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www.bayareahearingvoices.org

Vol 2 #5

VCVC: a Valuable Resource in our Toolbox

Communicating with others about our voices and other unusual experiences can sometime be very difficult. We don't feel heard or understood or, worse, feel horrible afterward. Often responses or family members are filled with advice like, 'you should do this' or worse, judgments filled with others' agendas. Often these responses are based on fear that is often unacknowledged. Is there an alternative approach that can actually be helpful?

In our groups we talk about using VCVC in our communication with others. VCVC stands for Validation, Curiosity, Vulnerability, and Community. An example of a validation response is: "That sounds so hard to be hearing a voice that is yelling at you" A validating response is based on empathy, putting ourselves in the other's shoes.

Asking questions from a place of Curiosity is also a valuable tool like asking, "Does the voice sound familiar to you at all?" Or "What was going in your life when you first started hearing voices?" Instead of offering advice, curiosity asks us to just listen. Often that is all that is needed.

Another approach is responding from a place of Vulnerability, for example saying: "In my own life, it has been very difficult to sit with angry feelings, particularly my own." This requires the listener to understand by looking at our own lives. In so doing we might find out we are not so different.

The last resource is Community, asking our friend or loved one, "I am wondering if you would like to talk to other people who have had similar experiences?" Our hearing voices groups are examples of community, wonderful resources that build community for participants, safe places we can return to for support, understanding and help in navigating our sometimes difficult experiences.

Alternatives to Meds

Often when we find ourselves talking to a psychiatrist or in the hospital, the only suggestions we hear to help us usually involve some kind of psychiatric medications and more hospitalizations. Either uninformed or unaware, these “mental health professionals” are ignorant of the myriad of formal and informal supportive actions that voice hearers and others with unusual experiences can take and are alternatives to medications and hospitalization.

Here is a list of helpful suggestions you can check out:

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR). EMDR is a type of therapy with an eight step process, in which the individual is asked to recall traumatic images while the therapist creates a sensory input, such as side-to-side eye movements or hand tapping. This therapy was developed especially for individuals with trauma;

Community

Peer support groups like our hearing voices groups

Expressive arts

Sports and group exercise

Neurofeedback

Music and dance

Peer Respite

Somatic Therapy

This list is from the Wildflower Alliance, home of the Western Mass Recovery Learning Community, a grassroots Peer Support, advocacy, and training organization with a focus on harm reduction and human rights.



TRAINING

When Conversation Turns to Suicide

When Conversation Turns to Suicide is a training for providers, peer supporters, family, friends and others in the community who want to build understanding, and develop skills to aid them in more effectively supporting others who might be struggling with suicidal thoughts.

This training is rooted in the 'Alternatives to Suicide' approach and offers an alternative to more medicalized suicide prevention and related programs. Participants in this training will explore:

- Myths and misunderstandings related to suicide and how to help
- The relationship of trauma, and losses of power and control to suicide
- A framework for support
- Ways to share power in your supporter role
- Ways to take care of yourself both before and after offering support
- How to influence change in suicide prevention policies and beyond

Dates: May 24, May 26, May 31, and June 2 from 12:30-4:30 EST.

Space is limited. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until all slots are full. For more information or to apply e-mail info@wildfloweralliance.org

Working with Hearing Voices and Unusual Beliefs.

6 Session Class With Peter Bullimore & Co, July 2022

Participants in this six session training will learn how to better understand and support people to make meaning of their experiences with voice hearing, and/or unusual beliefs, or what gets called "paranoia." All sessions will be held on Eastern Standard Time.

Tuesday July 12, 10am-2pm: Three Stages of Hearing Voices

Wednesday July 13th, 10am-2pm: Three Stages of Unusual Beliefs/"Paranoia"

Thursday July 14th, 10am-11:30am: Maastricht Interview Overview

Tuesday July 26th, 9am-4pm: Using Maastricht for Voices

Wednesday July 27th, 9am-4pm: Using Maastricht for Unusual Beliefs/"Paranoia"

Thursday July 28th, 10am-2pm: How to Use What's Learned from Maastricht

To register email info@wildfloweralliance.org

HEARING VOICES GROUPS

The Bay Area Hearing Voices Network offers five, online groups Monday-Thursday. To enter the on-line support group meeting go to our website: www.bayareahearingvoices.org and click on the link at the bottom of the page to the Wednesday group.

Monday Meetings:

BAHVN in partnership with Berkeley Mental Health offers separate support groups for adults and family members. The 2 separate support groups meet Mondays from 6 to 8 pm.

Tuesday Meeting:

BAHVN in partnership with [HealthRIGHT360 of San Francisco](#) offers an online adult support group Tuesday evenings from 6 to 8 pm led by trained facilitators with lived experience in the mental health system.

Wednesday Meeting:

BAHVN, in partnership with the [Mental Health Association of San Francisco](#) (MHASF), offers an online adult support group Wednesday evenings from 6-8 pm.

Thursday Meetings:

The HVN-USA Family and Friends Group (friends, lovers, and caretakers) are welcome too) meets online for 90 minutes every Thursday 2:30-4:00 pm PST. To join contact cindy@westernmassrlc.org

Thursday BAHVN Game Night, 5-7 pm:

An on-line weekly night of fun and games. Game play is free of charge to BAHVN adults, TAY, and family members, All attendees are required to open an [account at boardgamearena.com](http://boardgamearena.com), where the game night will be held online. Go to the [BAHVN homepage](#) for a Zoom audio link to Game Night.

The Bay Area Hearing Voices Network is a non-profit 501©3 organization. We seek to expand public awareness, provide community support, and refuge for those who hear voices, see visions, and experience other forms of extraordinary perception. To submit articles contact edherzog48@gmail.com. For more information about us visit our website at bayareahearingvoices.org.