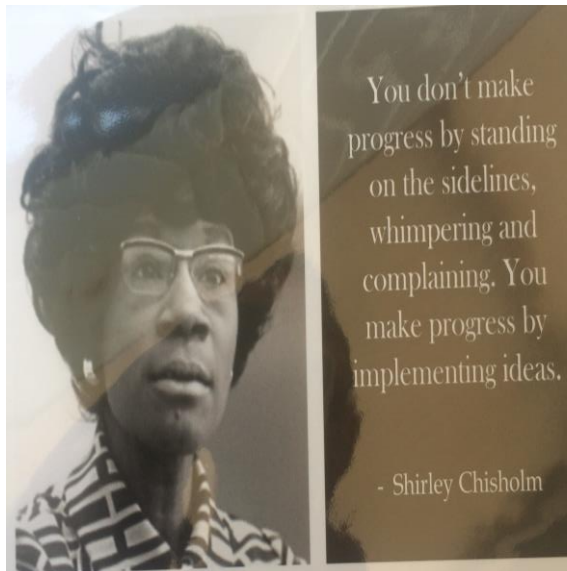




NPN

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

Problems Linked with Childhood Trauma

In traumatic situations such as road traffic accidents, assault or combat it is common for a victim to dissociate. Some describe having “out of body” experiences, others lose the memory of events. If a child is in a traumatic situation and cannot physically escape, then mental escape is the sensible option. Many abused children survive because they have been able to detach from the reality of their situation this way.

As soon as he came to my room, I started to imagine myself just melting into the mattress, just disappearing... I found myself floating away from my body...

Sometimes we try to achieve dissociation because we want to be less focused, we want to detach. Most of us have tried to “lose ourselves” in a good book or by watching a compelling film, but people also dissociate through drinking alcohol, smoking, using drugs, binge eating, self-injuring, gambling, and so on. All of these can help a person achieve a “tuned out” state, but not all of these behaviours are safe, or even legal, and some can make problems worse.

Sometimes we tune into different aspects of ourselves. For example: at work a woman would tap into the professional part of herself, out with friends she would tune into the social playful part of herself and when her child needed her, she would get in touch with the maternal part of herself. It's common to slip from persona to persona like this. It helps us function effectively.

"...It's as if I became a separate person – a soldier who felt no pain, I wasn't Sam anymore..."

Unfortunately, some people find that they slip from one facet of themselves to another so easily and so frequently that they feel as if they are not quite functioning as a single person. They might even feel as though they have several distinct personalities within them. This doesn't necessarily present a problem but if you are worried or confused, because you don't feel as though you function as a single person, ask your doctor for help or seek advice from a professional therapist.

Understanding Childhood Trauma

In summary, then, dissociation is a perfectly normal response, but it can cause problems if it interferes with a person's day to day functioning or if attempts to achieve a detached state are harmful. In part two we will look at ways of tackling dissociation so that you can make it work for you.

Sensitivity to Abuse

The finding that survivors of abuse have a special sensitivity to abuse related information makes a lot of sense, too. It reflects the strategy “better to be safe than sorry.” If a child has been abused and he is now extra aware of danger, he can better protect himself; he has a heightened awareness and he’s on the lookout. If hurt is avoidable, he’ll be able to escape and it it’s not then he can prepare himself. This reaction can be carried into adulthood where, if a person is still at risk, it might be helpful. However, If there is no risk, the oversensitivity can interfere with the quality of a person’s life. Again, in Part two we will be looking at ways in which you can appraise your initial reactions so that you can be confident in weighing up a situation.

My Voice Hearing Experience

Anon

I just want to share with you a bit about my voice hearing experiences. This is my experience, but it might be different for you – as all voice hearers are individuals and we all cope with things in different ways.

It took me a long time to work out who my voices were. I thought I recognized them but wasn't sure exactly. Because I was given a label of schizophrenia for a while, I thought that meant that the voices were just anybody but then the more I worked through my issues I realized that these voices were known to me.

The voices that haunt me are the voices of people who have hurt me in the past; adults that I can't trust, and I feel would still try to hurt me.

I find that staying at home and cutting myself off is the worst thing I can do because the voices have a captive audience. If I switch the TV on to distract myself, I find that it emphasises all the things that don't help like stories about rape, abuse or small children. It's like the TV makes me hear and see stuff I don't want in my head – I can't get away.

