The Hearing Voices Network Ireland (HVNI)
An Introduction to Hearing Voices Groups

Dr. Mary Farrelly
Hearing Voices – some facts

• Hearing voices has/is associated by psychiatry with a diagnosis of schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorder
• The traditional approach has been to understand such experiences as an illness that has a biological cause—an over activity of the neurotransmitter Dopamine and therefore to treat with medication
• This has been predicated on the assumption that because ‘antipsychotic ‘drugs appeared to calm people with schizophrenia that their condition was caused by too much Dopamine
Lepping et al, 2009
Clinical relevance of findings in trials of antipsychotics: Systematic review BJP, 198, 341-5.

“Around 10-22% of people with persistent difficulties who receive modern antipsychotics will experience a benefit that can be attributed to the drugs rather than placebo efforts of natural recovery”
In research concerning people who hear voices, it was found that 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 one's sexual identity, etc. (Romme & Escher 2006)
Hearing Voices – some evidence

- A meta analysis of studies that considered adverse events and the incidence of psychoses revealed that people who suffered childhood adversity were 2.8 times more likely to develop psychosis than those who had not. (Varese et al, 2012)

- Those subjected to one form of adverse event were 1.7 times more likely to be diagnosed with a psychotic disorder, compared to 18 times more likely for 3 adverse events and 193 times more likely for 5 events (Shevlin et al, 2012).
Marius Romme and Sandra Escher
The Hearing Voices Movement

- The Hearing Voices Movement was founded more than 20 years ago, following the ground-breaking research of Professor Marius Romme and Dr Sandra Escher.

- Romme & Escher have advocated for a radical shift in the way we understand the phenomenon of Hearing Voices.

- Rather than taking the traditional approach favoured by biological psychiatry, which views voices as a product of brain and cognitive faults, their research has firmly established that voices make sense when looking at the traumatic circumstances in life that provoked them.

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Hearing Voices - Some facts

• Hearing voices when nobody is around or at least when nobody seems to be saying the words you hear, is quite a common thing to happen.

• Many people hear voices that are not perceived as thinking, thinking aloud or coming from people around them.

• Research has shown that up to 10% of the population in the UK hear voices that no one else can hear.  www.jacquidillon.org
“Bob describes his panic stages from the ages of 11 to 15, where he would come home to an empty house in Dun Laoghaire. His father, a travelling salesman, was away all week. Bob had two older sisters; one was married, the other was at university.”

“I had that sense of 'I need someone to hold on to me here'. That was the loss,” Bob explains. "Adding to a bizarre fear of coming home and it is always November – in my head, my youth is always November – and the house is dark, I walk up the steps and I'd go in and I'd keep my head down. And if I don't keep my head down at the top of the stairs, there would be a woman looking at me."

"I'd imagine it was my mum," he says, "but I don't know. And then, because I didn't want to light the fire, I'd turn on the gas oven and put my feet in the oven and tilt back in the kitchen chair and just read a book. But I daren't look at the window on to the yard, because there would be a face looking in the window like that. I remember that face. I'd say: 'Stop it, now'."

(Barry Egan, Sunday Independent, 2013)

"I was actually mad," he recalled of that time of being temporarily parted from his children, Fifi ..Peaches ... and Pixie ... Bob added by way of explaining his madness that he could hear their footfall on the stairs. And he would shout out to them in the morning – "7.30am? What are you doing up, love?"

The sad fact was Bob was utterly alone in the house. "I would suddenly twig that I was talking to those ghosts," he told me in 2002, "and I would smell them going up to bed. I would go in to tuck them up and I would be actually at the bed, and the bed was flat and I would just collapse."

(Barry Egan, Sunday Independent, 2013)
Robin Van Persie has revealed he was tormented all summer by voices in his head - telling him he should have achieved MORE, writes Steve Goodman of the Sunday People.

The Holland striker hit 30 goals in his debut Manchester United season as Alex Ferguson’s side reclaimed the Premier League title. But RVP, on the mark against Crystal Palace this weekend, said his close-season attempts to relax were scuppered by feelings of guilt over United’s Champions League shortcomings.

“I kept on hearing a little voice in the back of my head throughout the summer,” Van Persie admitted. “It told me that I should have put in even more effort. It was a good season, both for Manchester United and myself, but we could have gone further in the Champions League.”
Hearing Voices - Some facts

- It is estimated that 20% of the people who hear voices in the general population find their voices reassuring.
- For some people, this experience is part of their life and causes no distress.
- For others, hearing voices is a very distressing experience. Their voices are perceived as threatening, powerful and disturbing.
- Other unusual perceptual experiences include smells, sensations, unusual thoughts.
- Many people can identify that voices start at a time (or after) when they have had something they experience as traumatic happen.
- If hearing voices causes distress, the person who hears the voices can learn strategies to cope with the experience. Coping is often achieved by confronting the
Facts about Hearing Voices

- People who hear voices may hear one voice or many voices.

- The voice or voices may be pleasant and 'good' or they may be unpleasant and 'bad' voices.

- Sometimes, 'good' voices may turn 'bad' later on, and vice versa.

- There is usually a pattern to when the voices appear, when they stop, when they get worse and when they get better.

- Voices often appear or get worse when the voice hearer feels stressed.

