



April Edition 2023

You are not your illness. You have an individual story to tell. You have a name, a history, a personality. Staying yourself is part of the battle."
— *Julian Seifter*

Limbrick Centre, Limbrick Road, Sheffield, S6 2PE,
Tel: 07590837359

Email: enquiries@nationalparanoianetwork.org

Website: www.nationalparanoianetwork.org

support@nationalparanoianetwork.org

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

Voice Dialogue and self-esteem

It is common for people with schizophrenia to hear voices criticising them about their delusions. Often the voices will criticise about other things too. Voice dialogue can improve our self-esteem and help us climb the Maslow Tree. This issue is also serious as voices can lead us to commit suicide.

The voice dialogue approach can be used alongside existing strategies such as cognitive behavioural therapy and compassion focused therapy. Yet these therapies may not be effective as when there is no insight or the never loser psychology is involved. Then there is another way of solving voices.

Much depends on what the voices are criticizing about. Often this can be something we have done wrong but as in my case they are also prompted by the delusion I had caused 9/11. Some things make us feel worse about yourself than others. So, for me the impact on self also depended on the voice content and what else was being criticised. It wasn't just about 9/11.

The voices can convince you that you are a bad person. You need to argue with them and formulate reasons to challenge what they say. The voices can criticise in different ways though each of these can be answered in their own fashion. This account will outline what happens with this.

Reducing voices by standing up to them will restore your self-esteem. Yet this might be more difficult if the criticisms are very true. In my case where this is connected to the delusions about being responsible for 9/11 getting rid of them will be

much harder as there is so much more truth in what they say. Other things were less certain.

We all carry around with us our own internal critic and the voices can latch on to this and reinforce it. Yet it is possible to ignore the critic most of the time so this should help keep the voices quiet. The same thing can happen if we are overly critical of ourselves, so we need to stop thinking like that.

You must examine your feelings about the voice. You can be compassionate in the way the voice isn't. There is truth here to challenge the voice in that *it* is not being compassionate. That means you can answer. Still the voices can be very convincing and may spoil your sense of compassion.

Then you can use your *self-knowledge* to speak out against the voice. Your family can do this too. The bad stuff is easier to believe so this might require some soul searching. Yet with a spoiled identity this might be harder. Your family's knowledge of you will become very important.

Insight into your delusions as about causing 9/11 will help your self-esteem and can help answer the voices criticising about it. If you are not so sure you have caused it this will mute the voice. Yet as long as you believe it so far it won't go away. Then it will still be easier to stand up to its criticisms.

So, other approaches can help alongside with using knowing yourself. Having insight might question this so far. We can use this knowledge to emphasize your good points. Then when the voices start to calm down about things you can concentrate more on yourself.

Voice dialogue about this might also mute the voice again making it easier to resist with your own thinking. If this is combined with some insight which as in my case made me doubt whether I had really caused 9/11 this will quieten the voice further. It will take less courage to resist it.

Having family on your side might be hindered by the stigma of being schizophrenic. Where emotional contact has been lost there will be less people on your side to challenge the voice. That puts the emphasis back on the psychologist who will be a bit of a lifeline here.

Looking at all the wars and revolutions there have been in history I tried to use that to answer what I was hearing about 9/11. Also, all the other bad things I thought I caused like poverty and cancer were also having a positive effect on society making us better people. The voices still didn't accept this as it thought I had killed all the people.

So initially believing I had killed all those people I thought I had deserved the criticism. Then I got to thinking about all the atrocities in history again. So, if I couldn't get rid of the voice in this way at least I could restore my sense of self-esteem. I was no worse than a lot of famous people.

Still the voice can be very intelligent in criticizing you morally. It said the other atrocities in history were also not acceptable. Yet taking history into account you can match this, and you can get into a philosophical argument about things. This didn't cure the voice but at least I could stand up to it.

The key is to have positive reinforcement especially from your friends and family. Their care and love will soothe the criticism of the voice and calm you down enough to meditate on your good points. Knowing your good qualities will then lessen the impact of what you are getting from the voice.