So I need to be active, to distract myself by doing things that cleaning the house or getting out and about.

When I first go out after a period when I've been stuck at home, I find that the voices get worse for a bit before they get better. They tell me to go home so that they can control me or tell me to take an overdose or self-harm. However, I know that if I keep going out the voices will get less.

It's horrendous though because there's more of them, they should be louder than me and they trigger me back into issues of my childhood. They can cause me to disassociate so that I feel like I go back to certain times when I was a child when my abuse was at its worst. So I start to think and act as if I were 5 again. This makes it difficult for me to cross-roads, I feel frightened of the adults around me they don't feel trustworthy, and I don't know how to get home or to get to someone where I know I can be safe. This is a very scary experience that sometimes just last for a short while or up to 4-5 hours or more.

In that time, it is important for me to contact people that I trust because hearing the voices of real people that I trust, that won't lie to me and believe in me, really helps. The more input I get from other people the less airtime the voices get. It's scary to do this and to keep

going out but the more I do it the more chance I've got of getting rid of the bad voices.

Trusted people can tell me if what the voices are saying is true and they remind me that I'm an adult now and that these voices can no longer hurt me – they are only voices from the past.

I'm too scared to speak back to the voices I hear because when I've tried it they seem to speak back with greater ferocity. I need other people to speak back to the voices on my behalf because the voices can't punish them.

The voices can be very threatened when I do reach out for support, but I have to ride the storm.

So, these are the things that I've worked out that that help me with my voices:

- Meeting with people that understand me and with whom I can be real helps, so I can talk if I want to or not if I choose.
- Also, it's good for me to have friends who don't talk about survivor issues/voices at all – who I can just be silly with and have 'time out'.
- I've put all my 'safe people' on quick dial on my mobile phone so I can contact them easily.

- I've got little cards in my wallet with statements that my trusted people have said which contradict the voices. They remind me of positive things about myself. They are there for those times when I can't get a hold of anybody on the phone.
- I try to ground myself. Sometimes it helps if I am needed to be responsible for someone else e.g., a dog, a child, a friend in need – because it helps me to stay adult. When I'm adult I can tackle the voices better and make sense of what they're saying. When I'm not grounded the voices just get worse and if I go into child mode, I think the voices are real and the voices have greater power.

We all need to remember that although our experiences can vary, we can all empathise with each other because we can all relate to the experience of hearing voices.

3 Causes of Anxiety

1. Biology: Research has shown that some babies are born with an anxious temperament. Babies who are observed as edgy and reactive have been seen to grow up to be edgy and reactive adults; in other words, anxious babies grow into anxious adults. This type of anxiety is genetic, and it tends to run in families.

Biology, however, is not a sentence to a lifetime of anxiety. First, because biological anxiety waxes and wanes throughout your lifetime, it may become problematic really only during times of transition or stress. And second, because you can learn to manage your biological anxiety.

Best Solution: Anxiety management techniques are plentiful and effective. The best way to learn them is to see a cognitive/behavioural therapist. Some common anti-depressant medications are also effective in treating biological anxiety.

2. Childhood Emotional Neglect: This essentially boils down to how you handle your feelings. When you push your emotions down or suppress them, they don't simply disappear. Instead, they remain there, buried. Repressed and suppressed feelings pool together under the surface and become a diffuse form of anxiety. This type of anxiety seems to come and go at will. It becomes your main feeling. In general, you may find

yourself existing in two states: you either feel anxious, or you feel nothing at all.

Best Solution: The best solution for this type of anxiety is to break through the wall between yourself and your pool of blocked-off emotions. Pay attention to your feelings, allow yourself to feel them, learn to put them into words, and how to manage and express them. This may sound like a lot of work, but it will gradually reduce your anxiety and will have multiple other positive effects upon your life satisfaction as well.

3. Personal Growth: This is one of the most powerful, and yet least talked about, forms of anxiety. It's the anxiety that's naturally built into virtually every step of emotional or psychological growth that you take in your lifetime. It's especially intense when you're trying to give up a coping mechanism that you needed in childhood (like Maryann). This anxiety arises when you're about to make a healthy change in yourself, and it tries to pull you backward.