- To a voice hearer, the voices exist! They are real to the person who hears them.
Coping Well v Struggling to Cope
Romme and Escher’s research revealed:

People who could cope with voices
- Experienced themselves as stronger
- Experienced more positive voices
- Experienced less imperative voices
- Set more limits to the voices
- Listened selectively to the voices
- Communicated more often about their voices

People who could not cope with Voices
- Experienced themselves as weaker
- Experienced more negative voices
- Experienced more imperative voices
- Did not dare to set limits to them
- Tried to escape from the voices by using more distraction techniques
Important steps in recovering from the distress associated with hearing voices

- Accepting the experience
- Meeting people who accept the voices as real; being accepted as a voice hearer by others, but also by oneself
- Meeting someone who takes an interest in the voice hearer as a person
- Talking about the experience
- Becoming actively interested in the hearing voices experience

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Important steps in recovering from the distress associated with hearing voices

Coping with the voice hearing experience

- Identifying circumstances which trigger the voices and what the voices say
- Keeping a record of what the voices say
- Paying attention to your circumstances and how this might impact on your mental health, e.g. safe housing, social status, other significant relationships etc
- Developing and using coping strategies

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Important steps in recovering from the distress associated with hearing voices

Understanding and finding meaning in the experience

• Recognising the voices as personal and becoming the owner of your voices
• Changing the relationship with your voices, challenging them, changing the power structure between you and your voices
• Set limits on them
• Making choices, use positive voices as allies for example
• Recognising your own emotions, accepting them and expressing them
• Understanding and dealing with the underlying difficulties that have produced the voices
• Individual therapy

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Eleanor Longden

....Is A Clinical Psychologist who when she started college At the age of 17 began to hear voices that frightened her. Having been treated in a psychiatric hospital with medication and been diagnosed with schizophrenia, she met Dr. Pat Bracken an Irish psychiatrist who showed an interest in her experiences and helped her to make sense of them. She is now an activist and member of the hearing voices network and works in early intervention services with people who hear voices and staff.
Documentary on One

Sounds Mad

Have you ever wondered what it’s like to hear voices in your head? Have you ever thought that people who hear voices are plain mad? If so, this documentary might just make you think twice.

Rate this doc ★★★★☆ 4.4/5 (126 ratings)
Hearing Voices Information, Education and Training Sessions

To date in Dublin, Cork and Galway

- 9 Hearing Voices Group Facilitation (Adult) 3 day training
- 4 Hearing Voices Group (Young People) Facilitation 3 day training
- 3 Advanced Hearing Voices Group Facilitation Training
- 8 Hearing Voices Awareness Workshops
- 3 Working with Paranoia Workshops

In excess of 600 people have attended including nurses, allied health professionals, people with lived experience of hearing voices and their supporters.
Anxiety
Depression
Bipolar disorder
EXCLUSIVE INVESTIGATION

1,200 KILLED BY MENTAL PATIENTS

Shock 10-year toll exposes care crisis

He smokes when he wants

Tam's a man eater

18BN KILLED BY SANE PEOPLE

Shock 10-year toll exposes fuck all
Hearing Voices Groups

Provide an opportunity for people to:

- Talk about their experience of hearing voices,
- To discuss their ideas about what it means to hear voices,
- To share ways that they or others have used to help them manage their voices so the voices,
- To share ways they or others have managed to engage with their voices to help them grow and develop.
The Hearing Voices Network Ireland (HVNI) is one of over 20 nationally-based networks around the world joined by shared goals and values, incorporating a fundamental belief that there are many ways to understand the experience of hearing voices and other unusual or extreme experiences. It is part of an international collaboration between people with lived experience, their families and professionals to develop an alternative approach to coping with emotional distress that is empowering and useful to people, and does not start from the assumption that they have an illness.
Hearing Voices Groups in Ireland

- Kilkenny
- Donegal
- Kildare
- Tipperary
- Tipperary South
- Dublin
  - Dublin 1 Hill Street *(We never have the Hill street blues!!!)*
  - Sandyford
  - Tallaght
  - Ballyfermot
  - Clondalkin
- Cork
  - Bishops town
  - West Cork
  - Douglas
  - Mahon
Hearing Voices Groups

Hearing Voices Groups are a social environment that encourage and promote:

♦ Self Empowerment
♦ Interdependence, and
♦ A view of members as "experts by experience".

Key Principles

♦ Acceptance and Validation
♦ Respect
♦ Promote Hope
♦ Safety and Courage
♦ Collaboration
♦ Independence and Empowerment

Groups Provide

♦ Acceptance and a sense that one is not alone.
♦ A safe place to talk about visions and voices.
♦ An opportunity to learn what voices mean and how to gain control over the experience.

Our Role
To provide a framework and environment which facilitates the processes that enables people who hear distressing voices to move towards recovery

Our Aims
♦ To show that hearing voices is a real experience and may not always be a symptom of mental illness.
♦ To educate society about the meaning of hearing voices, and help to reduce the stigma in the community.
♦ To develop appropriate coping strategies for voice hearers.
Join Us

Help support our work and become a full member of Intervoice

Working across the world to spread positive and hopeful messages about the experience of hearing voices. If you hear voices, know someone who does or want to find out more about this experience – then this site is for you.

One Of A Million Campaign

2299 supporters and counting!
More Information

Hearing Voices Network Ireland
http://hearingvoicesnetworkireland.ie/

Intervoice
http://www.intervoiceonline.org/publications/about-voices-visions

Mad in America
http://www.madinamerica.com/2013/05/the-hearing-voices-movement-has-it-really-been-25-years/

Rufus May-therapeutic approaches
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SARayODS_90&feature=player_embedded
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ffw0pyAjiCw&feature=related

Eleanor Longden-experience of voice hearing and psychiatric treatment
http://talentsearch.ted.com/video/Eleanor-Longden-Learning-from-t

Jacqui Dillon-experience of voice hearing
http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/ninetoonoon/20100414
Thank you