



NPN

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**If your voices tell you not to paint,
then paint and your voices will be
silenced**

Vincent Van Gogh

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The first step in turning paralyzing fear into something more useful is to calm yourself

One of the most fundamental Buddhist teachings is mindfulness — the act of bringing awareness to the present moment. I spoke to Brother Phap Dung, a senior monk and teacher at Plum Village, the Buddhist community founded by the Zen master and author Thich Nhat Hanh, about bringing mindfulness to bear on fear.

There is unskilful fear and there is skilful fear

In the strange and frightening forest, the Buddha found freedom from fear by facing it down and recognizing it as a temporary mind state. In other teachings, he makes the helpful distinction between unskilful fear and skilful fear. I heard a good explanation of this in a recent talk given by Brian Lesage a Buddhist and a teacher of meditation, at the insight meditation society's forest rescue.

“Unskilful fear ... has got such a good argument: which is, anything can happen in the next moment.” A President Trump raises a multitude of deeply troubling possibilities of harm in the future, and while “that seems like a really convincing argument to keep on

worrying and being afraid,” it’s actually not a good reason to remain gripped by fear in the present. We can’t know the future, and so allowing fear to hold us prisoner in the present is ultimately unskillful. Skillful fear is watching it, getting really close to it, and uncovering the purer feelings, like love, underneath it. We can use fear skillfully by redirecting its energy and our attention toward more wholesome virtues, like courage and kindness, Lesage explains. “We must build dikes of courage to hold back the floods of fear,” Martin Luther King Jr. said.

On a more practical level, Brother Phap Dung recommends that people stop reading the news if it feeds fear. “Go take refuge in nature and find a cause where your heart doesn’t feel inactive and in despair,” he says. “This is the medicine. “We can and should focus on more tangible needs of the people around us than probable doom. “Your friend may be somebody who is being discriminated against,” says Dung. “You can only be there to offer them kindness if you are stable. You cannot help them if you are filled with hate and fear. What people need is your non-fear.”

Paranoid Thoughts Taking Up Your Day? How To Stop Paranoia and Anxiety

Anxiety is something everyone experiences at one time or another. It's a very natural response to sometimes normal, everyday situations. Paranoia is more extreme than anxiety and one that focuses on others. It's a belief that others are out to get us or mean us harm. It leads to distrust of everyone around us and what their intentions might be for us.

Everyone experiences fear and worry. They are a part of our survival traits. After all, if we don't fear something dangerous, we're much less likely to avoid it. Unfortunately, because human lives are more complex than the lives of other animals, we develop many more ideas of what to worry about. With the right tools, however, you can learn how to stop *paranoia and anxiety*.

How to Stop Anxiety with Paranoia

Anxiety isn't always a bad thing and, even when it is, it isn't always a sign of mental illness. If you experience occasional anxiety, you may not need the help of

mental health experts. Try these tips on your own and if they don't help - we'll cover that later in the article.

Breathe

The first line of defence against any of the thoughts that lead us down a dark path is to breathe. Learning deep-breathing exercises and meditating can help slow your racing thoughts down enough to get your bearings. Once there, you are more capable of thinking clearly and more rationally about what is causing your fear and anxiety.

Ask Questions

Once you've calmed your breath and your mind to the point where you can think clearly, ask yourself if you are reacting rationally or in a way that is helpful. Is what you are facing insurmountable? Is this something you can deal with, small step by small step? Is there someone you can ask for help? Try to determine if you are thinking reasonably or if your emotions are getting the better of you.

If you can, don't just ask these questions to yourself, ask them to someone else. It will probably be easier for a friend or family member to tell when your thoughts are irrational. If that's something that happens a lot, it could be a sign that your anxiety is a potential sign of mental illness rather than just a quirk.

Plan

Figure out what will be most helpful for you when you start to feel the symptoms of anxiety creeping up. Or maybe there is no "creep" and it just suddenly presents itself. Either way, having a plan of action can be immensely helpful.

It should involve anything that you find helpful or anxiety-reducing. For example, calling a friend you trust, making a detailed to-do list, or taking a walk around the block.

Make sure to have several steps in your plan in case one isn't enough, or the first couple aren't helping at that moment. But rest assured that even knowing that you have a plan of action that you can utilize when anxiety comes on can help you to remain or get to a place of calm.

How to Stop Paranoia

Paranoia is quite different to anxiety. However, people experiencing *anxiety* are often irrationally worried about things that are likely to happen. People experiencing *paranoia* are often worried about things that are quiet often never going to happen – for example, that people are going to hurt you or frame you for a crime.

The idea that someone is out to hurt you can take many forms. You may be paranoid that a partner or lover is going to leave you for someone else. Or you may constantly be worried that a stranger will attack you or break into your home if you let your guard down. It is also important to remember that with paranoia there is always a seed of truth it doesn't come from nowhere

Not Allowing Paranoia to Control You

It is normal to have general concerns or worries, but when they get in the way of your daily functioning, it can become problematic or be symptomatic of even more serious mental illness. When you start to worry excessively about these things, you can take these steps to keep paranoia from taking over your life.