Once we esteem who we are we can be ourselves. Our friends will esteem us for ourselves in the same way. It is a common feeling to feel bad about yourself and you normally get over these things. You can talk with your friends about what people have said about you in such instances to reaffirm your self-esteem.

You must remember your good points and focus on these to distract yourself from what you are hearing. That too should have a soothing effect on what you are experiencing as well as taking your mind off the voice. You can then use this focus more to try and answer them.

Your friends will like you so you will feel better about yourself despite the voices. You can use this to dialogue with what you are hearing. You can point out to the voice that your friends will take your side with this. You will have best friends and lifelong friends to support you in this.

The voices will know you very well but so will your family and any long-standing friends. You can draw on this direct knowledge on what they have said about you as a good person. So, you can try to introspect an answer to what you are hearing. You can meditate on these emotional relations to reinforce this and answer the voice with their existence.

My CPN suggested 9/11 was a good thing from a certain point of view. Such political acts can be both criticised and defended. Then it was also suggested again that the harm I was causing to people in other ways as the cognitive therapist said makes us better people. Still, that didn't satisfy the voices about 9/11 or anything else.

The voices criticising me were very convincing and powerful. It took a lot to stand up to them. Here the force of the ultimate *truth* about you is more powerful than the voices you hear. There will be more truth to the thought that you are not such a bad person and this should be clear to the voice.

The voices of friends and family if they do not silence what you are hearing might still make it more mute and less frequent. To do this I was possible that I was able to regard the voice of what I was hearing as just another person's voice and different to anyone else's. Then it was easier to show the voice that it was no different to those voices supporting me from friends and family.

If the voices take up much of the day you may be so overwhelmed with fear that a rational dialogue with them might not be possible. You will need to calm down first. A number of approaches may be used including breathing when you hear them and distracting yourself with a safe place image. This will become less of a problem the more muted they get.

So, you might also need help to confront them before being able to hear your own voice. Some supported graded exposure might aid this as the voice varies in severity and

does not always instil the same level of fear. Else you could coexist with the fear. Some Valium could also help with this. Your family could also do this for you by taking your side which might also calm things down.

You can be so caught up with thinking about the voice that you are not able to be mindful of your good points. So, you might need to practice this. In my case I set an alarm on my phone for me every day to remind me to focus on my own voice. This was an effective as I carried it everywhere so I couldn't forget about it.

We all have faults, but family, friends and partners will forgive them. Dialogue with the voices about this might do the same. Yet often we may need this to challenge the voice which can be very unforgiving. We can show we are loved despite our faults even if the voices hate us for them.

The voices will see more of our faults than other people generally would do. You can tell the voice that most people don't behave like this to each other. Yet the voice might think it is right to do this and so may ignore this point. All the same you can use it against what you are hearing.

The voices will be unduly harsh about what they are criticising. Your faults may not be so bad as they make out. They will magnify our thoughts out of all proportion to how bad they are. The voice might be persuaded about this and will become less punishing.

We can always feel bad about ourselves at times in life and our self-image can get tarnished. Yet generally we come through this and cheer up. It is just a part of life. Knowing this

the voices can be talked through with your friends who will remind you these feelings will pass. When they wear off the voices will be quiet again.

You are not supposed to be bothered about what other people think of you. Generally, you can ignore the problem when it happens as this is just fact of life. Yet it is harder to ignore the voice. You can tell it you are unconcerned with what it thinks of you. Yet thinking I was responsible for 9/11 the voice thought it still had good reason to criticise.

You can remind yourself of all the good things you have done in in life and keep a diary of nice things people have said about you. This should remind you of your good side and act as a further source of positive reinforcement. Again, you can counterpose this to what the voices say.

Frequent contact with friends and family are especially important as the loving conversation about you will distract you from the focus of the voice. It will also focus on something very supportive. If the voices don't like you then how is it, you still have the love of family and friends that do.

The voices might refuse to engage in a dialogue saying you don't deserve to be listened to. This can be handled in the same way as you will have things to say about them. Yet under certain conditions they will talk to you and the dialogue can be resumed.

