



# VOICES, VISIONS, GENDER & SEXUALITY



Are you lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or questioning your gender or sexuality? Do you hear voices or see or experience things others don't? If so you're not alone!

This leaflet has been put together in partnership with a young person with experiences like yours.

[www.voicecollective.co.uk](http://www.voicecollective.co.uk), E: [info@voicecollective.co.uk](mailto:info@voicecollective.co.uk), T: 020 7911 0822

It can be hard enough not being straight in this society, but having unusual sensory experiences too can be really overwhelming. Here are some questions young people in your position have asked us before.

## **AM I CRAZY?**

Nope, you're not a freak and you're not crazy!

Did you know that around 8% of young people hear voices? This means in a class of 30 students there might be 2 or 3 who have heard voices at some point in their lives\*. There are lots of young (and old) people out there who hear voices but nobody talks about these experiences. And we rarely ever hear about people who are having these experiences and are coping really well. Though many people do.

Hearing voices might make you feel really overwhelmed, angry, scared or depressed. These feelings might make you want to drink too much, do drugs or harm yourself in other ways. If this sounds like you, there are lots of places where you can get support – see the end of this leaflet for some suggestions.

\*we're going to say 'hearing voices' to include seeing visions, feeling, smelling and tasting things that others don't. Only because it's shorter, not because these experiences are any less important.



"When I accepted myself, anybody who mattered accepted me too. The voices quit feeding on my insecurities. There aren't any real 'normal' people. I stopped being scared, and started to be stunning'.

A quote from Jo

## **WHY AM I HEARING VOICES AND HAS IT GOT ANYTHING TO DO WITH MY GENDER OR SEXUALITY?**

There are lots of reasons why young people hear voices including (but not only) stress, bullying, trauma, drugs (legal and illegal), head injuries, spirituality, or just individual difference like being left handed.

Whatever the reason, it's common for young people to hear voices that get worse or harder to cope with when things are difficult. In fact we've found that often there is a link between how you're feeling and how nasty your voices are to you.

It can be really tough coming out as LGBT when you're young and you may be bullied or have a hard time. This could mean your voices get worse or you hear voices for the first time.

If you're unsure of your gender or sexuality and you haven't come out yet or you feel bad about yourself generally, you may find your voices picking up on this and maybe saying homophobic things or generally making you feel worse.

It is different for everybody and you may hear voices which have nothing to do with your gender or sexuality too.

## WHY ARE MY VOICES SO CRITICAL OF MY GENDER OR SEXUALITY?

This is really common. If you've got people around you who are not supportive, the voices may echo what they say. Or perhaps you're not sure what you think – the voices can pick up on this and make your uncertainty worse, especially if you're under stress.

Your voices may have views that are very different from your own but if your voices are really loud and harsh, it might make it hard for you to figure out what you think.

Also remember that we're living in a world where most people are straight and it can be hard to have a minority identity. Your voices might also be reflecting a prejudiced view and making things more difficult for you.

## IS HEARING VOICES A CURSE?

Although hearing voices might feel like a curse or a punishment for being different, it's not your fault. The good news is there are some practical things you can do to start feeling better.

## WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MYSELF?

If your voices are really critical and overwhelming it's good to have a toolbox of strategies to help you get through.

Different things work for different people, but having some simple calming strategies can be really effective.

One we've found really useful is "5 things". This can really help if your head is buzzing or you feel lost inside your own thoughts. It's a way of noticing what's around you and can make you feel 'grounded' in the world.

 **Name:** 5 things you can see, 5 you can hear and 5 you can feel. The 4 things ... 3 things .. 2 things ... 1 thing.

It's ok to repeat things, and if you're in a quiet room it's fine to 'cheat' and make some noise.

Over time you may want to think about challenging your voices, or responding to them differently. This can seem scary at first but you may find things change after a bit of practice.

For loads of ideas and strategies see our website: [www.voicecollective.co.uk](http://www.voicecollective.co.uk)



## I NEED HELP, WHO CAN I TALK TO?

People can - and do - recover from distressing voices. We've found that it helps to deal with any issues that are triggering them, as well as finding coping strategies that work for you.

No-one should have to do this on their own. It's really really helpful to talk to someone you trust; this might be a friend, family member or a worker.

We're always happy to talk, just drop us an email at [info@voicecollective.co.uk](mailto:info@voicecollective.co.uk) or see [www.voicecollective.co.uk](http://www.voicecollective.co.uk). We're also happy to help you find support in your local area.

You may also want to focus more on your gender or sexuality at this point, rather than voices. You may find as you feel happier about yourself the voices get less difficult by themselves.

A good starting point is the **London Lesbian & Gay Switchboard**. You can call them on 0300 330 0630 or see [www.llgs.org.uk](http://www.llgs.org.uk). They offer support to anybody no matter where they live in the UK.

If you're in a crisis you can call **Childline**: 0800 1111

### SOME LGBT SPECIFIC ORGANISATIONS:

**Lesbian and Gay Foundation** have some good pages on youth mental health: [www.lgf.org.uk](http://www.lgf.org.uk)

**Gay Youth UK**  
[www.gayyouth.org.uk](http://www.gayyouth.org.uk)

**Queer Youth Network**  
[www.lgbtyouth.org/ox/](http://www.lgbtyouth.org/ox/)

**Mermaids** has a support forum for trans youth  
[www.mermaidsuk.org.uk](http://www.mermaidsuk.org.uk)

**Imaan** are a Muslim LGBT support organisation  
[www.imaanlondon.wordpress.com](http://www.imaanlondon.wordpress.com)

**Broken Rainbow** have a specialist helpline for LGBT domestic violence: 0300 999 5428

**Albert Kennedy Trust** support LGBT homeless and vulnerably housed young people  
[www.akt.org.uk](http://www.akt.org.uk)