



Hearing Voices Network

HEARING VOICES NETWORK AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND • TE REO OROORO

JULY 2008 NEWSLETTER

Welcome!



Hywel Davies

Welcome to the 2008 newsletter of the New Zealand National Hearing Voices Network.

This newsletter has been made possible by our friend Hywel Davies from the Wales Hearing Voices Network in the United Kingdom who has kindly donated funds for the establishment of the newsletter. Thank you, Hywel!



Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world.

For, indeed, they are the only ones who ever have.

Margaret Mead



PROJECT SUPPORT GROUPS

Your invitation to participate in New Zealand Hearing Voices Network

Our goal is to support the establishment and to network hearing voices peer support groups in every city in New Zealand and to have established a fully funded national coordinator to support these groups and supply ongoing resource and leadership development to these groups.

What is a hearing voices support group and what does it do?

- A hearing voices peer support group helps voices hearers to regain some power over their lives. People who hear voices tell their stories and explore ways to work with, rather than against their voices.
- The key to the success of a hearing voices group is that it is consumer driven; where voice hearers are encouraged by each other to actively participate in their own recovery.
- The Hearing Voices Group is not intended to be an alternative to appropriate use of psychiatric medication.
- Hearing voices groups give consumers some additional ways of working with voices.
- The purpose of hearing voices groups is to offer a safe haven where people feel accepted and comfortable. The groups offer an opportunity for people to accept and 'live with their voices', in a way that gives them some control and
- A hearing voices network is a support structure connecting hearing voices peer support groups.

INSIDE

Practical information for people who hear voices

Three phases found among people who hear voices

Your invitation to participate in the New Zealand Hearing Voices Network

— join us!

West Auckland support group: Te Ata, 146 Lincoln Rd – every second Wednesday 7:00 to 8:30PM

Voice hearers can find themselves experiencing an overwhelming world and their power of reason may be virtually extinguished making it impossible to go about their lives. Open discussion with others offers a means of helping you to accept your voices.

Communication between voice hearers gives you the opportunity to share experiences and to learn from one another. This can be achieved by joining or setting up self help groups, such as those established by the Hearing Voices Network throughout the UK. (see Additional Resources page)

Voice hearers say it is important to discuss voices, in the process, it is possible to learn to recognise their games and tricks, as well as their pleasant aspects, and to identify patterns which are specific to given situations. This can help you to be better prepared for future onset of voices. Voice hearers may think they are alone in hearing voices. This makes the experience unpleasant and produces feelings of shame or the fear of going mad. Anxiety often leads to the avoidance of situations which might trigger the hearing of voices, and this seriously blocks self development. Anxiety severely restricts freedom of movement, and strategies of avoidance often seem to exacerbate the problem.

Voice hearers seek explanations to account for their voices. A personal approach to understanding can be helpful and there are many disparate perspectives used by voice hearers. An explanatory theory is essential to

the development of a coping strategy. Unless some meaning is attributed to the voices, it is difficult to begin to organise a relationship with them in order to reduce anxiety. Perspectives which discourage voice hearers from seeking mastery of the voices tend to yield the least positive results.

In the process of developing your own point of view and taking responsibility for oneself, the essential first step is acceptance of the voices as belonging to me. This is one of the most important and difficult steps to take.

Voices can express what the voice hearers are feeling or thinking, for instance aggression or fear about an event or relationship. When voices offer information in this way, the challenge posed by their presence is less significant than the reason for the feeling. When the voices express such views, it can be valuable to discuss the messages with someone you trust, this can often be a friend, a nursing staff member, etc.

When you hear voices that are malicious it is difficult to accept the existence of a positive, helpful dimension to the experience. Contact with other voice hearers can lead to the discovery that positive voices exist, and the realisation that these can be detected, as a result of acceptance of your negative feelings.

Imposing a structure on the relationship with the voices helps minimise feelings of powerlessness. It is valuable to see that you can set your own limits and restrain the voices from excessive intrusion on your life.

Sharing experiences enables voice hearers to get to know what medicines others are using, how useful these are, and what their side effects may be. It is important, for example, to know whether a particular medicine is helpful in reducing the hearing of voices or easing anxiety and confusion.

Sharing knowledge about voices with families and friends can be helpful. If family and friends can accept the voices they can be more supportive, this can make voice hearers lives easier, improving their confidence in social situations.

Voice hearers who have learned to adjust to their experiences report that, the process has contributed to their personal growth. Personal growth can be defined as recognising what you need in order to live a fulfilled life, and knowing how to achieve these ends.

Communicating about voices has its disadvantages, voice hearers can feel very vulnerable, some voice hearers find great difficulty in opening up about their experiences, though it can be easier with other voice hearers. Another drawback is that the voices may occasionally become temporarily more acute. All in all, though, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

Finally, It is most important to be fully aware of the wide variety of individual situations and circumstances. The best advice is to try to increase the voice hearers influence over their voices, rather than intensifying their powerlessness.

