



# Hearing Voices Networks: the best help I ever received!!

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## Hearing Voices

A range of sensory experiences commonly known as 'Auditory Hallucinations', but are not always experienced as auditory:

- Smell
- Tactile
- Visual

and includes living with distressing beliefs associated with these experiences.

Any extra-ordinary perceptual experiences perceived as separate from one-self.





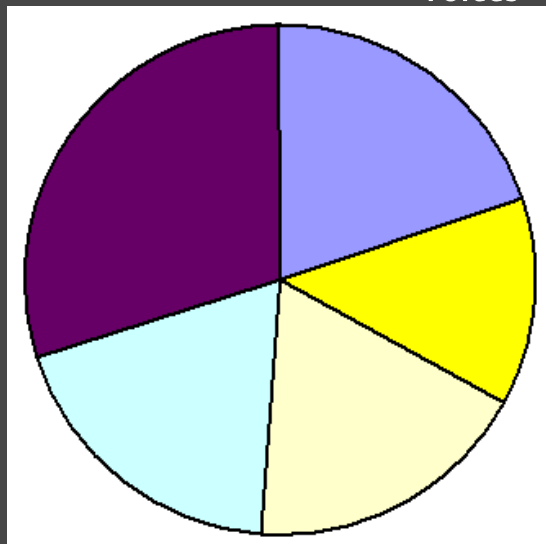
## Voice Hearing –

### A Common Human Experience

- Between 55% and 75% of the 'normal' population hear voices at some time in their lives (Millham & Easton, 1998).
- In the last 110 years several population surveys have shown that hearing voices is apparent in 2% to 4% of the normal adult population (Sidgewick et al., 1894, Tien, 1991, Eaton et al., 1991, Bijl et al., 1998)
- A recent New Zealand PhD study by Beavan (2006), showed that "Voice-hearers ... reported a diverse range of experiences ... and most had never been diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder."



### Many types of experience of Hearing Voices



- Psychic
- Distressing Voices
- Every day
- Spiritual
- Cultural

Diagram used with kind permission from Arana Pearson (VH & Trainer NZ) who first constructed the diagrammatic representation of divergent types of voices in order to illustrate the wide range of hearing voices experiences. It reflects an estimate from research (Romme & Escher, Bevan, 2006).



## Like What???

- ▶ Conscience – to chocolate or not to chocolate
- ▶ Home alone
- ▶ The song loop
- ▶ In trouble with the boss



## Voices are NOT exclusive to schizophrenia!!!

- ▶ 20% mania;
- ▶ 10% depression;
- ▶ Psychological trauma;
- ▶ Post-traumatic stress disorder;
- ▶ Organic conditions (incl. brain tumours, Parkinson's Disease, migraines, hyperthyroidism, temporal lobe epilepsy, Alzheimer's Disease, and delirium);
- ▶ Recreational drug use;
- ▶ Alcohol; &
- ▶ People with NO pathology at all!!! (incl. grief hallucinations)





# HEARING VOICES

## SIMULATION ACTIVITY

(IT IS OK IF FOR ANY REASON  
YOU DO NOT WANT TO PARTICIPATE)



## Voices Simulation Activity

1. Groups of 3
2. Choose one person to be the 'voices'
3. One person is the voice hearer
4. Other person is chatting to voice hearer (for the purpose of this exercise, to be known as 'the journalist')
  - a topic for discussion will be given to you
5. Chat for 2 minutes and swap roles until everyone has had a turn at all three.





## What happens next??

- ▶ People start isolating themselves due to the consequences of hearing voices
- ▶ Decreased performance in work or studies
- ▶ Lose job / quit studies
- ▶ At home all day doing nothing



## As a result...

- ▶ Tensions in relationships:
  - Lose friends
  - Breakdown of marriage / partnerships
- ▶ Get kicked out of the home & end up on the street if no other accommodation options open up.





## What might people do in response to hearing voices all day?

- ▶ Isolate themselves
- ▶ Talk back to the voices
- ▶ Increased anxiety behaviours
- ▶ Increased anger behaviours



## So... An Important Question:

is this person displaying the

‘Symptoms’ of Schizophrenia

or

are they displaying the

Consequences of Hearing Voices?





It might be said that the Hearing Voices Groups were formed to support people living with the effects of distressing voices and the social isolation that follows being given a disabling label such as ‘schizophrenia’.



## Coping Strategies

Voice hearers develop their own coping strategies to their voice hearing experience.

HVNA Information Booklet – centre pages, contains a Coping Strategies Poster that many voice hearers find useful.



