



# Hearing Voices Network

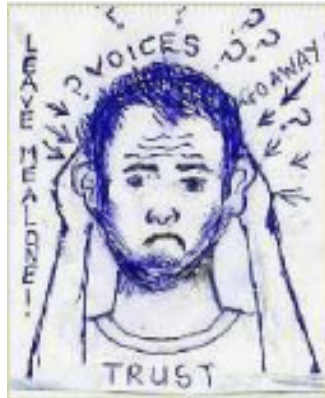
HEARING VOICES NETWORK AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

## A Simple Guide for Relatives and Friends

### WHAT ARE VOICES?

Hearing Voices is more common than people think. However, it can be a frightening experience for both the hearer and those around them, who may be unsure how to react. Research has shown that 70% of people who hear voices can rate the experience to some sort of trauma which has occurred in their lives.

The Hearing Voices Network seeks to encourage people to explore their experiences and develop rational for their voices. This can be a long and difficult experience, which the network supports by offering self help groups for both people who hear voices and their carers, relatives and friends.



Picture from Dundee Hearing Voices Network website

Voices often respond to what is happening around the voice hearer. Therefore, they can tell the hearer that the person they are speaking to is trying to harm them, that their food is poisoned or that something bad will happen if they talk about their voices.

This can lead to feelings of fear and vulnerability, resulting in the person reacting differently to those around them or becoming isolated from others.

All voice hearers are different. What is helpful for one voice hearer could be of no use for another.

### COPING WITH VOICES: HEARING TIPS FROM RELATIVES AND FRIENDS

- Accept that the voices exist, that they are a real experience for the person.
- Try not to interrupt or react critically or defensively to what is being said.
- Do not deny the experience because you feel sorry for the person but encourage them to talk.
- Tackle problems as calmly and objectively as possible.
- Look after yourself; this is extremely important, give yourself some time and space to relax.
- Find out about respite care so you can have holidays.
- Learn to say 'no' when necessary.
- Seek help and support if you need it.
- Reduce your sense of isolation by meeting with others in the same shoes as yourself.
- Offer good listening – this is allowing the person to express their feelings, encouraging them to do so.

### HOW TO EMPOWER THE VOICE HEARER

- Help them to try and think and plan for what they want
- Help them regain a sense of being in charge of their life
- Find out about self help groups and see if you or a friend or relative is interested
- Try to avoid being critical
- Try to offer person warmth and support.



Adapted from the Dundee Hearing Voices Network:  
[http://www.hearingvoicesnetwork.co.uk/simple\\_guide.htm](http://www.hearingvoicesnetwork.co.uk/simple_guide.htm)