You might get the chance to rectify your faults so the voice will have less to criticise. You could do something useful like voluntary work. You will also remember your individual acts of kindness like buying your friends and relatives Christmas

presents. In my case I took writing about mental health. So, I could dialogue with the voice about this too and the point was acknowledged.

Yet in my case the voices still think all this doesn't make any difference as being a writer doesn't make up for killing people. Yet if your motivations are genuine that you want to help people this might provide an answer to them so far. At least you won't feel so bad about yourself.

We may sometimes make mistakes in life and do things we shouldn't. This is something else about which the voices can criticise. Yet this could be true for anyone. So maybe the voices have made a mistake again in criticising you for something that doesn't really deserve it.

The voices can make you doubt yourself. Then as it is natural for us to doubt ourselves the voices can reinforce this. They can also prey on the fact we are doing it. It may take some more reassurance from our friends. Yet this an experience that is also very common and we all come through it.

Often too we will have negative thoughts about ourselves, and this can also trigger off the observing voice. Again, this is a very normal experience, and we often are able to ignore it. If we don't react to these thoughts in a negative manner this keeps the voice quiet.

Something else that provokes the voice is that we have done things in life we regret. Again, this triggers an immediate action within us, and this is again when the voices start to criticize. We need to remind ourselves we have all done things like that and that nobody is perfect.

They also criticize me about supporting capitalism and that you have been oppressive. Yet I can remember Peter Gabriel's lyrics that "you did nothing wrong". Then you can esteem what you have achieved in life even though you can be criticised for this. This despite the fact that there is political opposition to it.

You have got to be able to see yourself for the dialogue to begin and to have the courage to see your faults. Again, nobody is perfect, and your friends will reinforce this again by liking you for who you are. Then you can also further correct some of your faults so the voices will have less to criticise about.

You have got to be able to hear your own voice and you might need a therapist to dialogue with the voices you hear before you can do this. Then you can self-forgive your faults using your own voice to reinforce this. You can show the voices this is very possible. So that they might do the same.

You will learn to dislike what the voices is saying. Yet disliking the voice might antagonise it. So instead, you need to show it that it is being unfair. The voice may think it is being perfectly fair so this might take some persuading. In my case this was only possible so far.

In life we oppose things we don't agree with, and think are not right. We should all have experience of this to draw on and this useful for standing up to voices. The accusations made about us often aren't just which is a powerful thought in that we will deserve justice in the face of them.

If we can overcome the fear of what it is saying, we might be able to challenge it more. The voices criticise me about being responsible for 9/11 and to reach self-esteem you first have to overcome the fear of this. This is possible in many ways and as in my case by using supported graded exposure.

Sometimes what the voices say is so very general in that you are a bad person that they lack specific examples of the kind examined here. In these cases, you will have general sense that you can oppose to this without getting into more detail about things.

Often you will have to consult yourself about the criticisms and see what you think. It might take time to think it through, but you may come up with an answer to them. What you are hearing may not be the whole story about you. Then you might come up with ways of stopping its influence.

So, you will have to stand up for yourself. You don't take abuse from other people so you shouldn't from the voice. Sometimes in life you are brought into conflict with other people. So, you have to fight and having learned this you can do the same with the voice.

You have to visualise who is talking to you and use the authority of your family to challenge the voice. These people will also have their own faults and you can point this out to them. Then your family can take your side in addition to using your voice so there is more than one person defending you. Yet it will take your friends and family to add to the chorus here.

The voices can be nasty about your faults so you will need to show them you are nice. Again, your friends and family can reinforce this by talking about you doing acts of kindness and caring. This as you note them down in your diary will add to the positive side of your feelings about yourself.

Some people may hate you in the way the voice does. You have to say to the voices that is up to them. You can tell yourself that you are a caring loving person to answer the voice. Hate is a very common phenomenon and as for many people they simply have to leave it behind.

Sometimes the voices were nice and were going to allow me to atone for 9/11. They esteemed my academic writing. So, I didn't feel so bad about myself. I could use this to dialogue with the voice when it was critical to increase my self-esteem. Sometimes the voices accepted this and sometimes they didn't. Overall, they remained highly critical.

