

Working with Voices: NAMI PRESENTATION 5/16/2017

Gloria van den Berg: Executive Director Alyssum Inc

I. General Introduction

Hearing Voices can involve a condition of the mind that involves a "loss of contact with reality", difficulty with social interaction and the ability to carry out daily life activities.

Fundamental Voice Hearing Basics: Peer & Trauma Informed Approach

- Only the voice hearer can make meaning and determine direction on healing their voices
- It is SELF-DETERMINED whether or not someone's Voices are problematic
- Voices should be treated as "real" - "Real" Voices can be dealt with as "real" problems.

Benefits of this approach:

- No Stigma
- Hope for Healing
- Validation and self empowerment for the Hearer

II. Medication: Studies and evidence show that medication, although needed at times, is not the panacea it is represented to be

III. Trauma: Studies show that Voice Hearing (psychosis) is linked to trauma:

- Chemical alterations in the brain can be caused by long-term stress resulting from trauma.
- When a person is impacted by trauma the mind has the ability to compartmentalize and store the trauma to be processed at a later time.
- Ongoing suppression, denial or dismissal of trauma can result in the energy of those events gaining mass to such a degree that it becomes overwhelming to the everyday mind and can emerge as Voices or shifts in context or reality.

IV. Healing the Brain: Rewiring and healing the brain can be supported by:

- Love, Community, Environment, Human Connection
- Self determination
- Music, art and nature (avoid negative/jarring music)
- Setting positive and directional intentions
- Releasing energetic blocks in the body's energy system
- Meditation, mind management
- Sleep and rest
- Omega or fish oil supplements

Healing Voices: Gloria's Story - Two Kinds of Voices

Voice Hearers may be separated into two kinds of Voice Hearing; the first, occurring as the result of trauma; the second as a result of spiritual awakening, where trauma may prevent Voice Hearers from successfully re-grounding after a spiritual awakening or emergence

I. Recognizing Voices which result from trauma

- The overall feeling of these Voices (determined by the Hearer) is that "they are part of me or my life". They do not feel foreign or "other" to the Hearer.
- Voices may appear to represent aspects of the Hearer themselves or of family members or others who have had significant relationships with the Hearer.
- Voices may be positive, leading, re-assuring and guiding and/or aggressive and negative.
- Voices vary in age, gender, loudness, form and can be experienced through different senses

II. Recognizing Spiritual Awakening Voices

- Voices may be accompanied by strong surges in energy, which rise and fall in cycles.
- A more expansive consciousness or a reality which is not earth bound
- The Voices determined by the hearer to be "other" - as in from other dimensions of reality (angels, demons, extraterrestrials, etc).
- Great fear and/or paranoia or great euphoria may be experienced
- Total lack of interest in, or engagement with daily life
- Perceived ability to hear the thoughts of other people and to see auras, etc.

III. Working with Voices

A. Identifying Voices (worksheet #1)

- Hearer ascribes identifiers to the Voice - description, name, age, gender etc.
- Hearer identifies whether the Voices are personally related to their life experiences or "Other" and not personally related
- Hearer identifies the primary emotions expressed by the Voice
- Hearer identifies if the Voice is helpful or not
- Hearer describes how the Voice makes them feel
- Hearer identifies which senses are impacted

B. Making Meaning of Voices (worksheet #2)

- Hearer identifies which Voices they may want to be in contact with and which ones they do not.
- Hearer begins to understand or de-code the message the Voice is giving them
- Hearer identifies who (including other Voices) the Voice has a relationship with
- Hearer makes meaning of the "job" or purpose of the Voice
- Hearer identifies any familiar people in their lives whom the Voice may represent.

C. Managing Relationships with Voices (Worksheet #3)

- Hearer establishes how they would like their relationship with the Voices to be.
- Hearer describes how the Voice would like the relationship to be, understanding that the relationship is based on a two way dialogue to determine everyone's needs.
- Hearer identifies and describes when the Voices become active or are triggered
- Hearer learns which Voice is dominant or primary, and how the other voices relate in hierarchy (pecking order).
- Hearer establishes a "meeting schedule" with the Voices for work or quality time
- Hearer begins to establish clarity about their "rights" and boundaries, including time/schedule boundaries and physical or emotional boundaries.
- Hearer engages in a process of "group therapy" within and begins to assume the role of "parent" or primary person to all the Voices.
- Hearer may begin to develop an "inner family" who they rely on for companionship
- Dialoguing with, bartering with or embracing fear based Voices may lead to further disruption and fear
- Learning "mind tools" or visualizations such as: building shields and creating blocks.
- Calling in protection or help however you believe this is available (angels)
- Being aware that thinking about Beings or Voices invites them in

Management Tools:

- Set aside physical space where the work is done
- Engage in "Mitzvah" therapy, the act of helping others will be beneficial and grounding
- Accept the things you can't explain and let go of them
- Learn to trust inner wisdom and "knowing"
- Positive mantras (statements or affirmations) which can be repeated
- Use distraction techniques (puzzles, a movie, knitting, music, etc)
- Support groups with other Voice Hearers are often very helpful.
- Not isolating
- Make art about the meaning or feelings of the Voices
- Integrate spiritual practice or knowledge in your life
- Mind management

VI. Integrating, Letting Go, or Living with Voices (worksheet #4)

- Hearer decides which direction they want to take (whether to integrate, live with, or let go of their Voices)
- Hearer determines how the Voices may be helpful to their life and why they may want to live with their Voices.
- Hearer sets an intention or a plan for achieving their chosen relationship with their Voices.
- Grief and loss may be experienced as the hearer lets go of the story, the relationship and the experience and prepares to move forward without the Voice(s)