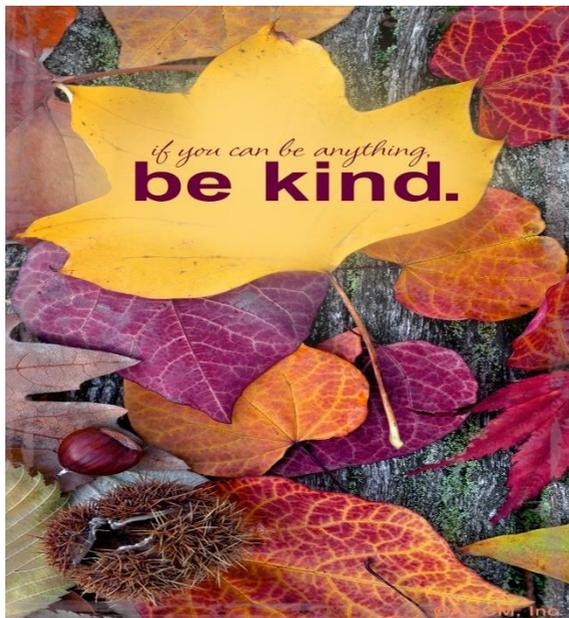




NPN

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The articles are the views of the contributors and not
necessarily those of NPN

The impact of the Maastricht Interview

My initial concerns regarding this piece of work was that the client was unable to physically attend the building due to nature of their job which was long term live in. Ironically Covid19 meant that any engagements in the initial phase were to be done over the phone.

Client stated that this worked in their favour, as they felt much more comfortable engaging via the phone rather than face to face.

The client had initially come to the service at a time of extreme personal distress. She was experiencing voices as well as physical movements coupled with intense bodily sensations. She stated that the physical aspects of the experience were completely unbidden, not of her volition.

For example, she would find herself in complex yoga positions that she had no prior knowledge of but checked out when she researched them. Another was being moved in a Mexican Wave, something that would be anatomically impossible to self-execute. At this early stage, the client believed that this 'sensorial experience' could only be explained as demonic possession. She would be visited nightly by 'The Entity' and was powerless.

The Maastricht Interview that I used is undoubtedly a team effort, 2 individuals working together to break down stereotypes, build rapport and re unify disparate parts of the personality. I was blessed in some

respects by having had a long-standing passion for mediation, yoga, and esoteric practices. This allowed the client to be free and open with their deeply held views and experiences that a non-practitioner of Eastern mysticism wouldn't necessarily get or understand. It proved invaluable in developing real depth to the relationship and afforded us occasions to explore aspects of our respective practices.

During one particular session the client had voiced real shame and guilt about her past indulgences with alcohol, drugs, and casual sex. To which I replied..." No different to the Buddha then." This one line struck at the very core of her belief system and sense of self. If this was acceptable behaviour for the Buddha before enlightenment, then it was also ok for her.

I made sure that each session was started with an informal check in. I would follow this up with encouraging remarks relating to progress she had made from the previous weeks and always strived to reinforce the idea that her narrative was both essential and entirely believable. Also, when broken down was not untypical of the dissociative experience.

I made a point of gently dropping breadcrumbs during the sessions. Suggestions that these 'experiences' stem from within - or the self - essentially unresolved emotions. I avoid forcing such ideas directly but weaved them in gently and allowed them to take root and develop of their own

accord. The last thing someone experiencing nightly visitations, body being bent out of shape needs is a practitioner trying to shoehorn in hard rational explanations. This approach can only serve to damage the relationship.

Historically this person had grown up in an environment of unboundaried sexual norms perpetrated by the father. It was important to challenge these and get the client to re-evaluate because those imposed norms were neither normal nor acceptable. This allowed other doors to open and we were able to dig deeper into her experience. Along the way, those unhealthy boundaries had somehow been normalised – and for this client...”it would be weird in someone else's’ family but not in ours.”