You need ways of cheering up after the voices have stopped as what they say will stick in your mind. Then you can restore your self-esteem more. Spending time with friends and family can soothe any remaining criticism from the voice. Having a wish list also works here. So, you feel less depressed.

You need to tell yourself you deserve the best in life and to be happy. The voices will contradict this, so you have to keep reminding yourself. You can use this as a maxim in life and tell yourself the voices are being very unfair. You can tell them that though they might not accept it.

The voice may find your weaknesses and try to exploit them as a punishment. This in my case for causing 9/11. You need to tell the voice you don't deserve to be punished to stop this. Again, having family on your side will carry as much authority as the voice does. So, they can help to persuade it there is no reason to punish which will also make you feel safer from them.

Sometimes the need to be a good person can cause too much remorse. You need to be aware of this. The voices might try to take advantage of this and try to criticise you further. Yet again this too will have an answer. So, we don't beat ourselves up too much about it.

Losers suffer from self-hatred which can be reinforced by the voice. So, they are unlikely to see themselves or develop self-esteem. Voices can also criticise being a loser too. Yet learning to like yourself to answer this will also be very difficult.

It is often said in life just be yourself. Trying to do this will allow you to stand up to the voice. Yet losers have a problem with this too as being yourself is not enough. You may need to change this psychology somehow if you are going to answer the voice.

You have to learn to like yourself so you can develop your self-esteem. It helps to make a list of your good points and your faults. So, you can make an overall assessment of yourself. You can then develop new good points and add to the list. Then try to correct the bad things you don't like.

You also need not to be submissive to the voice and just like being submissive in life you have to learn about this in the normal way. You will need to learn to stand up for ourselves again and to have the courage to do this. Where there has been learned submissiveness in childhood this will be more difficult. The voice can criticize you for being weak. So this may have an answer to them here.

You don't let people criticise you and get away with it. You answer them back and defend yourself. So, you can say all this with some power. This will match the power of the voice. Yet you have got to find the courage for this. So again, it helps to build it up gradually. It helps to have someone on your side when you stand up to things. Then eventually you will have to learn to stand up for yourself as in life and to be answer the voice in the same way.

In the end the voices will be silenced, less frequent or quieter. That should allow long periods in between where you can learn to like yourself more. If the voices are there nearly all the time this will be much more difficult and may require a psychologist to get you started with it.

Conclusion

If we can esteem ourselves this will help us self-actualise and not to have our identity spoiled by the illness. We are going to be a lot happier with ourselves and our lives. This will end the suffering which is inflicted by the voice and help us grow as people. This should be the goal for service users and clinician in dealing with schizophrenia and voice hearing.

Mark Ellerby

How do we Define Trauma

DEFINITION

“An injury or wound violently produced”.

OR

“An emotional experience or shock that has a lasting
psychic effect.

Types of Trauma 1

1. Single blow trauma.

Natural disasters, technological disasters, acts of terrorism, violent crime.

2. Repeated trauma.

Combat trauma, political or other imprisonment, some forms of emotional, physical or sexual abuse

Types of Trauma 2

1. Natural trauma.

Unintentional injury, accident, ‘act of god.’ Sometimes described as trauma of facility.

2. Man made trauma.

More likely to be prolonged and is harder to bear.
Trauma dealt by a person. Sometimes described as trauma of agency.

Types of Trauma 3

“If someone falls and breaks a leg, that is facility, if someone intentionally breaks another person’s leg, that is agency’ (Gelinas 86)

The most extreme trauma entails an attitude of deliberate intent on the part of the perpetrator.

What is Emotional & Psychological Trauma

Emotional and psychological trauma is the result of extraordinarily stressful events that shatter your sense of security, making you feel helpless in a dangerous world. Traumatic experiences often involve a threat to life or safety, but any situation that leaves you feeling overwhelmed and isolated can result in trauma, even if it doesn’t involve physical harm. It’s not the objective circumstances that determine whether an event is traumatic, but your subjective emotional experience of the event. The more frightened and helpless you feel, the more likely you are to be traumatized.

Helping someone who experiences Trauma.

Listen to them.