- **Recognize the "What-if" Game**

Many people play a game with their minds. It can be called the "what-if" game. It's when you worry about a situation in the future, something that hasn't happened yet. And instead of visualizing yourself succeeding or having a positive outcome, you start to think about all the negative scenarios that could happen.

Another word for this is "catastrophizing," which means that you are playing out a worst-case scenario in your head with no evidence that this will happen. You ask yourself, for instance, "What if this person thinks I'm stupid?" Or "What if someone laughs at my opinion?"

But, if you can at least recognize that you tend to see the worst-case scenario, then you can be aware of when you are playing this game with yourself. When you catch yourself playing this game, take a deep breath, and pause. Remind yourself that there is no logical reason that the worst case would happen over other, more positive outcomes.

- **Practice Positive Visualizations**

Choose a time when you are not experiencing anxiety or paranoia, and practice consciously putting positive images in your head.

Start small, with a situation that does not typically cause you to worry. Play through the situation in your mind, imagining how well you accomplish each step.

- **Banish Self-conscious Thinking**

If your paranoia is rooted in social anxiety and the worry that others will not accept you, then the best thing to do is just stop caring what others think.

It sounds easier said than done, but you can never please everyone, and constantly guessing what someone else wants from you will leave you drained. Most of the assumptions that we have about what others think about us are due to our insecurities rather than facts or evidence that someone doesn't like you.

If you work on being happy with yourself, instead, you will likely stop projecting negative thoughts about yourself onto others. Worst case scenario, someone may not like you, and you won't care!

- **Work on Your Anxiety**

Extreme anxiety results in paranoia so it can be helpful to tackle it first. You've already read about how to get a better handle on your anxiety, so this step should be easy! First breathe, then ask questions, make a plan, and talk to your doctor about your options if you feel that you need more support.

- **How do I stop being paranoid?**

If you're paranoid, it's difficult to control those feelings, especially if your paranoia is more severe than in most cases, or if it's caused by a mental health issue. However, there are steps you can take to help with your paranoia:

- Talk to a therapist about your paranoia and why you believe you feel this way. A therapist can help to identify the causes of your paranoia and give medical advice on some ways that you can treat your paranoia as well.
- Stay in good health. Eat right, exercise, and get plenty of sleep. Substance abuse and mental health are also closely related so if you do

recreational drugs or abuse alcohol, getting that under control can help. Lacking any of these healthy habits may cause your symptoms of paranoia to intensify.

- Practice mindfulness and cognitive behavioural therapy, two techniques that can help with your paranoia. They help by allowing you to look at your thoughts and discard any that are toxic, and keep you focused on the present.
- What causes the paranoid thoughts to manifest? Write down some possible triggers and figure out how you can avoid them. This is another issue that you can discuss with your therapist. You two can work together to prevent any episodes.
- While this won't help with extreme cases, look at your paranoia through a rational lens. Look at statistics and content that disproves your paranoia. Be rational about it as best as you can. Again, if you need help with this, consider confiding in someone close to you like a friend, family member, or seek the help of a licensed therapist.
- Finally, if you're trying to get help for your paranoia, you're already making progress. Many paranoid people aren't self-aware about their paranoia and may be aggressive if someone accuses them of being paranoid. By trying to make changes, you're proving that you want to

get help, which isn't the case for a lot of paranoia cases.

- **Helping someone who is experiencing Paranoia**

You may be able to tell when someone is paranoid. The person may accuse others of trying to harm him or her or may look around fearfully. The person may talk about protecting himself or herself from attack.

Here are ways to help the person who is paranoid:

- Don't argue. Ask questions about the person's fears and talk to the person about the paranoia if the person wants to listen to you. If someone is threatening you, you should call for help.
- Use simple directions, if needed. Tell the person that no harm will come to him or her and that you can help. For example, "Sit down, and let's talk about it."
- Give the person enough personal space so that he or she does not feel trapped or surrounded. Stay with the person but at a distance that is comfortable for him or her and you. Stay more than an arm's reach away.
- Call for help if you think anyone is in danger.
- Move the person away from the cause of the fear or from noise and activity, if

possible. Ask the person to tell you what is causing the fear. Make a direct statement that you are not afraid.

- Focus the person on what is real.
- Tell the person everything you are going to do before you do it. For example, "I'm going take out my cell phone."
- **To help with situations that may cause paranoia:**
 - Help the person avoid things he or she fears. For example, if the person is afraid of dogs, avoid them.
 - Keep lights turned on if the person tells you that this makes him or her less scared.
 - Talk about the person's fears when he or she is not paranoid and make a plan for handling the fears when they occur.
 - Help the person make a list of his or her fears. At the end, consider asking the person to write, "These things are not going to hurt me. I can take control of these feelings. They will go away if I seek help." Don't insist that the person does this. Doing so may make the person include you as part of the paranoid belief.

