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FOUNDATION



**HEARING VOICES
THE RECOVERY JOURNEY
PART 1**

IMPORTANT STEPS TO RECOVERY WITH VOICES

WHAT DOES RECOVERY MEAN?

It Means:

- Taking life back into your own hands
- Living your own life, not the life of your voices.
- Functioning well and being independent.
- Finding a purpose in life – a personal and social recovery.

FOUR IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF RECOVERY

(as defined by well-known (recovered) voice hearer Ron Coleman)

- **Involve Others** – Because you need to get direction, hope, support and friendship.
- **Work on the Self** – Self-esteem, Self-confidence, Self-awareness and Self-Acceptance.
- **Make Choices** – Become responsible for your own decisions and find a purpose in life.
- **Take Ownership** – Learn to “own” your own voice hearing experiences.

ISSUES IMPORTANT IN RECOVERY FROM THE DISTRESS WITH VOICES

1. Meeting someone who takes an interest in the voice hearer as a person.

Don (a voice hearer) tells his therapist:

I was spoken to as a person, I became an identity. You were interested in a theatre play I had written. Before that I was treated as a patient; lived in a no-man's-land; there was a cessation of my feelings. When you lowered my medication I woke up and became clear in my mind.

2. Giving hope by showing a way out and normalising the experience.

Mien (a voice hearer) was told by his psychotherapist:

I am not mad but that they (the voices) were related to my past, and that it is a rather normal experience you can talk about with others. It helped me to realise voices express what is happening with you. It is something that belongs to me.

3. Meeting people who accept the voices as real.

Karina (a voice hearer) tells:

What helped me was the support I got from the hearing Voices Network, feeling a part of something and being accepted for who I was. I felt the support I got from these people was invaluable.

4. Becoming actively interested in your experience of the voices.

Ami (a voice hearer) tells:

I came across advertising on a billboard that somebody would give a lecture about hearing voices, a woman called Liz Bodil. This was the turning point. She also sold books. The book

“Accepting Voices” I read in one night. I just felt this was for me. This described my experience and also said there is a reason for voices.

5. Recognising the voices as personal.

Daan (a voice hearer tells)

I thought I was bad because the voices called me all sorts of names. Later I realised that the voices were related to the physical abuse because they had the same characteristics of those who abused me. Then I noticed the voices became more or less intrusive depending on the situation I was in. They became bad when there were conflicts in the house. So, they were kind of a mirror of my living situation.

6. Changing the power structure between you and your voices

Eleanor (a voice hearer) tells:

I realised that the fear I felt had created this vicious circle of avoidance and isolation. I tentatively began to test out what the voices claimed. One night he said: “I want you to cut off your toe and if you don’t I’ll kill your family”. It was the hardest thing I’ve ever had to do but I said “Just do it”. It was a terrible night but nothing happened, so I realised he hadn’t much power.

7. Making Changes

Jeanette (a voice hearer) tells:

My first choice was staying alive, which had consequences, for instance looking after myself. The next choice was to find out that I was ok. I started to think “Why do I have such high demands on myself; what is so bad about me?”

8. Changing the relationship with your voices

Debra (a voice hearer) tells:

I decided that everything I was doing so far was not working for me, so doing the exact opposite made sense to me. First, I changed my attitude towards them. I embraced them as friends and welcomed their intrusions, greeting them with kindness and respect. As a consequence, my fear reduced, which in turn alleviated the distress I felt; now when I heard a voice my anxiety level didn’t increase. I also began exploring other areas of my life and discovered what role the voices played in my life; the need to feel connected to someone; the need to belong.

9. Recognising one’s own emotions and accepting them.

Eleanor (a voice hearer) tells:

Everyone has their private demons, and his (the voice’s) demonic aspects were the unaccepted aspects of my self-image. The contempt and loathing that he expresses is actually to do with me in that it reflects how I feel about myself. He is like a very form of my own insecurities, my own self-doubt.