This process of re-evaluating forms another key stage in the process. Deep down the person knows aspects of their developmental experience was wholly inappropriate but in order to survive they will mitigate and rationalise the behaviour of others. This only serves to reinforce the perpetrators power and produces an unhealthy view of the self and the world around them. It’s important to robustly challenge those assumptions and allow the victim new perspectives on old beliefs. Only then can they reframe historical abuse for what it really is.

At times there were parts of her experience that I couldn't explain but because I believed her story 100 percent, we were able to journey together and open doors that were previously closed to outsiders. The demons were finally out in the open, exposed and under the microscope.

As part of my own journey I have benefitted greatly from a second career as a Mental Health Advocate. This has meant lots of opportunities to support people on acute and intensive care psychiatric wards. The single most important thing I have learned from the role is simply this - if its real for someone then it's real. Dismissive comments like, "oh, it's just part of your illness, your imagining it" are nothing short of cruel and devaluing. This is their reality in the moment. As real to them as the very person being dismissive. Perhaps another way of explaining mental distress is that of not being believed. We need to be more compassionate and accepting that there are those of us who will at some time, or another experience altered states. Our job is not to try to grasp or conceptualise but simply accept that my reality is not yours.

There are many gaps in our attempts to understand the human experience. Modern societies way of addressing it has been to medicalise and apply a rigid diagnostic structure . But in reality, it's largely beyond our ken and simply too nuanced for categorisation. People need to be believed, accepted, and encouraged to join up the

dots that were cruelly erased through violence or sexual trauma. Only when a sense of self begins to re-emerge can the victim begin the process of reframing those past experiences. The Maastricht Interview allows that journey to begin and in the right hands can offer safety, validation, and enough self determination to navigate that journey.

The Maastricht Interview Training for Hearing Voices & Problematic Thought, Beliefs & Paranoia

Is available online from the National Paranoia Network. It can be delivered across the world for more information and costings

Email enquiries@nationalparanoianetwork.org

Other training available online Working through Paranoia, Making Sense of Hearing Voices & Working with Childhood Trauma

How to Start Overcoming Fear

1. Awareness. Before you can begin overcoming fear, you have to be aware that your fears are causing havoc in your life. It's easy to get so attached to your thoughts and feelings that you think they are all that exist, which couldn't be further from the truth. You are not your fears. You are the awareness that experiences it.

2. Identify. Get specific about what exactly you're afraid of. Pay attention to the pictures you have in your head about the situation. What is happening in them? What are you really scared of? Become an observer of your inner space.

3. Curiosity. While curiosity may have killed the cat, it certainly won't do you any harm when investigating your fears. Get curious about what thoughts generate your fear. Where do you feel the fear? How do you react to it? What colour does it have? Be an observer of what is going on.

4. The Now. What are you lacking right now? When you center yourself in the now, you realize that everything is how it is. You naturally accept what is. Tapping into the now can be as simple as feeling your body and breath.

5. Gratitude. Whenever you feel fear, switch it over to what you are grateful for instead. If you're afraid of public speaking, be grateful for the opportunity to

communicate with so many people, and that they are there to genuinely listen to what you have to say. If you are outgrowing your friends, be grateful for what's to come.

6. Journaling. Getting your fears down on paper is important, because trying to think them through doesn't work. You get caught up in endless loops of negativity that only lead you further down the rabbit hole, and make your life miserable.

7. Watch. Watching a movie or a documentary can be as enlightening as reading a book. Sometimes it's nice to distract yourself from your fear.

8. Diet. Did you know that the food you eat can have a dramatic impact on how you feel? All the processed sugars, additives, sweeteners, and other chemicals in our foods have a surprisingly powerful effect in getting our body out of balance. Stick to a clean diet that suits you. Meaning, more fruits, vegetables and whole (real) foods. Just eat a bit more each day. See what happens. You may find yourself having more energy and courage.

9. Understand Failure. When you realize that failure is not the end of the world, you become free. Failure is just a steppingstone to success.

10. Breathe. Your breath can set you free. It can anchor you in the now and help you vanquish and overcome your most pervasive fears.

