

VOICES BEYOND SCHIZOPHRENIA

INFORMATION SHEET



“I’ve never told anyone about the voices, including therapists, because I knew they’d just give me a load of meds and call it ‘schizophrenia.’”

Does hearing voices mean that I have schizophrenia?

One of the biggest myths about voices (or “auditory hallucinations”) is that they occur only in schizophrenia. In fact, voices are incredibly common across a variety of different diagnoses and in people who have never sought any form of mental health treatment. For instance, voices are relatively common in

depression, PTSD and dissociative disorders. See the back of this information sheet for some statistics.

Regardless of diagnosis, very strong links have been established between childhood trauma (especially sexual abuse) and voices. In addition, voices can be

caused by recreational drugs, long-term alcoholism, brain tumors, and experiences such as the sudden death of a loved one.

Regardless of the contributing factors, there are many ways of working with voices and decreasing any distress associated with them.

A voice hearer’s perspective:

“For a long time I thought there was probably no hope—the voices were overwhelming and meds didn’t help...nothing seemed to help. Then I joined a group that encouraged me to think about voices in different ways and to explore what was happening when they started. Over time, I’ve learned to listen to what the voices are telling me, to talk back to them, and to ignore the negative comments. Things are so much better now.”

**HEARING VOICES
NETWORK
BAY AREA**



Voices, Visions & Other Unusual or Extreme Experiences

Some statistics:

- Between 5 and 16% of children and younger teens experience voices, including many with no other mental health problems or diagnosis (Van Os et al., 2009).
- Similarly, between 10 and 15% of otherwise healthy adults hear voices (Sommer et al., 2010).
- At least some healthy adults hear voices that are nearly identical in frequency and characteristics to voices in schizophrenia, though these voices are experienced as less distressing (Faccio et al., 2012).
- Approximately 40% of people with combat-related PTSD hear voices (McCarthy-Jones, 2012). About half of people with non-military PTSD may also hear voices (Anketell et al., 2010).
- Estimates of the prevalence of voices in depression have ranged from 5% to over 40% (Toh et al., 2015).
- Nearly 40% of people with Parkinson's experience hallucinations: 22% visual and 10% auditory (Fenelon, 2000).

support
paranoia
exploration fear
insight community belonging
visions
empathy
peer stories
groups wellness
healing experience
empowerment beliefs
compassion

voices

The Hearing Voices Movement offers hope and alternative ways of working with voices.

The **Bay Area Hearing Voices Network** is a regional hearing voices movement group that includes voice hearers, peers, family members and professional allies in the community. Together, we work to change assumptions made about voices and unusual experiences, and to create learning and healing opportunities for people across the Bay Area. At the heart of our approach is the conviction that voices and other experiences are often deeply meaningful and that opportunities to explore meaning are fundamental to healing.

What we offer:

- Peer and family 'Voices, Visions & Beliefs' support groups
- Trainings, workshops & presentations on group facilitation, the hearing voices movement & alternative approaches
- Events and community gatherings
- A venue for organizing, consciousness raising and cultural change

Find out more:

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