1. Give them time. Let them talk at their own pace – it's important not to pressure or rush them.
2. Focus on listening. ...
3. Accept their feelings. ...
4. Don't blame them or criticise their reactions. ...
5. Use the same words they use. ...
6. Don't dismiss their experiences. ...
7. Only give advice if you're asked to

There are a few different types of dissociation.

- **Dissociative amnesia** involves the inability to recall the details of stressful or traumatic experiences. It can include having no memory at all, but it can also include patchy or incomplete memories.
- **Dissociative fugue** is a disorder where memory loss is common, and a new identity may even be created as the person has no memory of their past or who they are.

- **Depersonalization derealization disorder** involves feelings of being detached from one's body or mental processes. It can feel like you're watching someone else's life, and sometimes, you can't even recognize yourself in the mirror.
- **Dissociative identity disorder**, which is also referred to as multiple personality disorder, involves the presence of two or more distinct personalities within the same person without any awareness that the other personalities exist.

5 Tips to Help You with Dissociative Disorders

1. Go to Therapy

The best treatment for dissociation is to go to therapy. An adult psychiatric program can be especially effective if your experiences of dissociation are particularly intense, or if they are the result of sexual abuse. It is also extremely effective if your dissociation co-occurs with another disorder, like post-traumatic stress, or depression and anxiety.

Talk therapy can help you work through the challenges you face when dealing with your condition, while stress management can help you identify and learn to deal with triggers that send you into a dissociative state.

As is the case with nearly any mental health problem, the type and quality of your therapy may change over

time. You may want to consider family treatment, while eye movement desensitization and reprocessing may be able to help you work through traumatic memories.

2. Learn to Ground Yourself

Therapy can help you work through dissociative challenges with the assistance of a licensed professional, but it's also useful to learn some techniques that enable you to deal with your experiences when you're alone. One of the most powerful is to learn how to ground yourself.

Grounding yourself simply means finding ways to be present in the current moment. For some, it literally means taking off your shoes and feeling the grass between your toes. For others, it could mean playing a memory game.

Additional grounding techniques include:

- Breathe in and out deeply.
- Recite a poem or a song.
- Look for a way to make yourself laugh.
- Splash cold water on your face.
- Sit with a pet.

3. Engage Your Senses

Engaging your senses can be a great way to deal with feelings of dissociation, and it's a powerful way to ground yourself in the here and now.

During a dissociative experience, try running through all of your senses, one at a time, and labelling everything you smell, see, touch, hear, and taste. Pay attention to whether one sense is being overwhelmed and look for ways to stimulate other senses that aren't being used. For example, it might include leaving a room with a strong candle or taking a warm bath.

An especially effective way to engage your senses is to practice skin brushing. A natural bristle brush is swept over dry skin, including your legs, arms, and neck. Not only can it promote a sense of body positivity, but it can also enhance the immune system, which is often suppressed by traumatic events.

4. Exercise

Exercise is an effective way to deal with nearly any mental health problem—not to mention, it's also a good way to take care of your physical health.

However, exercise doesn't have to mean going to the gym or running a marathon. There are many easy exercises you can quickly and easily at any time.

Bodyweight training can include chair squats, walking lunges, and lifting light weights. Not only can the sensation of the movements help ground you, so can counting the reps you complete. Additionally, dancing can be a great way to focus on the moment, as can going for a quick bike ride.

5. Be Kind to Yourself

It's also important to practice compassion and kindness. Learn to appreciate your brain for developing a coping mechanism that helped you deal with a difficult life situation and recognize that recovery takes time. Having downs means you also have ups, and that's progress you can be proud of.

Dealing with feelings of Emptiness

Feelings of emptiness are less recognized. Yet it can be quite challenging for many who experience it. Here are some of the ways people have described their emptiness.