Each time Maryann tries to abandon the habit that saved her life in childhood, her body screams, "No-o-o-o-o!" It does this by sending her feelings of fear, to alert her that what she's about to do is dangerous.

Best Solution: The most helpful strategy in managing this type of anxiety is simply recognizing what it is. When you can accept that it's only your body warning

you against something that's not dangerous, you can accept the feeling, and then override it. In Maryann's situation, a vital step in her growth process involves not giving in to the wave of anxiety she feels, but instead letting it wash over her like a wave; and then overriding it. This means speaking up in spite of it.

Each time Maryann manages her anxiety this way, ending with healthy action, she is reducing her anxiety's power. She's essentially re-programming her brain to recognize that the new behaviour (speaking up) is not dangerous, but adaptive and healthy.

Every single human being, every single day receives messages from their body.

"Escape!"

"Stop!"

"Stay quiet!"

"Don't try that," insist the voices of your anxiety.

So now, you must begin to insist back: *"I will not run away from this. I will not stop. I will not stay quiet, I will speak up. I will try that."*

Accept the feeling, understand its cause, and you can take control of what's been controlling you.

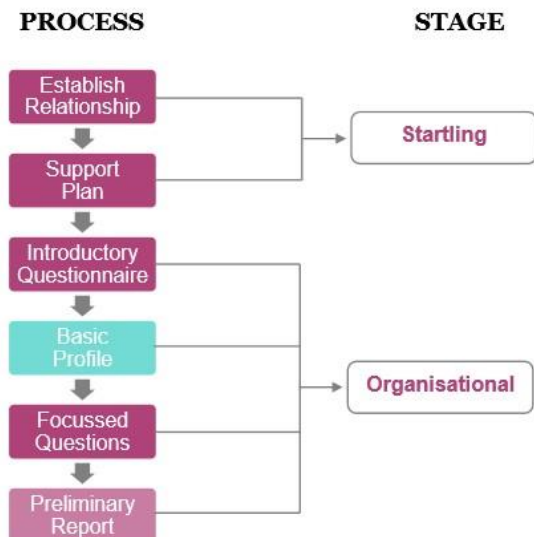
"Working Through the 3 Stages of Voice Hearing using the Voice Profiling & Focussing Approach"

The Melissa Roberts Foundation is proud to have been involved in the development of this new and exciting training module, in conjunction with our good friend Peter Bullimore and his team at the Paranoia Network UK. The training module is available in half day and full day workshops and is an excellent tool for people working one on one with voice hearers, to help identify the 3 stages of voice hearing by using the voice profiling approach.

The workshops focus on:

- What are the three stages of voice hearing?
- What is voice profiling?
- How/When/Why - Using voice profiling within each stage
- Developing a basic profile (2)
- Developing a report (2)
- Developing focussed questions
- Applying what has been learnt

The following chart defines the processes involved:



The modules are available both online and at face-to-face workshops.

Peter B presented an overview of the modules at the recent World Hearing Voices Congress in September, and the feedback and interest has been fantastic.

If you would like to know more about these new and exciting training modules, contact Peter B at enquiries@nationalparanoianetwork.org located in the UK or myself at melissarobertsfoundation.org.au, located in Sydney Australia.

Bruce Roberts Chairperson Melissa Roberts Foundation

The Moon and the stars are your eyes – Laon
And I the ocean deep,
Moving with Moon rhythms.
I drink you in and take my fill.
My phantoms, deep and dark we fly...
Carrying unearthly treasure to lay on your pillow
From this, my green and luscious land.
If you could but see the Lady Moon tonight,
In all her shining glory...
Showering precious silver on all, she surveys...
You would love her too!
And this timeless affair of Earth and Moon
Can make our sky laugh or cry –
Can freeze a heart,
Can melt a heart,
This game we have is, Her game –
And she the merciless mistress
We have a destiny, she glows:
Showing Her glory to all!
Brazen and bold, she, the seducer of minds
Brings memories of secrets best forgotten,
Yet reluctant I am, I pay her service –
To cast off her shadows on the silken waters
Or forget the magic that she threw on us
Would be but a futile denial!
Ah well! When memories fail me Laon
As years passing blunt the razors sharp edge,
When my pictures are all but complete
And like mirrors – hang on some wall
Lest I forget such beauty and vision,
Lest I cannot remember the times
That we danced, chatted and loved.
By the light of you, my silvery Moon.