From INTERVOICE www.intervoiceonline.org

SOME FACTS ABOUT HEARING VOICES

Hearing voices in itself is not a symptom of an illness, but is apparent in 2 to 4 % of the population (some research gives higher estimates) and even more (about 8%) have peculiar personal convictions, that we call delusions, and do so without being ill.

Whilst one in three becomes a psychiatric patient – two in three can cope well and are in no need of psychiatric care and no diagnosis can be given because two-thirds are quite healthy and well functioning. It is very significant that there are in our society more people hearing voices who never became psychiatric patients than there are people who hear voices and become psychiatric patients.

Marius Romme (2001)

Psychiatry in our western culture unjustly identifies hearing voices with schizophrenia. Going to a psychiatrist with hearing voices gives you an 80% chance of getting a diagnosis of schizophrenia.

Marius Romme (2001)

Hearing voices in itself is not related to the illness of schizophrenia. In population research only 16% of the whole group of voice hearers can be diagnosed with schizophrenia.

Marius Romme (2001)

In our research concerning people who hear voices we found that in 77% of the people diagnosed with schizophrenia the hearing of voices was related to traumatic experiences.

These traumatic experiences varied from being sexually abused, physically abused, being extremely belittled over long periods from young age, being neglected during long periods as a youngster, being very aggressively treated in marriage, not being able to accept ones sexual identity, etc.

Marius Romme (2006)

The prognosis of hearing voices is more positive than generally is perceived. In Sandra Escher's research with children hearing voices, she followed 82 children over a period of four years.

In that period 64% of the children's voices disappeared congruently with learning to cope with emotions and becoming less stressed. In children with whom the voices were psychiatrised and made a part of an illness and not given proper attention, voices did not vanish, but became worse, the development of those children was delayed.

Marius Romme (2006)



Three phases

found among people who hear voices



THE STARTLING PHASE

- Most voice hearers describe the onset of the experience as being quite sudden, startling and anxiety provoking, and can vividly remember the precise moment they first heard a voice.
- The age of the onset of the initial experience of voices varies widely, as does the intensity of the startling phase, which appears to be most severe when it occurs during adolescence. The confusion seems to be less when voices are heard from an early age, or did not make an appearance until later in adulthood (In a survey 6% heard voices before the age of 6; 10% between 10 and 20; 74% after 20).
- Voices are often triggered by traumatic or emotional events such as accidents, divorce or bereavement, illnesses, psychotherapy sessions.

The impact of the voices fall into two main types

Some people perceive the voices as helpful and they evoke a feeling of recognition. These people feel the purpose of the voices is strengthening them and raising their self-esteem. The voices are experienced as positive and as an understandable aspect of their internal selves.

Others experience the voices as aggressive and negative from the very beginning. For these people the voices are hostile and are not accepted as part of themselves. They suffer from negative voices that can cause chaos in their minds, demanding so much attention that communication with the outside world is extremely difficult.

PHASE OF ORGANISATION: COPING WITH THE VOICES

Voice hearers often become confused by their voices and want to escape from them. For some, this urge lasts only a short time (weeks or months), for others, it can be many years. However, to come to terms with the voices on any level or to organise them successfully, requires some form of acceptance to take place. Denying the voices does not work. During this phase, voice hearers understandably seek ways of controlling or coping with the voices, strategies include:

- ignoring the voices (through distraction)
- listening to them selectively
- entering into willing dialogue with them
- making specific appointments with them

Attempts at distraction and ignoring rarely work, although this is a strategy many voice hearers attempt, it seems the effort involved often leads to a severe restriction of life style.

Unsurprisingly, initial feelings of panic and powerlessness are replaced with a period of anger at the voices, this anger does not appear to be part of a useful coping strategy. The most useful strategy described by voice hearers is to select the positive voices and listen and talk only to them, and to try to understand them.

- An important element in coping successfully with voices is to accept them. This appears to be related to a process of growth towards taking responsibility for one's own decisions. You have to learn to think in a positive way about yourself, your voices, and your own problems.
- Another strategy is to set limits and structure the contact with the voices, sometimes accompanied by rituals or repeated actions

THE PHASE OF STABILISATION

People can and do learn to cope with their voices and find a kind of equilibrium. In this state of balance, people consider the voices as part of themselves and their lives, and capable of a positive influence. During this phase, the individual is able to choose between following the advice of the voices or their own ideas, and can say "I hear voices and I'm happy about it"

From INTERVOICE www.intervoiceonline.org

creative corner



Many voice hearers have an abundance or artistic and creative energy.