This Pandemic is a Good Time to Face Your Social Anxiety

Are you secretly relieved that social distancing is giving you a built-in excuse? Few social demands, fewer social gatherings, cancelled group activities? Remember how you used to feel when you were invited somewhere? All kinds of things went through your head as your discomfort grew:

How many people will be there?

I prefer one-on-one.

I'd rather be alone.

I don't like being in a group.

I don't want to go.

Most people enjoy parties, reunions, conferences, and group activities of all kinds. But there's a fairly large subset of people who feel so exquisitely uncomfortable in a group that all they can think about is:

When can I escape?

How many times have you thought, or said, one of the sentences above? If your answer is, "Many," I want to assure you that you are not alone. Being in a group

requires a different level of confidence and different social skills than spending time with someone one-on-one. Having talked with countless numbers of folks who avoid groups, I can say with confidence that most likely it's not the group itself that you're avoiding. Actually, you're avoiding a particular feeling or set of feelings that you have when you're in a group. Here are some of the feelings described over the years by folks who are uncomfortable in groups:

- Left out
- Trapped
- Lost
- Overlooked
- Freaked out
- Anxious
- Sad
- Ignored
- Judged
- Panicked
- Confused
- Self-conscious
- Alone
- Invisible
- Inferior

What causes these feelings? What is it about being among a number of people that would cause a person to have any of these uncomfortable emotions? Is it a

result of anxiety or depression? A social phobia? Is it a weakness or a fault?

Sure, some of these can be possible. Depression can make you feel like isolating yourself, and anxiety or social phobia can make you too nervous to enjoy the company of others. But if you're reading this looking for answers, I want you to dispose of the idea that your discomfort is a result of personal weakness or fault. Neither of those is the answer. And now I'd like to give you a far better explanation than any of those. Chances are high that your discomfort in groups is caused by one of three factors.

3 Reasons You May Be Uncomfortable or Anxious in Groups of People

1. **The prevailing feeling in your first group.** And by this, I mean your family group. I have seen that those who grow up feeling uncomfortable in their family group often carry those uncomfortable feelings with them. So think back to when you were growing up. When your family was together did you feel ignored? Overlooked? Left out? Alone? Invisible? (All of those feelings are typically a result of Childhood Emotional Neglect or CEN). Or did you feel trapped? Inferior? Targeted? Were you constantly preparing for some unpredictable eruption of anger or erratic behaviour of a family member?

Whatever your prevailing feelings were, you naturally carry them forward into your adult life. These old feelings then arise in situations that mimic the family experience. Like being in a group.

2. **Self-Fulfilling Prophecy.** Research has shown that when we expect people to treat us a certain way, we can unwittingly pull for it from other people. We actually unconsciously bring it upon ourselves. In a landmark study, it was shown that children who were labelled and treated as extra smart by their teachers actually acted smarter, and did better in school, regardless of what their IQ truly was (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). Since 1968 it's been discovered that self-fulfilling prophecy happens in many different ways and in interpersonal arenas of all kinds. So expect to be treated as an outsider by a group of people, and you may actually bring about exclusionary behaviour in the people around you.
3. **The Fatal Flaw.** The Fatal Flaw is a feeling that something is wrong with you. It's a sense of being different; of being missing some vital ingredient that everyone else seems to have. A surprisingly large number of people walk around with this feeling. It can lie there, under the surface, making you feel on the outside at social events both professional and personal. The Fatal Flaw can make you feel you don't belong, even

when you really, really do. It has the power to make you avoid group situations.

Notice that none of these potential causes of your discomfort are a product of the group itself. The actual people in the actual group are not the problem. The problem is a feeling that you have; a feeling that you bring with you wherever you go.

And now the good news.

You can't control other people (except perhaps unconsciously, thanks to Self-Fulfilling Prophecy). But you can control your feelings. Feelings can be managed. And now, during the pandemic, while the pressure is off, it's an excellent time to start working on your discomfort!

Steps to Overcome Your Discomfort in Groups

1. Come to grips with the true nature of your discomfort. The people are not the problem. It's a feeling inside of you that's the problem. Is it Cause #1, 2, or 3 above? Or is it a mixture of several? Understanding what you're truly bothered by, and why, is a powerful Step One toward resolving it.
2. Put words to your uncomfortable feeling. Choose them from the list above and/or add

your own. Naming a feeling instantly reduces its power.