## Strategies for Coping with Distressing Voices

### Hearing Voices Network Australia

Auspiced by Richmond Fellowship WA



#### FOCUSING TECHNIQUES

- Accepting that voices are not 'the' problem, they are a consequence of a problem. Your job is to find out more
- Identify your voices—number, gender, age and so on
- Learn about boundaries to apply to people and your voices (i.e., make a deal with your voices, "be quiet now and I'll listen later")
- Listen out for positive voices too—they can be allies
- Schedule a time to listen to the voices and ask them to leave you alone until that time
- Tell negative voices that you will only talk with them if they are respectful towards you
- Voice dialogue—let a trusted family member, friend or mental health worker talk directly to your voices
- Work through Ron Colman & Mike Smith's 'Working with Voices If' work book with a trusted family member, friend or mental health worker
- Write down what the voices are saying to you

#### POSITIVE DISTRACTION TECHNIQUES

- Go for a picnic
- Listen to energetic music
- Look at good things achieved list
- Look at photo albums
- Look at the list of good things others have said about you
- Make a list of your assets or strengths

- Make an emergency comfort bundle (of goodies)
- Read books, love letters, love poems
- Read joke books / emails
- Say positive statements to self
- Record positive statements on tape (your voice)
- Watch films—comedy or inspirational

#### POINTS TO REMEMBER TO EMERGE ME TO LOOK AFTER MYSELF.

- Do something nice for 'me' each day
- Eat a healthy diet
- Keep regular appointments with my support network even if I am feeling OKAY
- Look up, get perspective, stretch or shift your body
- Plan my day, ensure I do not have long periods of time with nothing to do
- Beach out. Talk to someone
- Take medication as prescribed (in consultation)
- Think about how I am feeling and be realistic about what I can achieve
- Try to see the grey areas are saying to you

#### DISTRACTION TECHNIQUES

- Discuss feelings with another person
- List emotional triggers
- Paint / draw emotions
- Rainy day letter
- Write a diary
- Write poetry / prose regarding feelings

#### THINGS THAT HELP VOICE HEARERS TO COPE

- Acupuncture
- Avoiding street drugs
- Changing or singing
- Distraction e.g. reading, and computer games
- Focusing on the voices
- Going to Hearing Voices Groups
- Having good support around you, good friends, family, nurse, counselor etc
- Holidays
- Humor
- Identifying when you are most likely to hear the voices
- Ignoring voices
- Isolating self
- Keeping a diary about them
- Keeping occupied e.g. cooking, house chores
- Keeping physically active and healthy
- Listening to music
- Massage
- Meditation
- Money
- Positive attitudes
- Praying / speaking to God
- Religion / Deliverance and Healing
- Sex
- Shouting at the voices
- Sleeping
- Staff listening to you
- Talking (to a trusted person)

#### WHAT MAY NOT HELP

- Being over-medicated
- Being told not to talk about voices
- Dreams and trying to get to sleep
- Labeling
- Lack of sleep
- Not having information
- Other people denying the existence of voices

- Other people denying your explanation of your voices
- Professionals thinking they know more about your voices than you do
- Side effects of the medication
- Thinking negatively
- Being socially isolated

#### REPAIRMENT TECHNIQUES

- Acknowledge fear, worry, and stress and let go consciously. Trust
- Count your breaths
- Dancing / walking
- Focus on the position of your body
- Focus solely on breathing / breathe deeply
- Give yourself permission to relax
- Guided fantasy dreamtime
- Learn figure 8/ Yoga breath
- Listen to guided relaxation on tape
- Listen to relaxing music
- Massage hands, feet, head, etc.
- Relax each muscle individually
- Swimming / floating
- Yoga

#### THINGS THAT MAY WORK FOR ME IN A CRISIS

- Ask for help sooner not later
- Create a personalized crises plan when you are feeling well
- Cry
- Find a safe place
- Hand in my medication / blades or other similar items
- Have PRN medication
- Kick boxes around outside
- Let people know where I am
- Let someone know how I am

- feeling
- Plan safety
- Remember that situations and feelings frequently change—'This too shall pass' (King Solomon)
- Rest on my bed
- Shout into my pillow
- Try to identify how I am feeling

#### COMFORTING TECHNIQUES

- Buy / pick fresh flowers
- Change the sheets on your bed
- Cuddle up to a teddy
- Eat a favorite food in moderation
- Have a bubble bath
- Have a soothing drink
- Hold a safe comforting object
- Find a safe space
- Hug someone
- Listen to soothing music / favorite soft music
- Prayer / meditation / creative visualization
- Put lights / radio on (to sleep)
- Sing favourite songs
- Sit in a safe place
- Soak your feet / Radox bath
- Spray room fragrance
- Strobe / brush your pet or someone else's
- Use perfume / hand cream or take a warm bath
- Use pot pourri / essential oils
- Wear comfortable clothes
- Write a diary or talk about how you feel with another person
- Zen seeing (with a friend)