Think you are open-minded?

How open minded?

Many of us have had the experience of being in a crowded place and looking over our shoulder thinking we hear someone calling our name only we hearing someone calling out name only for they're to be no-one there. Disconcerting, isn't it?

We have all had the experience of having two people trying to talk to us at once only for us to end up feeling confused and frustrated. Now take that a step further in your imagination. Imagine six people talking to you at the same time, all with their own urgencies, thoughts, demands, all clamouring for your attention. What would you do? Tell them to shut up. Sorry, that won't work, try, and distract yourself from them by doing something else. Fat chance! Leave the room? You can't. You could move to the other side of the planet, and they would still come with you. This is a hint of what it is like hearing voices. Welcome to my world, doesn't sound too bad?> Well it gets a whole lot more complicated. Mostly these voices aren't just conversational, not just the odd passing comment.

If you have had a child, you will know what it is like when they become upset, inconsolable and distraught. You'd do anything to pacify them, to put your arms around them to tease their distress and thus ease yours.

But you can't. I hear a voice, those cries, that child I cannot calm lives in my experience. Imagine having people surround you that when you go to have a drink, tell you not to drink it because it's been poisoned. Likewise, when you go to eat something, poisoned. Likewise, when you go to take a tablet, poisoned. At first you may be able to brush it off. "Yeah right, whatever! They are being ridiculous."

But what if I tell you this for hours, for days? What if you actually see it being poisoned? Would you start to wonder? Indeed, it's such a consistent message a fact that you almost take it for granted. Difficult even to distinguish whose thought it was in the first place. This is how brainwashing works and it's really not that different. Remember you cannot switch this off. You have no choice whether you hear it or not. And they are just not comments, not just asides but dictatorial and if not adhered to the consequences are at best, severe at worse potentially fatal.

Imagine having a voice coming into your head that deals not just in words but also in images which, when triggered, starts horrendous flashbacks. It's a bit like going to the cinema thinking you're in the screen for Bambi and actually you're sat in the front row for the

worst horror movie. Except I don't have the choice to leave. And the thing is once you have seen these images you can't 'unsee' them. If that makes sense. They stay with you, things that you have tried so hard to forget. Imagine having a voice telling you how fat and disgusting you are.

Your worst critic magnified and amplified. We all have niggling worries about our weight and body image, but this voice takes it to a whole new level. Your body becomes your enemy that you have to wipe out. You have to disappear. You starve yourself. Use laxatives. Purge. Exercise to the point of collapse. You become so hell-bent on self-destruction that people cannot stand by and watch. They take you into hospital and force-feed you. Your self-hatred increasing with every drop.

This goes on for years, every day a battleground. Another voice is obsessional, creating a ceaseless anxiety unless everything is just so just perfectly so. I won't bore you with every voice. They are not always the same, some come, some go, some stay the same. They tend to work in conjunction with visual hallucinations, seeing things others can't see but are so real to me, I could reach out and touch them. Together they can make life a confusing, terrifying, and very, very occasionally a very funny place to live. Some say its brain chemistry, some say it's due to trauma and in the

majority of cases (sadly) it's both. Are you still as open-minded as you were at the beginning?

If you see someone on the street looking troubled, distressed, or even talking to themselves or looking at something you cannot see, remember we all have our own unique internal landscapes and maybe, just maybe that person is experiencing a different reality to you, one like I have described, does that make them mad? A lesser person than you wearing a large over-coat of stigma. I'll leave that to you.

Anon. – How tell it is that I can't even put my name into this.

Helpful Hints - For Carers & Family Information to help reduce the distress that can be associated with hearing voices.

Being the carer or family member of someone who hears voices can feel confusing, frightening, and isolated. Many carers/families tell us that they receive little information about how to be helpful and feel greatly frustrated by this. This fact sheet aims to provide some practical help in these areas. Using the philosophy of the hearing voices approach, we recommend two important and fundamental ideas of thinking about voices.

