the scrutiny that came with his appearance, Gary made the conscious decision to stop smiling, believing it highlighted his condition and prompted the question, "What’s wrong with you?" “It became my armour. But my mask would slip sometimes,” he admitted, reflecting on how inquiries about his smile would send him into emotional turmoil.

Despite his challenges with self-esteem, Gary successfully established Talk Staff, a business he later stepped away from in order to launch his consultancy career. He also initiated a podcast titled Leaders in Disguise, which aims to address mental health and well-being within leadership contexts. “I started speaking openly about my Bell’s Palsy in 2021, and that led to amazing support from the charity Facial Palsy UK," he noted. This support ultimately resulted in a referral to a specialist clinic.

Through his involvement in Love My Face, Gary found an opportunity to confront the issues he had silently battled for years and gained the chance to consider potential solutions for his smile. He expressed that the show created a space for him to reflect and progress towards self-acceptance, including the option for "smile" surgery.

Love My Face, produced by Flabbergast TV and presented by Jono Lancaster, explores the narratives of those with visible facial differences, providing a platform for personal stories and discussions surrounding treatment options.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://garyparsons.uk/my-story/> - This URL supports Gary Parsons' journey with Bell's Palsy and its impact on his mental health, as well as his transition into leadership mental health advocacy.
2. <https://garyparsons.uk/blog/imposter-in-the-disabled-community-bells-palsy/> - This URL provides details about Gary Parsons' experience with Bell's Palsy and its emotional impact, including his struggles with imposter syndrome within the disabled community.
3. <https://www.derbyworld.co.uk/community/entrepreneur-gets-his-smile-back-on-new-tv-show-5082121> - This URL discusses Gary Parsons being featured on a new TV show called Love My Face, highlighting his journey with Bell's Palsy and its effects on his life and career.
4. <https://www.londondaily.news/entrepreneur-gets-his-smile-back-on-new-tv-show/> - Similar to the previous source, this URL reports on Gary Parsons' involvement in Love My Face and his experience with Bell's Palsy affecting his smile and career aspirations.
5. <https://mentalhealthspeakers.co.uk/speaker/gary-parsons> - This URL highlights Gary Parsons' career as a mental health speaker and consultant, focusing on his journey from struggling with Bell's Palsy to becoming a prominent advocate for mental health in leadership.
6. <https://www.noahwire.com> - This URL refers to the source article itself, detailing Gary Parsons' personal journey with Bell's Palsy and his appearance on the TV show Love My Face. However, since the article itself doesn't provide direct external corroboration, it's more about the context provided in the query.
7. <https://www.derbytelegraph.co.uk/news/local-news/derbyshire-man-who-woke-up-10105808> - Please view link - unable to able to access data