3. Talk with a trusted person about the feeling and how it makes you want to avoid group events. If you don't feel comfortable talking with a friend or family member, talk with a therapist about it. Sharing your feeling with another person will even further reduce its power over you.
4. Start exposing yourself to group situations a little at a time, with support.
5. Before you go to the group event, set an amount of time you will be there. Remind yourself that you have to manage your feeling while you are there. Talk back to the feeling when you feel it:

These people are fine. They're not the problem.

You're an adult, and no one in this group can hurt you.

You're a good person and you belong here.

It doesn't matter what other people think.

It's just a feeling. It's old, and you don't need it anymore.

You're a person, on equal footing with everyone else here. And you matter.

Strategies for coping with distressing voices

Focusing techniques

- Accepting that voices are not ‘the’ problem, they are a consequence of the problem. Your job is to find out more.
- Identify your voices (age, gender etc.)
- Learn about boundaries to apply to your voices (i.e. Make a deal with your voices ‘be quiet now and I’ll listen later’)
- Voice dialogue – let a trusted family member, friend or mental health worker talk directly to the voice.
- Listen out for positive voices too – they can be allies
- Tell negative voices that you will only talk to them if they are respectful towards you.

Positive emotional techniques

- Go for a picnic
- Make a list of good things that others have said about you
- Make an emergency comfort bundle of goodies
- Watch films- comedy or inspirational

Points to enable me to look after myself

- Do something nice for ‘me’ each day

- Eat a healthy diet
- Plan your day, ensure you don't have long periods with nothing to do
- Keep regular appointments with your support network even if you're feeling OK

Emotional focusing

- Discuss your feelings with another person
- Paint/draw emotions
- List emotional triggers
- Write a diary
- Write poetry regarding your feelings
-

Things that may help you cope

- Acupuncture
- Avoiding street drugs
- Going to Hearing Voices Group
- Humour
- Talking (to a trusted person)
- Keeping physically active

What may NOT help

- Being over-medicated
- Being told not to talk about voices
- Labeling
- Lack of sleep
- Other people denying the existence of the voices
- Professionals thinking, they know more than you do

- Being socially isolated

Things that may help in a crisis

- Ask for helper sooner than later
- Cry
- Find a safe place
- Kick boxes around outside
- Let people know where and how you are
- Hand in medication/blades etc.
-

Comforting and relaxation techniques

- Listen to guided meditation on tapes
- Swimming/floating
- Focus on breathing deeply
- Hug someone
- Put lights/radio on
- Go to your safe place
- Sing your favourite song

General ideas

- Positive self talk
- Self forgiveness (find yourself innocent)
- Talk to the voices, see how they feel.
- Wear one earplug.
-

Common Traits of People Saying Sorry Too Much

While “sorry syndrome” is a pervasive issue that is experienced by all sorts of people, there are certain common traits that overlap with this tendency. In particular:

- **Compassion.** People who care a lot about the feelings and preferences of others often find themselves over apologizing when they’ve done nothing wrong.
- **Submissiveness in relationships.** Those who are prone to saying sorry too much in a relationship often give their partner the message that they feel it’s wrong to have their own personal boundaries or needs.
- **Agreeability.** If you care a lot about keeping the peace and preventing conflict, you’re likely to say sorry more than is necessary. After all, you’d rather give an unneeded apology than end up in a fight.
- **Lack of faith in one’s own judgment.** When you’re never quite confident that what you’re doing or saying is right, you can be quick to apologize and simply assume you’re in the wrong.
- **Strict background.** Whether you were raised in a strict schooling environment or by particularly authoritarian parents, spending your childhood

in fear of discipline can make you trigger-happy with apologies.

