



March Edition 2022



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.

Dealing with Intrusive Thoughts

Unwanted intrusive thoughts are stuck thoughts that cause great distress. They seem to come from out of nowhere, arrive with a whoosh, and cause a great deal of anxiety. The content of unwanted intrusive thoughts often focuses on sexual or violent or socially unacceptable images. People who experience unwanted intrusive thoughts are afraid that they might commit the acts they picture in their mind. They also fear that the thoughts mean something terrible about them. Some unwanted intrusive thoughts consist of repetitive doubts about relationships, decisions small and large, sexual orientation or identity, intrusions of thoughts about safety, religion, death or worries about questions that cannot be answered with certainty. Some are just weird thoughts that make no apparent sense. Unwanted Intrusive thoughts can be very explicit, and many people are ashamed and worried about them, and therefore keep them secret.

There are many myths about unwanted intrusive thoughts. One of the most distressing is that having such thoughts mean that you unconsciously want to do the things that come into your mind. This is simply not

true, and, in fact, the opposite is true. It is the effort people use to fight the thought that makes it stick and fuels its return. People fight thoughts because the content seems alien, unacceptable, and at odds with who they are. So, people with violent unwanted intrusive thoughts are gentle people. People who have unwanted intrusive thoughts about suicide love life. And those who have thoughts of yelling blasphemies in church value their religious life. A second myth is that every thought we have is worth examining. In truth, these thoughts are not messages, red flags, signals or warnings--despite how they feel. The problem for people who have these thoughts--and one estimate is that more than 6 million people in the United States are troubled by them-- is that unwanted intrusive thoughts feel so threatening. That is because anxious thinking takes over, and the thought—as abhorrent as it might be—seems to have power it does not. People tend to try desperately and urgently to get rid of the thoughts, which, paradoxically, fuels their intensity. The harder they try to suppress or distract or substitute thoughts, the stickier the thought becomes. People who are bothered by intrusive thoughts need to learn a new relationship to their thoughts--that sometimes the content of thoughts are irrelevant and unimportant.

That everyone has occasional weird, bizarre, socially improper and violent thoughts. Our brains sometimes create junk thoughts, and these thoughts are just part of the flotsam and jetsam of our stream of consciousness. Junk thoughts are meaningless. If you don't pay attention or get involved with them, they dissipate and get washed away in the flow of consciousness. In reality, a thought—even a very scary thought—is not an impulse. The problem is not one of impulse control- it is over control. They are at opposite ends of the continuum. However, sufferers get bluffed by their anxiety, and become desperate for reassurance. However, reassurance only works temporarily, and people can become reassurance Junkies. The only way to effectively deal with intrusive obsessive thoughts is by reducing one's sensitivity to them. Not by being reassured that it won't happen or is not true. Unwanted intrusive thoughts are reinforced by getting entangled with them, worrying about them, struggling against them, trying to reason them away. They are also made stronger by trying to avoid them. Leave the thoughts alone, treat them as if they are not even interesting, and they will eventually fade into the background.

Here are steps for changing your attitude and overcoming Unwanted Intrusive Thoughts

- Label these thoughts as "intrusive thoughts."
- Remind yourself that these thoughts are automatic and not up to you.
- Accept and allow the thoughts into your mind. Do not try to push them away.
- Float, and practice allowing time to pass.
- Remember that less is more. Pause. Give yourself time. There is no urgency.
- Expect the thoughts to come back again
- Continue whatever you were doing prior to the intrusive thought while allowing the anxiety to be present.

Try Not To:

Engage with the thoughts in any way. Push the thoughts out of your mind. Try to figure out what your thoughts "mean." Check to see if this is "working" to get rid of the thoughts. This approach can be difficult to apply. But for anyone who keeps applying it for just a few weeks, there is an excellent chance that they will see a decrease in the frequency and intensity of the unwanted intrusive thoughts.

Recognizing and helping with depression

Family and friends are often the first line of defence in the fight against depression. That's why it's important to understand the signs and symptoms of depression. You may notice the problem in a depressed loved one before they do, and your influence and concern can motivate them to seek help.

Be concerned if your loved one:

Doesn't seem to care about anything anymore. Has lost interest in work, sex, hobbies, and other pleasurable activities. Has withdrawn from friends, family, and other social activities.

Expresses a bleak or negative outlook on life. Is uncharacteristically sad, irritable, short-tempered, critical, or moody; talks about feeling "helpless" or "hopeless."

Frequently complains of aches and pains such as headaches, stomach problems, and back pain. Or complains of feeling tired and drained all the time.

Sleeps less than usual or oversleeps. Has become indecisive, forgetful, disorganized, and "out of it."

Eats more or less than usual and has recently gained or lost weight.

Drinks more or abuses drugs, including prescription sleeping pills and painkillers, as a way to self-medicate how they're feeling

Finding a way to start a conversation about depression with someone is always the hardest part. You could try saying:

"I have been feeling concerned about you lately."

"Recently, I have noticed some differences in you and wondered how you are doing."

"I wanted to check in with you because you have seemed pretty down lately."

