

The Inclusivity of NSDA Support Groups

According to NSDA President, Charlie Reavis, “We recognize the fact that many people in our community have other voice conditions besides spasmodic dysphonia. In 2018, the NSDA Board decided to expand our Mission and Vision to include ‘related voice conditions’ in addition to SD. We are lucky to be part of an organization that understands how to live and cope with a voice condition and we should expand our reach to help others who are trying to cope with related voice conditions. I believe that we have the tools and capacity to serve a larger community through expanded outreach. We care regularly for those with other voice conditions, especially in our local support groups. Our local leaders reference many cases of those living with other voice conditions coming to a meeting and asking whether they can participate even if they don’t have SD. Anyone who comes to a local support meeting is included, regardless of condition, and by officially expanding our Mission and Vision, we make it clear that all are welcome.”

NSDA support group communities welcome people and look forward to helping those with voice conditions live better lives. Dysphonia means *abnormal sound of the voice*. Dysphonia is common and affects nearly one-third of the population at some point in their lives. The NSDA is dedicated to being a resource for people with spasmodic dysphonia and related voice conditions – like vocal tremor, vocal cord paralysis, and MTD (muscle tension dysphonia). A number of people live with both spasmodic dysphonia and related voice disorders. The NSDA has materials available to educate so that people can learn all that they can about the symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment of SD and related voice disorders.

Spasmodic Dysphonia is task-specific, meaning that the muscles spasm only when they are used for particular actions and not when they are at rest. Muscle Tension Dysphonia involves extra vocal work and strain; it is generally, but not always, considered a functional condition rather than a neurological condition. With Vocal Tremor, the vocal cords flutter open and closed during voicing. Vocal Cord Paralysis is a complete loss of nerve input to the vocal folds where the vocal cord is not moving at all. For further information on SD and related voice conditions, please visit the NSDA website at dysphonia.org.

The four pillars of our organization – research, education, awareness, and support – underpin everything that we do. The NSDA is a community that *cares about you and your voice*. As such, we include friends and family of people with dysphonia. The voice struggles of someone with vocal fold paralysis, muscle tension dysphonia, vocal tremor, and spasmodic dysphonia are all relatable and often intertwined. By being inclusive, the NSDA can help more people and grow our base. Truly, there is beauty and power in enlarging our community. Together, we will continue to make a difference!