- **Anxiety.** Living with an underlying sense of impending doom can lead you to be ultra-sensitive to the idea of situations or relationships going awry, which in turn can spark a disproportionate number of apologies.
- **What is the Psychology Behind “Apologizing Too Much”?**
- Apologizing too much (or “over-apologizing disorder”) can have a wide variety of background explanations. Some of them are indicated in the personality traits as discussed above. For example, a difficult upbringing, a past of emotional abuse and a naturally high level of compassion for others can all lead to constantly saying sorry.
- However, regardless of the nuances of your personal life, studies show that there’s likely a root cause of excessively over apologizing.
- Research conducted at Harvard Business School indicates that we make superfluous apologies with the goal of building or maintain trust. This study does indeed establish that we trust people (even strangers) more if they make unnecessary apologies when they approach us. So, there is an adaptive reason for the behaviour. In fact, less than 10% of participants gave a stranger their phone when asked without a superfluous apology. However, closer to 50% let the stranger

borrow their phone if the request was prefaced with the comment “I’m really sorry about this rain!”

- **5 Ways To Stop Saying Sorry Too Much**
- While apologizing can be a powerful tool for building trust and improving social cohesion, it’s vital to be able to assert yourself and view yourself as having the right to make your way in the world.
- If you’re constantly apologizing, you send the signal to the Universe that you are meek, unsure and undeserving. An unnecessary “sorry” has huge potential to undermine your manifestation power. Therefore, it pays to cut back. But how can you do this?
- Before saying sorry, stop and ask yourself this: “Have I actually done anything wrong here?”. If the answer is no, do not apologize! The urge can be easier to resist if you ask this follow-up question: “If I didn’t do something wrong here, do I really want people to think I believe that I did?”
- **2. Express Compassion Differently**
- If you worry about sharing difficult emotions, note that there are other ways to show compassion and empathy. Instead of constantly apologizing in a relationship, say something like “I know that’s tough to hear” or “You can always tell me when you’re upset.”

- **3. Know Your Triggers**
- Do a quick brainstorming session and write down 10 things that make you want to apologize. For example, bumping into a stranger or asking someone to do something for you. For each item, think of something you could say instead. Spend a week focusing on just one, trying to entirely eliminate “sorry” from that context.
- **4. Phrase Questions Carefully**
- There’s no need to over-apologize when you need clarification, so don’t say sorry when you ask. Instead, experiment with questions like “Could you please say a bit more about that for me?” or “Can you please help me understand this better, maybe by using an example?”
- **5. Turn Apologies into Gratitude**
- The next time you feel an apology rising up inside you, think of a way to rephrase it into a statement of gratitude. For example, “I’m sorry you had to run that errand” can easily become “I’m so grateful you did me this favour!”. Not only is this more pleasing to the hearer, but it focuses your mind on positivity and abundance. This can help you attract even more positivity.

Sorry Rachel, could I just interrupt briefly?"

- *"Right, yes, sorry Aaron. Go ahead."*
- *"Sorry, I just thought we were working towards a March completion on this project? Sorry if I've got that wrong."*
- Sound familiar? Saying "sorry" when we don't really need to can be a difficult habit to break. Perhaps you don't even notice yourself doing it. But over-using the word "sorry" can make your sincere apologies less meaningful and may even lose you your co-workers' respect.
- So, why do we do it?
- Apologizing is a common trait among "people pleasers" and those of us who avoid confrontation at all costs. We apologize because we assume that we are the ones in the wrong, because we want to diffuse tension, or to fill an awkward silence. Over-apologizing can also reveal a lack of self-worth or self-confidence.

Winter Morning

The morning wakens with the lumping flails, chilly and cold; the early rising clown hurtles along and blows his fingernails; icicles from the cottage eaves hand down, which peeping children wish for in their play. The field once clad in autumn russet brown, spreads from the eye its circle far away in one huge sheet of snow: from the white wood. The crows all silent seek the dreary fens, and starnels blacken through the air in crowds; the sheep stand bleating in their turnip pen and loath their frozen food; while labouring men button their coats more close from angry clouds and wish for night and its snug open fire again

John Clare

Philippa Louise

I am looking for participants for my research...
Have you struggled accessing help for your mental health?

I am looking for participants to take part in my research into the barriers to recovery for people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia.