#### GENERAL TIPS

- Don't beat yourself up, we all make mistakes
- List achievements
- Make a contract with your voices
- Positive self talk
- Self forgiveness (find yourself innocent)
- Talk to the voices, find out how they feel
- Wear one ear plug

#### DISTRACTION TECHNIQUES

- Cinema
- Clean or tidy things up
- Do puzzles or develop a hobby
- Exercise—walking/running/dance/beach
- Gardening / striking pot plants
- Listening to CDs / mp3 player
- Paint or draw pictures / posters / cards
- Playing games/cards/computer
- Reading out aloud or hum a tune to yourself
- Sewing / knitting / collecting
- Shopping
- Sports
- Telephone a friend
- Use visual imagery or count to yourself when trying to get to sleep
- Visit a friend
- Walk in shallow water
- Washing
- Watch TV / video
- Write letters

**\*NOTE: Distraction techniques are useful when voices are particularly distressing or intrusive but are not recommended as an on-going coping technique.**

We thank to the Dundee Hearing Voices Network for allowing us to draw on their THINGS THAT HELP VOICE HEARERS TO COPE and WHAT DOES NOT HELP categories. Special thanks to Maria & Audrey for sharing their personal collection of strategies with us and thank to the members of the Hearing Voices Network Australia for their contributions. Please respect the collective minds of Voice Hearers – any replication from this document must acknowledge its source (4).



I CAN'T STOP YOU TALKING TO YOURSELF, SO I'M PRESCRIBING A DUMMY MOBILE PHONE...





## Workers holding hope

- ▶ Workers can play an important role by holding hope for voice hearers, by extending a hand of friendship, by offering everyday acceptance, or by connecting the person to activities or groups they want to be a part of.
- ▶ Sometimes a voice hearer can't see their way through the muddle that encompasses them every day, and it is important that they have someone who they can trust hold that hope in their hands for them that they can and will recover, even though they can't see it right now.
- ▶ By recovery from voices, we don't mean that the voices will disappear. But it is possible to learn strategies to cope with the voices so that their effects are less distressing to the voice hearer.



## Working with Voices? What Can Workers Do?

### LISTEN!!

- ▶ Accept the person's experience of the voices
- ▶ Try to understand the different language people use to describe their experiences
- ▶ Assist to meet with other people with similar experiences (read about hearing voices → diminish the taboo and isolation).
- ▶ To consider helping the person communicate with the voices.

*Romme & Escher (1993, p. 26)*





## Research from HVNA evaluation

- ▶ 61% respondents felt less isolated as result of attending HV group meetings
- ▶ 83% respondents felt more confident to talk about their voice hearing experiences
- ▶ 44% respondents indicated that their voices have less power
- ▶ 54% respondents indicated that they are less distracted by their voices than prior to attending a HV group meeting
- ▶ 61% of respondents who indicated they used to find their voices frightening have become less afraid of their voices since attending a HV group



## Research from HVNA evaluation

Benefits from attending a HV Group:

- ▶ 49% heard fewer voices
- ▶ 40% voices have become more positive in nature
- ▶ 54% have fewer admissions into hospital
- ▶ 29% require less medication
- ▶ 74% require less emergency help
- ▶ 43% require less support from others





## Conclusion

- ▶ Hearing Voices is not abnormal
- ▶ Many people live successful and meaningful lives despite hearing voices
- ▶ Hearing Voices Groups are a meaningful activity:
  - Benefit of peer support
  - Share like experiences
  - Get coping skills



## Feel free to contact us!!

**Hearing Voices Network Australia**

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## Websites

- ▶ HVNA [www.hvna.net.au](http://www.hvna.net.au)
- ▶ INTERVOICE: The international community for hearing voices [www.intervoiceonline.org/](http://www.intervoiceonline.org/)
- ▶ Working to Recovery [www.workingto\\_recovery.co.uk/](http://www.workingto_recovery.co.uk/)
- ▶ Ron Coleman's Story [www.roncolemanvoices.co.uk/](http://www.roncolemanvoices.co.uk/)
- ▶ Dundee HVN (Scotland) [www.hearingvoicesnetwork.co.uk/](http://www.hearingvoicesnetwork.co.uk/)
- ▶ Gloucestershire HV and Recovery Group  
[www.hearingvoices.org.uk/](http://www.hearingvoices.org.uk/)



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