The Hearing Voices Network likes to encourage all voice hearers to express the way they feel and to explore the meaning of their voices. A great way to do this is through art, writing and poetry. In this newsletter we have chosen a poem by UK artist Aidan Shingler, which is printed with his kind permission. His website is www.oneinahundred.co.uk

We would like to see some works by New Zealand voice hearers in our future issues. If you have a poem or story, or artwork you would like to share here next time, please send to us at:

Hearing Voices Network Aotearoa NZ
PO Box 78-132
Grey Lynn
AUCKLAND

Or email to: hearingvoices@woosh.co.nz

We are also collecting stories and art for the AGM. Please let us know if we can use for this also. If you wish to remain anonymous just say so and we will respect your request.

THE BUTTERFLY COLLECTOR

Born into the world, a butterfly, exquisitely sensitive, vulnerable, beautiful, fragile.

She takes to the air to celebrate creation, the gift of her life, and to express and experience the birthright of freedom.

The collector (Prof: mg, od, ect, xyz, cert, psych, etc) interested in, fascinated by, ignorant of, the way of the butterfly, nets her and takes her from the natural environment back to his laboratory.

In captivity, she is disorientated and fearful. She struggles to be free.

He observes her, recording the 'peculiarities of her behaviour', important for his research.

He administers a measured chemical solution, hydrochloric acid.

Heavily sedated, she ceases to struggle.

He examines her psychedelic wings, 'intriguing'.

He inserts a sterilised needle into and through her thorax and pins her to a one-dimensional surface.... her spirit breaks.

He attaches a label to her.

He is satisfied. She is categorised.

She is placed within a case and displayed behind glass.

He has his prize... another one to add to his collection.

How clever he is.

What an extraordinary specimen.

Hearing Voices Network Aotearoa NZ

Te Reo Orooro

Affiliates and Sister Organisations

INTERVOICE International Network aims to:

- Show that hearing voices is a normal though unusual variation in human behaviour
- Show that the problem is not hearing voices but the inability to cope with the experience
- Educate society about the meaning of voices so as to reduce ignorance and anxiety and to ensure this innovatory approach on voice hearing is better known by voice hearers, families, professionals and the general public
- Demonstrate the wide variety of voice hearing experiences and their origins, and peoples' approaches to coping
- Increase the quality and quantity of mutual support available to all people and organisations involved in hearing voices work across the world
- Make our work more effective and develop more non-medical ways of helping voice hearers cope with their experience.

Sponsoring organisation for our newsletter:

Hearing Voices Network Cymru
Upper Robeston, Robeston West,
Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire,
SA73 3TL, Wales, United Kingdom.

Sister organisation:

Australian Hearing Voices Network

Perth Hearing Voices Group
Contact: Lyn Mahboub, *Consumer Consultant; Director Hearing Voices Network; Richmond Fellowship of WA Inc; BA (Hons) Psychology/Comm. Cultural Studies*
email: lyn.mahboub@rfwa.org.au
www.rfwa.org.au

Cairns Keepwell Group
Contact: Gaynor Ellis, *Coordinator Mental Health Resource Service*
email: mhrs@centacarecairns.org



MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS APPLICATION FORM

The Hearing Voices Network Aotearoa New Zealand is a non-profit organisation and as such relies on funding and donations. If you would like to become a member of our society and support our organisation please fill in this form and return to us with your payment.

- **Voting Rights:** Whilst our services are provided to all, only paid members of the society may vote for or be part of our committee. As a society we are run by our members in the form of a committee that is voted in each year.
- **Newsletter:** We are a new organisation but are planning a regular newsletter to be sent out quarterly. In this we will include stories of interest, latest news of interest, and welcome contributions from all our members.
- **Internet:** We currently have a Yahoo group for our members that is closed to the public, where we exchange information and ideas about our network. We are planning our own official website this year.
- **Seminars and Events:** We will advise you of any seminars or events we may be hosting and keep you informed of others that may be of interest.
- **Support Groups and Information to the Public:** Membership is not necessary to attend our support groups which we provide for free or at minimum cost. However membership fees do help us to better equip them with books and other resources as well as help pay for any hireage.

NAME:

ADDRESS:

Phone no: email address:

WAGED \$20.00 • UNWAGED \$10.00 • Corporate \$60.00

DONATION \$ Method of Payment

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$

Please make cheque payable to:

Hearing Voices Network Aotearoa NZ, PO BOX 78-132, Grey Lynn, AUCKLAND

CONTACT US

Hearing Voices Network Aotearoa NZ
PO BOX 78-132,
Grey Lynn, Auckland

Web:

www.health.groups.yahoo.com/group/hearingvoicesaotearoa

Email:

hearingvoicesaotearoa-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

or hearingvoices@woosh.co.nz