Once you're talking, you can ask questions such as:

- "When did you begin feeling like this?"
- "Did something happen that made you start feeling this way?"
- "How can I best support you right now?"
- "Have you sought help before?" If yes, ask what kind of help? Was it successful. Yes/No?
- If yes, ask how it helped/ if no as why it didn't help

What you can say that helps

- "You're not alone. I'm here for you during this tough time."
- "It may be hard to believe right now, but the way you're feeling will change."
- "Please tell me what I can do now to help you."

- “Even if I’m not able to understand exactly how you feel, I care about you and want to help.”
- “You’re important to me. Your life is important to me.”

“When you want to give up, tell yourself you will hold on for just one more day, hour, or minute—whatever you can manage.”

What you should avoid saying

- This is all in your head”
- “Everyone goes through tough times.”
- “Try to look on the bright side.”
- “Why do you want to die when you have so much to live for?”
- “I can’t do anything about your situation.”
- “Just snap out of it.”
- “You should be feeling better by now.”

Try and Keep Active

- Active participation in life
- Active coping strategies
- Active management of experiences
- Work and recreational activity
- Active social and emotional life
- Sense of purpose

A Buddhists Approach to helping with Anxiety

1. Acknowledge the fear

Buddhist teachings state that suffering, illness and death are to be expected, understood and acknowledged. The nature of reality is affirmed in a short chant: “I am subject to aging ... subject to illness ... subject to death.”

This chant serves to remind people that fear and uncertainty are natural to ordinary life. Part of making peace with our reality, no matter what, is expecting impermanence, lack of control and unpredictability.

Thinking that things should be otherwise, from a Buddhist perspective, adds unnecessary suffering.

Instead of reacting with fear, Buddhist teachers advise working with fear. As Theravada Buddhist monk Ajahn Brahm explains, when “we fight the world, we have what is called suffering,” but “the more we accept the world, the more we can actually enjoy the world.”

2. Practice mindfulness and meditation

Mindfulness and meditation are key Buddhist teachings. Mindfulness practices aim to curb impulsive behaviours with awareness of the body.

For example, most people react impulsively to scratch an itch. With the practice of mindfulness, individuals can train their minds to watch the arising and passing away of the itch without any physical intervention.

With the practice of mindfulness, one could become more aware and avoid touching the face and washing hands.

Meditation, as compared to mindfulness, is a longer, more inward practice than the moment-to-moment mindful awareness practice. For Buddhists, time alone with one's mind are normally part of a meditation retreat. Isolation and quarantine can mirror the conditions necessary for a meditation retreat.

Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche, a Tibetan Buddhist monk, advises watching the sensations of anxiety in the body and seeing them as clouds coming and going.

Regular meditation can allow one to acknowledge fear, anger and uncertainty. Such acknowledgment can make it easier to recognize these feelings as simply passing reactions to an impermanent situation.

3. Cultivating compassion

Buddhist teachings emphasize the “four immeasurable’s”: loving-kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity. Buddhist teachers believe these four attitudes can replace anxious and fearful states of mind.

When emotions around fear or anxiety become too strong, Buddhist teachers say one should recall examples of compassion, kindness and empathy. The pattern of fearful and despairing thoughts can be stopped by bringing oneself back to the feeling of caring for others.

Compassion is important even as we maintain distance. Brother Phap Linh, another Buddhist teacher, advises that this could be a time for all to take care of their relationships.

Dealing with isolation.

This could be done through conversations with our loved ones but also through meditation practice. As meditators breathe in, they should acknowledge the suffering and anxiety everyone feels, and while breathing out, wish everyone peace and well-being.

4. Understanding our interconnections

Buddhist doctrines recognize an interconnection between everything. The pandemic is a moment to see this more clearly. With every action someone takes for self-care, such as washing one's hands, they are also helping to protect others.

The dualistic thinking of separateness between self and other, self and society, breaks down when viewed from the perspective of interconnection.

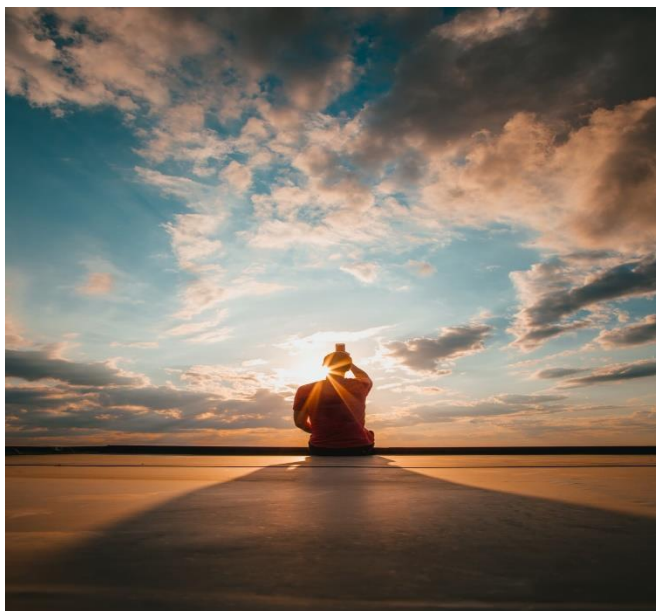
Our survival depends on one another, and when we feel a sense of responsibility toward everyone, we understand the concept of interconnection as a wise truth.