1. Accept that the voices are real Why? Most importantly, because for the voice hearer; they are. Brain imaging studies show that the brain's primary auditory cortex responds in the same way to voices as it does to noises, we all can hear. In other words, it's a real reception. Denying their reality or advising the voices hearer to ignore them promotes denial – whereas acceptance of their reality gives permission to start actively dealing with them. Denying the reality of voices is almost like a colour-blind person insisting that red and green are exactly the same colour. It is more helpful and realistic to accept that perceived reality can differ for different people.

2. Focus on helping the person to try to reduce distress, rather than get rid of the voices. The distress is the real issue, not the voices. In fact, many people who hear voices lead fully functioning and successful lives. Many people hear and focus on their positive voices, while others have developed strategies to change the power balance with the voices, or set strong boundaries with them, or found new ways to interpret and make sense of what the voices say – often to the point that the voices become helpful guides or indicators of life issues. In mental health, we used to think that thinking about suicide with clients would increase the risk of someone acting on their suicidal thoughts. We now know that the best thing we can do is ask about suicide and encourage the person to talk, offering them support. It is not that different with voices. Many people still mistakenly think that talking about voices will increase the chance of someone becoming lost in their psychosis. The reverse is true. This is a deeply significant and often highly distressing experience which people need to share and explore. Not to do so, is simply to leave the person alone and in private torment. It may be more comfortable for non-voice hearers to avoid opening up these conversations – but it is not in the interest of real recovery.

Self- Care

Perhaps though, the most important message we have for carers is that of self-care. No person can do the recovery work for another, no matter how much we love them. Carers/family – just like mental health workers – need to be sure to have adequate supports for themselves and people with which they can debrief, an ability to let o and a healthy, balanced life. Practical & Helpful Ideas for Carers & Family Members

- Don't be afraid to talk about voices.
- It can help to think of the voices as just other people in your loved one's life.
- Support the person to make sense of the voices in their own way. It does not matter what explanation someone has for their voices – it just matters that each person has a way to make sense.
- Encourage the person to set limits with their voices – as they would in any other relationship; for example, only listening at set times. This takes time and practice, and it doesn't work for everyone.
- Encourage the person to challenge the truth of what the voices say – sometimes they lie.
- Encourage the person to join a group and share their experience with others (this will reduce feelings of stigma). Hearing Voices groups are popping up all over.

Contact Hearing Voices Network or the Paranoia Network for more information.

- Ask about the voices – how many do they hear? What gender are they? How old? Are they all frightening or are some of them helpful? Profiling the voices helps to build understanding and control.
- Encourage the person to enlist the support of voices, particularly if they hear positive voices.
- Remember it can be extremely helpful for the person to talk with their voices – as long as it doesn't take over everything else. Some people hold up a mobile phone when talking to their voices this is a great way to normalise the experience.
- Remind the person that often-what voices say is symbolic rather than literal. This can take some of the fear out of the situation and help to make sense of confusing messages.
- Often voices can be associated with something traumatic in a person's life; also remember that trauma can mean quite 19 different things to different people.

Often the content of the characteristics of the voices will relate to these traumas. If this is the case, encourage and support the person to seek counselling for whatever the trauma may have been.

Do you use cannabis?

**Would you like to take part in an online
intervention for cannabis-related paranoia?**

This study involves 7 online sessions each lasting about
one hour

Sessions focus on thinking patterns linked to cannabis-
related paranoia and other unusual experiences

Please only sign up if you are able to complete all 7
sessions

The study is open from
13st October 2021 to 13th April 2022
Further details and how to join can be found here:

<https://sotonpsychology.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SVcFRQAr0NZfDxJl4>

**On completion of all 7 sessions, participants will be
entered into a prize draw to win one of three £100
Amazon vouchers (we plan to recruit 180 participants
to the study)**

Maastricht Interview Training for Hearing Voices & Problematic Thought Beliefs & Paranoia Is available online from the National Paranoia Network. Other training available online Working through Paranoia, Making Sense of Hearing Voices & Working with Childhood Trauma

It can be delivered across the world for more information and costings Email enquiries@nationalparanoianetwork.org

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

Hearing Voices Group Ireland

A group for people who hear voices or experience
paranoia and unusual beliefs, on Zoom

Facilitated by Michael Ryan

Every Sunday @ 4pm

Zoom Link <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89201253186>

Email: vhmichael9345@gmail.com

With enquiries