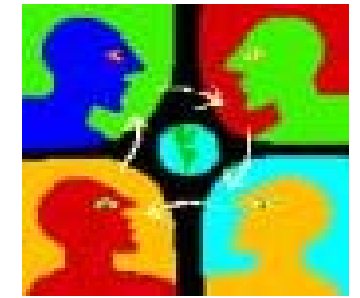


Strategies for Coping with Distressing Voices

Hearing Voices Network Australia

Auspiced by Richmond Fellowship WA



FOCUSING TECHNIQUES

- Accepting that voices are not 'the' problem, they are a consequence of a problem. Your job is to find out more
- Identify your voices—number, gender, age and so on
- Learn about boundaries to apply to people and your voices (i.e., make a deal with your voices, "be quiet now and I'll listen later")
- Listen out for positive voices too—they can be allies
- Schedule a time to listen to the voices and ask them to leave you alone until that time
- Tell negative voices that you will only talk with them if they are respectful towards you
- Voice dialogue—let a trusted family member, friend or mental health worker talk directly to your voices
- Work through Ron Colman & Mike Smith's "Working with Voices II" work book with a trusted family member, friend or mental health worker
- Write down what the voices are saying to you

POSITIVE EMOTIONAL TECHNIQUES

- Go for a picnic
- Listen to energetic music
- Look at good things achieved list
- Look at photo albums
- Look at the list of good things others have said about you
- Make a list of your assets or strengths

- Make an emergency comfort bundle (of goodies)
- Read books, love letters, love poems
- Read joke books / emails
- Say positive statements to self
- Record positive statements on tape (your voice)
- Watch films – comedy or inspirational

POINTS TO REMEMBER TO ENABLE ME TO LOOK AFTER MYSELF:

- Do something nice for 'me' each day
- Eat a healthy diet
- Keep regular appointments with my support network even if I am feeling OKAY
- Look up, get perspective, stretch or shift your body
- Plan my day; ensure I do not have long periods of time with nothing to do
- Reach out. Talk to someone
- Take medication as prescribed (in consultation)
- Think about how I am feeling and be realistic about what I can achieve
- Try to see the grey areas

EMOTIONAL FOCUSING

- Discuss feelings with another person
- List emotional triggers
- Paint / draw emotions
- Rainy day letter
- Write a diary
- Write poetry / prose regarding feelings

THINGS THAT MAY HELP VOICE HEARERS TO COPE

- Acupuncture
- Avoiding street drugs
- Chanting or singing
- Distraction e.g. reading, and computer games
- Focusing on the voices
- Going to Hearing Voices Groups
- Having good support around you, good friends, family, nurse, counsellor etc
- Holidays
- Humour
- Identifying when you are most likely to hear the voices
- Ignoring voices
- Isolating self
- Keeping a diary about them
- Keeping occupied e.g. cooking, house chores
- Keeping physically active and healthy
- Listening to music
- Massage
- Meditation
- Money
- Positive attitudes
- Praying /speaking to God
- Religion/Deliverance and Healing
- Sex
- Shouting at the voices
- Sleeping
- Staff listening to you
- Talking (to a trusted person)

WHAT MAY NOT HELP

- Being over-medicated
- Being told not to talk about voices
- Dreams and trying to get to sleep
- Labelling
- Lack of sleep
- Not having information
- Other people denying the

existence of voices

- Other people denying your explanation of your voices
- Professionals thinking they know more about your voices than you do
- Side effects of the medication
- Thinking negatively
- Being socially isolated

RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

- Acknowledge fear, worry, and stress and let go consciously. Trust
- Count your breaths
- Dancing / walking
- Focus on the position of your body
- Focus solely on breathing / breathe deeply
- Give yourself permission to relax
- Guided fantasy dreamtime
- Learn (figure 8) Yoga breath
- Listen to guided relaxation on tape
- Listen to relaxing music
- Massage hands, feet, head, etc
- Relax each muscle individually
- Swimming / floating
- Yoga

THINGS THAT MAY WORK FOR ME IN A CRISIS

- Ask for help sooner not later
- Create a personalised crises plan when you are feeling well
- Cry
- Find a safe place
- Hand in my medication / blades or other similar items
- Have PRN medication
- Kick boxes around outside
- Let people know where I am
- Let someone know how I am

feeling

- Plan safety
- Remember that situations and feelings frequently change-"This too shall pass" (King Solomon)
- Rest on my bed
- Shout into my pillow
- Try to identify how I am feeling

COMFORTING TECHNIQUES

- Buy / pick fresh flowers
- Change the sheets on your bed
- Cuddle up to a teddy
- Eat a favourite food in moderation
- Have a bubble bath
- Have a soothing drink
- Hold a safe comforting object
- Find a safe space
- Hug someone
- Listen to soothing music / favourite soft music
- Prayer / meditation / creative visualization
- Put lights / radio on (to sleep)
- Sing favourite songs
- Sit in a safe place
- Soak your feet / Radox bath
- Spray room fragrance
- Stroke / brush your pet or someone else's
- Use perfume / hand cream or take a warm bath
- Use pot pourri / essential oils
- Wear comfortable clothes
- Write a diary or talk about how you feel with another person
- Zen seeing (with a friend)

GENERAL IDEAS

- Don't beat yourself up, we all make mistakes
- List achievements
- Make a contract with your voices
- Positive self talk
- Self forgiveness (find yourself innocent)
- Talk to the voices, find out how they feel
- Wear one ear plug

DISTRACTION TECHNIQUES

- Cinema
- Clean or tidy things up
- Do puzzles or develop a hobby
- Exercise – walking/running/dance/beach
- Gardening / striking pot plants
- Listening to CDs / mp3 player
- Paint or draw pictures / posters / cards
- Playing games/cards/computer
- Reading out aloud or hum a tune to yourself
- Sewing / knitting / collecting
- Shopping
- Sports
- Telephone a friend
- Use visual imagery or count to yourself when trying to get to sleep
- Visit a friend
- Walk in shallow water
- Washing
- Watch TV / video
- Write letters

***NOTE: Distraction techniques are useful when voices are particularly distressing or intrusive but are not recommended as an on-going coping technique.**