It's not okay

you know that moment
when you're a selfish human
and you abandon everyone
who loves you
cause you're struggling
and all you see is fire
not with those sparks of excitement
but sparks
that b u r n your soul
then you crush
everyone
push them away
causing them to h a t e you
there's a mirror
between you and your friends, family
which can be shattered
but every time it shatters
everyone ends up bleeding
and all that you say is
' I hate me too '
then you hate your existence
and they do too
they are tired
you feel sorry for being a burden
lack of empathy, pessimism, tantrums
mental breakdowns
you keep killing them
and you died ages ago

Gillian Carter

The Impact of the Maastricht Interview

My name is Liam before I underwent one-to-one sessions with the Maastricht interview, I had been self-isolating for 4 years and I had really bad anxiety and I was hearing voices. I thought that if I did not tell anyone about it, they would go away but unfortunately, they did not. I was a very negative person towards everyone and everything in my life and that did not help at all. So, when I started the Maastricht sessions, I wanted to give it my all, so I never missed an appointment, and I was always trying to help out by giving out as much information as possible. Then towards the mid-session I went through one of the most changing experiences of my life. When Peter Keane my worker suggested music, I started to listen to it all the time but then he suggested different genre's and then something clicked I then started to have a conversation with the voice who I thought was being negative, but it turned out to be a guide. Thanks to this when I finally finished the 10 sessions I kind of felt like all my emotions in my body have been let go. I highly recommend the Maastricht interview to anybody who hears voices. My experience of undertaking the interview has been great it has honestly given me another meaning to life I would like to thank everyone who has worked with me. So, if you do have the chance to undertake the interview please go and do it. It could change your life for the better. Thanks for reading this.

Artist Statement for the Living Work of Valerie Porter:

My name is Valerie Porter. I use mixed media when building my whimsical, sculptural paintings and objects. These paintings came to me when I used my imagination to build and paint inner resources for myself as I heal from trauma. I survived multiple ACE's, (Adverse Childhood Experiences). I grew up in a home where love and violence were at war. I learned the language of blame and it was reinforced in public schools, right wrong, black, white, judgement and insecurity. I longed for compassion, autonomy and fairness and justice. In 1996 I had a grade point average of 3.87 and was taking high honor classes at the college I attended. I was accepted into the Boston Museum School of Fine Art and was planning to apply to Yale. During the fall of 1997 I was diagnosed with a "major mental illness," I was told my choices were to take medication, that made me drool, constipated, have high cholesterol, and hypothyroidism. I gained 50 pounds in two months from medication was told I had the potential of dying twenty- five years sooner than the rest of the population, due to a mental health diagnosis, and the best I could hope for was to manage the illness that soon defined me. I was experiencing big thoughts and strong emotions and didn't believe I existed. I saw messages from God written in the sky. I believed I

received messages from the television, road signs, business signs, bumper stickers and everyone was talking about me. I was terrified. I chose to take the medication and spent 18 years in and out of hospitals, I had multiple suicide attempts, and learned the language of helplessness and hopelessness in the institution of mental illness. The violence language I learned growing up, was very similar...They were both based in assumptions, evaluations, judgment, assessments, and blame' all objectified human life.

18 Years passed, and I started to learn a new verbal language. Courageous communication- which translated to me-be yourself no matter what anybody else says, and give myself and others kindness, compassion, and understanding.

By doing this, I became more resilient, and able to connect to what's alive in me. It's one of the ways I've healed myself. Another way I have healed is through the visual arts. It is the way I communicate best. Art has not only been healing it has been survival. I have connected to other aspects of myself which I could not have had the courage to do other- wise. Where we lack the courage to verbally communicate, our art channels bravery into our heart to speak our truth. In our art we combine fragile and strong, unbreakable materials to create a dance between the natural paradoxical life forces which exists in all of us. Since we are living in

fragile times in our existence, I try to save the worlds creatures by remembering those species at risk of extinction, those extinct, and those yet to be created. We are all connected, and their existence is part of our existence. There is reference to time in my work because where and when we are from in time is an important historical fact to me. We learn from our history. Everything is for the time being.

I do not have children. It was a sacrifice I made a long time ago in a response to over population. So, my legacies to the world are my art and to be kind to others. The story my art tells is a reflection of the times we live in.

What I hope people will see in my art is the magical, inspirational, and at times, humorous spirit that exists within me as I transform with my work. I am falling in love with my selves and the world as I listen and try to observe the world through the magical process of art making and imagination. The mind is infinite, and I intend to extend it towards peace, kindness and hope in order to heal the earth for the next generation. My art is a beautiful expression of a painful life.

I AM

I am: Yet what I am no one cares or knows. My friends forsake me like a memory lost.

I am the self-consumer of my woes. They rise and vanish in oblivious host. Like shades in love and death's oblivion lost; and yet I am! and live with shadows lost

Into the nothingness of scorn and noise

Into the living sea of waking dreams. Where there is neither sense of life nor joys.

But the vast shipwreck of my life's esteems; and the dearest that I loved the best-are strange-nay, rather stranger than the rest

I long for scenes where man has never trod; a place where women never smiled or wept

There to abide with my creator. God, and sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept

Untroubling and untroubled where I lie.

The grass below-above the vaulted sky

John Clare

Maastricht Interview Training for Hearing Voices & Problematic Thought Beliefs & Paranoia Is available online from the National Paranoia Network. Other training available online 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

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

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With enquiries