If you would like to take part, please follow this link:
http://staffordshire.qualtrics.com/.../SV_2926Z52DU6i8JM1

Or if you would like further info you can email me, l024471i@student.staffs.ac.uk to discuss it further

Rebecca White

Participants needed for an online study investigating whether satisfaction with relationship status is linked to mental health, self-esteem, loneliness, and stigma?
Anyone who is over 16 and has ever received support for unshared experiences/psychosis is able to take part.
The link to more info and the survey is: j.mp/36l17f0

Understanding Suspicious Thinking

Do you have difficulty trusting others? Do you tend to be wary or suspicious?

Are you 18+ years old? Would you like to take part in a survey exploring suspicious thinking? You will be asked to complete four questionnaires that should take no longer than 35 minutes. You will be entered into a draw to win one of three £50 Amazon vouchers if you take part.

To take part, please go to <https://www.isurvey.soton.ac.uk/37016>). Please feel free to email ojp1g12@soton.ac.uk for more information.

Would you like to take part in some research about loneliness?

Taking part in the study you will be interviewed about your experiences of loneliness. We are particularly interested to hear from people who have received support around their loneliness. For more information please contact melina.malli@phc.ox.ac.uk

**INTERVOICE CONGRESS 2021
ORGANISED BY HEARING VOICES NETWORK
IRELAND**

**VENUE: UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK, CORK
CITY, IRELAND**

SAVE THE DATE/DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Hearing Voices Network Ireland (HVNI) is pleased to announce that the **12th Annual Intervoice Congress 2021 will be held in Cork, Ireland, in late August/early September 2021** (exact dates to be confirmed).

The Congress is organised by HVNI, supported by Failte Ireland, through the Cork Convention Bureau, and by the Cork Conference Centre at University College Cork. The venue for the conference is University College Cork. Not really knowing where things will be re the pandemic in late summer 2021, the conference will adopt a hybrid model, with hopefully many delegates being able to travel to Cork, and others across the globe joining and/or contributing online.

We look forward to meeting you (either in person or online) late summer of 2021!

Further news to follow soon through the usual channels.

Queries to Harry Gijbels at h.gijbels@ucc.ie

26 On behalf of HVNI conference 2021 committee
<http://hearingvoicesnetworkireland.ie/>

INSIDE MY MIND

If you were to look inside my mind; I could tell you right now all the things that you would find; you would see the blueprint of how my thought process is designed; no more negativity as that's been left behind. The first things you would see is an awful lot of fight; this would make you understand and give you some insight.

The next thing you would discover is the real me; throwing in the towel is something you won't see; giving up does not exist to me; I have an arsenal of weaponry; it makes me stronger mentally; my illness is my enemy; for my life I have a recipe; I transmit so much energy, it is of a high intensity; each day is a test for me; I fight back successfully; I have to be a leader because that's what you all expect from me. Search a little more and you will find my rage; I'm like a wild animal who's just broken free from his cage. The next thing to be found, that would be my positivity; it is one of the main factors how I entered my RECOVERY; my story is a fall and rise you see; to be grateful is compulsory

When I go to bed I have no time to count some sheep; that's because I'm also fighting when I am asleep I'm in a happy place now, I'll make sure the feeling lasts; there's absolutely no chance of me taking my foot off the gas

NEVER GIVE UP!!!

Online Hearing Voices & Paranoia Support Groups

Join our online Hearing Voices & Paranoia Support Group Meetings on ZOOM

Thursday 3pm -4.30pm with Paul Meeting ID 88460268952 Password 375878

Sundays: HVN USA on ZOOM 6:30p - 8:00p USA Time with Cindee 11.30pm – 1.00 am UK Time Meeting ID 827 5463 8654 No Password Needed

Saturdays Texas USA HVN Meeting on ZOOM
10am-11.30 USA Time with Paul
4pm-5.30pm UK Time Meeting ID 83079149464
No Password Needed

Monday Sheffield Hearing Voices & Paranoia Support Group with Emma & Lyn
On ZOOM 11am- 12pm UK Time
Meeting ID: 558 685 8263
Password 6DyVca