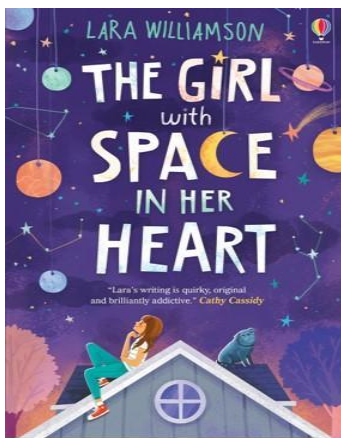
5. Use this time to reflect

Times of uncertainty, Buddhist teachers argue, can be good opportunities for putting these teachings into practice.

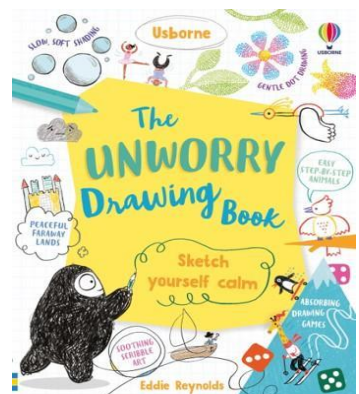
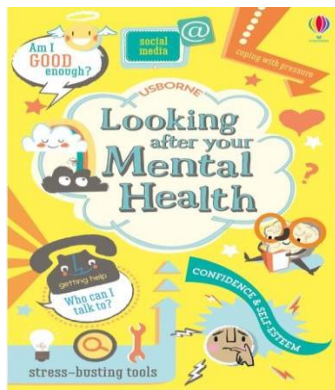
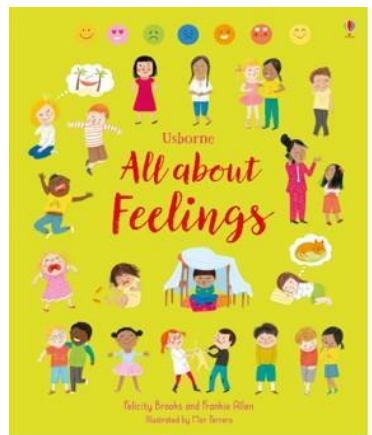
Individuals can transform disappointment with the current moment into motivation to change one's life and perspective on the world. If one reframes obstacles as part of the spiritual path, one can use difficult times to make a commitment to living a more spiritual life.

Isolation in the home is an opportunity to reflect, enjoy the small things and just be.





Great books
to help
Children
understand
mental health



https://usborne.com/gb/the-girl-with-space-in-her-heart-9781474921312?partnerCode=65093b85f95b5f45be7c04576a557d99&utm_campaign=triple_rainbowbooks&utm_source=partner-store&utm_medium=link-share

https://usborne.com/gb/unworry-drawing-book-9781474986120?partnerCode=65093b85f95b5f45be7c04576a557d99&utm_campaign=triplerainbowbooks&utm_source=partner-store&utm_medium=link-share

https://usborne.com/gb/all-about-feelings-9781474937115?partnerCode=65093b85f95b5f45be7c04576a557d99&utm_campaign=triplerainbowbooks&utm_source=partner-store&utm_medium=link-share

https://usborne.com/gb/looking-after-your-mental-health-9781474937290?partnerCode=65093b85f95b5f45be7c04576a557d99&utm_campaign=triplerainbowbooks&utm_source=partner-store&utm_medium=link-share

Maastricht Approach Project: A Journey Begins

Join us **in-person** as we debut MAP, an Advocacy Unlimited initiative

This is a **free** event to learn about the Maastricht Approach Project and to explore Voice Hearing through a holistic lens. We invite clinical professionals, people with lived experience, family and friends to come together in support of creating choice and understanding of what it means to hear voices.

Highlights of the event

- NASW and CCB/RSS CEU's (pending)
- Guest speaker Peter Bullimore
- A Taco Bar
- Vendors
- Music
- Creative expression hour
- Much more details to come!

Portions of the event will be offered virtually!

We understand if you are not able to attend in-person, we still would like for you to join in the celebration.

When:

May 5th 2022 9:30-4pm

Where:

Chrysalis Center Banquet Hall 255 Homestead Ave
Hartford, CT 06112

Please email Maggie for questions.

Mtaylor@advocacyunlimited.org

Maastricht Interview Training for Hearing Voices & Problematic Thought Beliefs & Paranoia Is available online and face to face from the National Paranoia Network. Other training available 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 enquiries@nationalparanoianetwork.org

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 83079149464 No Password Needed

Monday Sheffield Hearing Voices & Paranoia Support Group with Emma & Lyn on ZOOM 11am-12pm UK Time Meeting ID: 558 685 8263 Password 6DyVca

**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