



HEARING VOICES THE RECOVERY JOURNEY PART 3

ACCEPTING VOICES AND FINDING A WAY OUT

There are 5 elements to acceptance, and each element has different consequences.

ACCEPTING THAT THE VOICES ARE REAL

Ron (a voice hearer) says:

Anne Walton, a fellow voice hearer, at my first hearing voices group asked me if I heard voices. When I replied that I did, she told me that they were real. It does not sound like much but that one sentence has been a compass for me, showing me the direction I needed to travel, underpinning my belief in the recovery process.

Sue (a voice hearer) says:

At first, I had denied the voices were real. This brought utter conflict within me and fear, extreme fear. They completely took over. Once I accepted the voices were real, the relationship changed. I stopped trying to get rid of them, but accepted them as personal.

ACCEPTING THAT THE VOICES BELONG TO YOU

Accepting the voices as real is one thing, but that does not mean that the hearer feels the voices belong to them.

As voices evoke often intense anxiety, they are perceived as bad news, not something to relate to.

Lisette (a voice hearer) says:

When I first heard about the book "Accepting Voices", it took some time before I wanted to order it. And when I received it, it took another few weeks before I could read it. The title "Accepting Voices" did not appeal to me. I had the idea that I could not accept something like that. I have accepted it now, but though I still do not like the voices, I have accepted that they belong to me.

Mien (a voice hearer) says:

I accepted that the voices are there and found a way to cope with them. They belong to me.

ACCEPTING THAT THE VOICES ARE RELATED TO THE LIFE HISTORY

Acceptance that the voices belong to them is not the same as connecting their voices to their life history.

For some people making the connection might be too threatening as the voices are often related to a troubled past. Interestingly, some people are able to make a connection between their voices and their life history from the start, and are able to accept the voices as a reaction to a problem and not as an illness.

Jo (a voice hearer) says:

All the voices are part of me due to my life events.

Stewart (a voice hearer) says:

I know I started hearing voices because of what was happening to me at that time, although I still don't know why those things came to me as voices. I just accept that it is me and all in all things have turned out ok.

ACCEPT THAT THE VOICES ORIGINATE WITH THE HEARER

Only a few voice hearers come to the conclusion that the voices are created by themselves.

John (a voice hearer) says:

I recently realised that I created my voices, that they come from my mind: my unconscious, as my dreams do.

Mien (a voice hearer) says:

I have had the most benefit, and I still have, by assuming that in one way or another, I create the voices myself.

SELF-ACCEPTANCE

Jeanette (a voice hearer) says:

My first choice was to stay alive. That was an important decision as I stopped myself not wanting to live. The next step was to see if I felt ok about myself. The psychiatrist thought I was ok, more than ok even, and said: "I do not understand why you think so negatively about yourself, because if there is someone with capacity it is you."

I reasoned that if this is true, why don't I believe I am someone? After this I started to think slowly about what I was doing to myself. Why did I make such high demands on myself? What was so bad about me? Why didn't I have any rights? One day that psychiatrist asked: "Who are you really?" I totally freaked out. I panicked. Later I started to think about it, why I had become so terribly afraid of the remark. Then I thought: "I am nothing at all. That is what has happened to me. Who I am is my voices, that is who I am and nothing more." I did not know what I was feeling, what came from the voices and what came from others. Because of the tolerance of the psychiatrist I learnt to feel emotions like anger and sadness as belonging to me, and that I just could have them.

Mien (a voice hearer) says:

It has everything to do with how I perceive myself. For years I had lived with the idea that it was totally my fault, that I was a child of the devil and doomed from birth. This conviction I had to turn around.

SUMMARY

Accepting the voices is the first step in the process of changing the relationship with the voices, and might lead to changing the relationship with oneself.

Accepting is a personal process and a difficult one, and it involves something that is negative and frightening, and implies learning to cope with emotions that are triggered by the voices.

Accepting is seldom an isolated process. Others must accept that the voice hearer will be able to accept their voices; something that is denied to voice hearers by the disease model.