Strategies for Coping with Distressing Voices

Hearing Voices Network Australia

Auspiced by Richmond Fellowship WA

FOCUSBING TECHNOQUES
• 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
• Look at photo albums
• Look at the list of good things others have said about you
• Make a list of your assets or strengths

THINGS THAT MAY HELP VOICE HEARERS TO OPEN:
• 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 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

REFLEXATION 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 / Boating
• Yoga

CARING 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 / Boating
• 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
• Fish 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
• Cradle or tidy things up
• Have a soothing drink
• Wear comfortable clothes
• Have one ear plug
• Find a safe space
• Hug someone
• Listen to soothing music / favourite soft music
• Pray / speak to God
• Religion/Deliverance and Healing
• Sex
• Shouting at the voices
• Sleeping
• Staff listening to you
• Talking (to a trusted person)

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
talker
• Paint or draw pictures / posters / cards
• Playing games / cards /
computer
• Reading out aloud or hum a
song to yourself
• Read books, love letters,
poetry
• Look at the list of good things
others have said about you
• Make a list of your assets or strengths

We thank the the Dundee Hearing Voices Network for allowing us to draw on their THINGS THAT HELP VOICE HEARERS TO COPE and WHAT DOES NOT HELP categories. Special thanks to Maria & Audrey for sharing their personal collection of strategies with us and thanks also to all the members of the Hearing Voices Network Australia (including the Bunbury 5 senses group) for their contributions.

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