- *I know I should be feeling something, but there's nothing there.*
- *A vague discomfort that feels like an absence of something.*
- *Numbness in my belly (or chest or throat).*
- *An empty feeling in my body.*
- *A sad longing for something vague that seems unfulfillable.*
- *A deep sense that I'm missing something inside of me that everyone else has.*

Everyone experiences emptiness in their own unique way. That's why empty feelings are so difficult to talk about. "Empty" isn't a typical feeling; it's actually an *absence* of feeling. I call it "the un-feeling." It's a deep sense that something is missing. So, it's not quite sadness, not quite grief, not quite loneliness. In fact, I have heard plenty of folks say that experiencing any of those emotions might be better than feeling empty.

What You Can Do

1. **Have compassion for yourself.** Emotional neglect is never a choice. It's not your fault. It's not your fault that you experienced it and it's not your fault that you've continued it. It's simply a matter of not being aware of the problem.
2. **Know that your feelings are not missing, they're just blocked.** They are right there, waiting for you to feel, name, and acknowledge them.
3. **Make a decision to become aware of your feelings.** If emotional neglect is part of your life, from your childhood, within yourself now, or in your marriage, this is a powerful change that you can make right here, right now that will help you through this season and far beyond.
4. **Several times each day, pause and turn your attention inward.** Ask yourself, "What am I feeling right now?" It's OK if the answer is, "Nothing at all." The more you ask with a genuine intent to know, the more your feelings will begin to answer back, and the less empty feelings you will feel.

In my own world

In my own world I can be free

I can be what I am

I can be what I want to be

There are no locks

There are no bars

Just space between me

And those far away stars.

My roof is the sky

My comfort the dawn

I always know god

I never know scorn

My life is at one

With the peace I have found

Heaven above

God is around

TIME

Time starts where it ends
But it never ends
It began somewhere
At the last ending,
Hour upon hour a moment lasts
Day upon day
Year upon year
To another second gone past
Eternity has just passed me by
Just a fraction, how many fractions
Of endless time to pass
Until another moment past
Light rushed by
But time stands still
In this empty moment of eternity.

Hearing voices study

An investigation of the relationship between childhood trauma and voice-hearing

Ethics approval ref: R81513/ RE001



Can you help us?

Hearing voices is a relatively common human experience. For some people, hearing voices can be distressing and have a negative impact on their lives. Current research highlights many biological, social and psychological factors, as well as interactions between them, that lead to the development of voices.

Researchers at the University of Oxford are looking for participants to take part in a study investigating the links between traumatic childhood experiences and voice-hearing. Individuals living in the UK and aged 18 years or over **with or without** experience of childhood trauma or hearing voices are invited to complete a series of questionnaires online, via telephone, Microsoft Teams call or, depending on location, face-to-face. It is hoped that this study will help to improve the current understanding of how childhood trauma increases the risk of hearing voices.

Research team



Professor Craig Steel
Clinical Psychologist



Jade Elliston
Trainee Clinical Psychologist

Contact



jade.elliston@hmc.ox.ac.uk



jadeellistonpsychology



jadeelliston93



Maastricht Interview Training for Hearing Voices & Problematic Thought Beliefs & Paranoia Is available online and face to face from the National Paranoia Network. Training available, How to use the Maastricht Interview for Hearing Voices & Problematic Thoughts, Beliefs & Paranoia, 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 peterbullimore@yahoo.co.uk

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 85737775621 No Password Needed

Sheffield Hearing Voices & Paranoia Support Group. The group runs Every Monday 11.00am-12.00pm at the Gardner's Rest 105 Neepsend Lane Sheffield S3 8AT

Contact peterbullimore@yahoo.co.uk

lyn@nationalparanoianetwork.org

**Online Hearing Voices Group in Ireland Facilitated by
Michael Ryan**

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.web/j/89201253186>

Email: vhmichael9345@gmail.com

With enquiries

Families/friends can contact

families@usahearingvoices.org

For support groups

Unusual beliefs group St Mungos

Every Thursday 2.30-3.30

93 Shirland Road, London W9 2EL

Contact Helen Claire Taylor (tayloh15@lsbu.ac.uk)

'Talking Heads' Support Group runs on every first Tuesday
of the month at Brunswick Centre, Strand Close, off
Beverley Road
Hull, HU2 9DB from 3pm – 4:30pm. People with
voices/visions and unusual beliefs are welcome
Contact Dan 07816 864727