



NPN

Spring Edition 2020



**Limbrick Centre, Limbrick Road, Sheffield, S6 2PE,
Tel: 0114 271 8210**

Email: enquiries@nationalparanoianetwork.org

Website: www.nationalparanoianetwork.org

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

One-line support

At the National Paranoia Network, we have set up a peer support email service. If you would like support, you can email us at

support@nationalparanoianetwork.org

Many people who Hear Voices or experience Paranoia, will be finding it harder to cope due to the current situation and isolation. Many people are up during the night due to difficult voices and paranoia, they could get added support, due to the difference in time zones, when people/workers in various countries are in bed we could respond to them. Online support packs are also available

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 is a real reception. Denying their reality or advising the voice 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 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 go and have a healthy, balanced life.

Practical & Helpful Ideas for Carers & Family Members

- *Do not 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 does not 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 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 – if 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 normalize 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 very different things to different people. Often either the content or 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.*

My Love of Art

By Wayne D. Clay

Moving on, the best art show I have ever seen was held in the Western Park Gallery which was of the works by the patients of Bedlam. They were the best paintings I had ever seen in that they conveyed the emotion and feelings of the people who painted them. In other words, they laid bare their very souls for the entire world to see. The only name I can remember was Louis Wain who is renowned for his paintings of cats and there is a series of eight paintings that were in this show. The paintings start off with a cat that you can tell is a cat until the last painting, which is an abstraction, but the only thing is that no one knows the order the paintings were done. I supposed I ought to mention some of the artists I most admire, and these would be the impressionists, my favourite being the much troubled Van Gogh. I have had a go at some of Van Gogh's paintings with mixed results. I had a go at "Starry Night" and it looked very flat and lifeless, unlike the original. It is interesting to note that many of the famous artists were not very well for long periods of time in their lives and took up art because they had a lot of time on their hands. There was no goggle box on in the corner of the room to waste their time on.

The thing that attracts me to the impressionists is the colour as that is what art is about to me. Some of the

old masters seem to predominantly to use black and paint dreary pictures whereas the colour of the more modern artists is in your face. To use a modern term. The old masters were gifted in a natural ability but seem rather dark in our world today. Of course, they did not have electricity to paint by. Their art reflected their times as all art does reflect on the history that is around when it is created. Some of the art that is put forward today is more to amuse and to cause controversy than to admire.

I do not know what I would have done without art to fall back on in my life as it has been a mainstay when I look back. Through all the traumas my life has taken I have always looked at art as some sort of salvation. It has been a calming influence and a crutch that I could lean on when the world got too much, I am doing more paintings at present than any other time in my life and they make me feel good about myself which in my life is not something I've always felt. As to whether my art is good art does not matter because I get something out of it. It makes me happy which is all that matters.

Art offered me a chance to express myself in a non-violent way. Some people when they lose their thread take it out on passers-by and it ends up on the day's news as the latest disaster of tragedy. I painted the rainbow and got sectioned for my troubles, but I came through it and used art to help me recover from a break-down. When asked why I painted the rainbow by

the policeman I replied "for my mother" for the crimes of my father had put me into some sort of shock some twenty years previous and I visited Hammerton Road Police Station under very different circumstances to that Friday in March. By the way I was not charged with any offence. A final thought is that it is not money that is held above our heads, but it is art which is held over us all.

My autobiography can be purchased from
<http://www.nationalparanoianetwork.org>



Facing my Demons

I became ill in 1996; this was due to overwork and no sleep. When I was admitted to hospital, I believed it was a Spaceship and I was being abducted, I tried to escape; smashing up the hospital in the process I am sorry for that now.

They drugged me up and put me in a padded cell. They sectioned me under the Mental Health Act, Section 2 for 28 days.

I came home and continued to do strange things, I live opposite a newsagent and would go daily to cars parked outside my house where people were reading their papers, I would challenge them saying they were watching me.

I went to see the Psychiatrist at the hospital, and I went in this office, I sat on the floor with my back to the wall facing the door. I was convinced someone was out to kill me. I ended up with another Section 2. This time when I came out of hospital, I was pointed in the direction of The Limbrick Day Centre in Hillsborough Sheffield. My biggest mistake was going on my own, I got there and sat in reception for 20 minutes, no one approached me, and I went home thinking I had gone to the wrong place.

For the next 12 months I stayed in the house too frightened to venture out. A CPN would visit talking to my partner asking how I had been. I had never had a CPN, so I did not trust him and never said much to him.

My Paranoia escalated my partner says that I could see a red laser dot when I was at the table or sat watching T.V. Convinced that I was going to be shot killed off by the SAS

WHY?

I watched T.V. through the night and believed I knew how Camelot was fiddling the Lottery. I was filled with feelings of ecstasy to terror all compressed inside.

The first chance I got I ran away from home, living on the streets of Sheffield. No fun!

I decided to kill myself by jumping off a railway bridge but spotted some people from Green Peace scaling an incinerator chimney and went to join them. Arrested again!

I came home after 3 weeks of hell and was immediately sectioned again. The Psychiatrist came to see me on the ward and asked how I was doing I told him it was the best hotel I had stopped in. The next day I was discharged after only 14 days. When I returned home

my partner had had enough of my bad behavior, so I left home again. I headed to the North Yorkshire coastline. I was soon in trouble with the police and was arrested and put back in hospital. I thought it was being run by The Freemasons [Masonic Lodge] and that the staff was working for the Secret Service. After 3 or 4 days they brought me back to Sheffield to a hospital I had never been in before, Section 2 again. But still I was unable to tell anyone what was going on in my head.

One day the council came to rewire my house they did this in just 4 hours whilst I was out. When I came home, I believed they had bugged the house installing cameras and microphones. I also thought the identification chip in my dog was a transmitter relaying all our conversations, the poor dog would be put outside or shut under the stairs. My elderly neighbour who was 84 thought this was strange behavior but encouraged me to talk rubbish to the dog.

Next news Sectioned again!

When I came out of hospital this time, I knew I could not repeat the past, my partner was at her wits end and my children were starting to suffer. I took my medication as prescribed, it did not matter how bad things were I would not run away again.

At this point I returned to The Limbrick Centre in Sheffield and started attending most days. After a few months I met Peter Bullimore he told me he ran a group for Voice Hearers and people who experience Paranoia. I went along 6 times and did not say anything, I thought the people attending were all actors and they were filming me. I had heard other people's stories and began to trust them, I had to tell someone what was going on in my head, and I had been carrying a secret for 7 years. I still believed someone was out to kill me but what was my life worth anyway, I was torturing myself. The next few months I started making new friends at the group talking openly about my own experiences. Since that time, I have attended regularly for the last 5 years. I have learned about my paranoia and voices which I was scared to admit to anyone that I experienced but I now facilitate the group, some workshops and speak at conferences.

I have learnt that Paranoia is, MISTRUST, SUSPICION, FEAR and FEELINGS of GRANDEUR.

I had to make choices and decisions to keep myself well but the two main things that helped me were The Hearing Voices Network & Paranoia Network and accepting I had a problem and not running away from it.