



Bay Area  
Hearing Voices Network  
**Newsletter**

April 2024 | Vol 4 #4

# **Heather Riemer**

We Love You Heather

1964-2024





One of our beloved board members and group facilitators recently passed away. We love her and miss her dearly. She will always be remembered for her kindness and empathy, and her contributions to helping those who hear voices or see visions in their path to recovery.

## **What I Wished I'd Have Known**

By Ed Herzog, BAHVN President

As a family member with a son who hears voices I have many regrets, especially at the beginning of this journey with him. When he told me that he was hearing voices I turned to professionals for guidance instead of listening to and validating my son. They told me the voices were dangerous and that I needed to “babysit him 24/7”.

This exacerbated my fears and anxieties given that I was being confronted with something that I knew nothing about ones that challenged my conception of reality. After a period of time when the voices became more difficult for him he ended up in the psychiatric hospital. This turned out to be even worse. I learned through first hand experience that their focus was on containment

instead of harm reduction or healing. We lost our rights. I lost my voice as a parent, my son was viewed as dangerous. I am sure he felt betrayed by me. And I felt betrayed by the mental health system.

They said he had a “chemical imbalance”. In the United States, the pharmaceutical industry has tremendous power and influence to sway desperate parents. This can lead to many frustrating years of failed approaches. I remember saying to him, “you have a disease like diabetes”. My son was not like a diabetic. He was treated like a guinea pig with treatments with unknown efficacy. Side effects of the medication they gave him were extreme.

I began to investigate alternatives to the medical model, and look beyond the voices as the “problem”. I learned the hard way that invalidating his voices does not work, talking him out of them does not work, and fixing him does not work. I had to acknowledge my own fears, uncertainties, grief, expectations, and beliefs. How might my own anxieties and fears be impacting the situation? What are my own limits?

I started looking for alternatives to the medical model. I joined with other parents, those with lived experiences, and clinicians who were dissatisfied with the choices offered to us. We formed a network and along the way I learned a number of skills to help me and my son:

- Curiosity, validation, vulnerability, and community is more powerful than “fixing”. Saying “Tell me more” works better than saying “You need to do XYZ...” ;
- Share power in the relationship. Learn to let go. Allow your family member to define their concerns and what they want to work on. But realize YOU cannot take responsibility for your child’s path. You cannot walk it for them:

- Build a Network. Create community with other families and voice-hearers that have been impacted to build collective power. Who is \*my\* support system? How am I taking care of myself?

If you are fortunate that your son or daughter reveals to you that they are hearing voices, I hope that you will take the time and look for alternatives to the prevailing medical model that is primarily focused on medication and hospitalization. Check out our website, [www.bayareahearingvoices.org](http://www.bayareahearingvoices.org), the.

HVN-USA website, and our weekly groups offered by the Bay Area Hearing Voices Network as well as in other parts of the country.



## **Redefining Crazy Conference**

After three years of being virtual the 2024 Redefining Crazy: It's the System, Not the People Conference is returning to in-person. The agenda includes best practices in peer support, innovations in mental health crisis response, and a focus on communities reclaiming wellness. BAHVN will have a table there and we hope to see you!

### **TOPIC TRACKS**

#### **Peer to Peer – Weaving Our Own Safety Net**

Share best practices, models, histories, practices, and values that uplift your work with stakeholders & other professionals in the field.

### **Fostering Peer Success – Tools for Every Industry**

Share your organization's expertise, policies, program practices, and challenges supporting staff in their mental health recovery.

### **Peer Responses – Models for Prevention, Crisis & Recovery**

Share your innovative models of support for those experiencing crisis, extreme states, and severe challenges to daily living. Help us develop a better system for those who need it most!

### **Hoarding Disorder & Cluttering Behaviors**

As a peer-run organization, the Mental Health Association of San Francisco (MHASF) is committed to providing free options in a landscape where mental health care is all too inaccessible due to cost. They're happy to offer scholarship opportunities for anyone interested in attending the 2024 Redefining Crazy: It's the System, Not the People Conference who may otherwise be impacted by the registration fees.

## Resources



## HVN Hope-Based Web Site

We are pleased to announce that long-time BAHVN family room member Julia Green has launched a web site to share the books, films, support group info, organizations, and other resources that she has found helpful in embracing HVN's hope-based approach. Julia lives in New York City and is grateful she can connect with BAHVN on zoom even though it means staying up late. Please visit her web site below.

[Visit website](#)

## MHASF Advanced Peer Professional Training!

**WHEN:** April 8 – May 2, 2024  
Monday – Thursday  
8 AM – 12 PM

**WHERE:** Zoom

**COST:** Free!

Advanced Peer Professional Training (APPT) is a brand new CalMHSA-approved Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist training program.

One application unlocks the full suite of services from APPT! You can learn more about APPT here . To learn



## Intl Hearing Voices Congress

The World Hearing Voices Congress 024 will be held in the Danish capital Copenhagen on 26 and 27 September. The theme of the congress is: Reclaiming Our Lives. This annual event brings together voice-hearers, loved ones and other allies in a two-day event that explores and celebrates the diversity of voice - hearing, vision-seeing and related human experiences. It is a space where people from across the world come to connect with, and learn from, one another. The strength of the World Hearing Voices Congress comes from the diversity of people who contribute to it.

[More info](#)

## HVN-USA Facilitator Training

more about Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification, click below.

[Learn more](#)



## Mind Freedom International MAD CAMP

The second annual Mad Camp is scheduled for July 18 – 22 this year at the Four Springs Resort near Middletown, California. Mad Camp is a week-long camp in which people who are in extreme states, are having unusual experiences, are on spiritual journeys, are exploring anxiety and depression, and/or are escaping from, hiding from, or transforming psychiatry can gather together for singing, dancing, cavorting, telling stories, reading poetry, quiet time, meditation, breathwork, hiking, exercise and other kinds of expression.

[Learn more](#)

HVN USA is happy to offer an ongoing mutual support group for people who are currently facilitating HVN groups and for those interested in starting new Hearing Voices groups. This group is happening once-a-month online via Zoom (including a phone-in option), free of charge. Like other Hearing Voices groups it's a place for facilitators to share our stories, challenges and victories, to gain new perspectives and connect with others who may have similar experiences First Friday of each month; April 5, 3 4 EST for more info email [info@hearingvoicesusa.org](mailto:info@hearingvoicesusa.org).





## Hearing voices groups

### Monday meetings

BAHVN offers an online a family and friends and adult support groups Tuesday evenings at 6 pm led by trained facilitators with lived experience in the mental health system.

[Join Monday meeting](#)

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### Wednesday meetings

BAHVN, in partnership with the Mental Health Association of San

### Friday Nights BAHVN Game Night

An online 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, where the game night will be held online.

[More info](#)

### Sunday meetings

We have two Sunday Zoom Group Meetings! Come between 6 and 7 pm PST for an Adult Support Group with Kyle, a recently added BAHVN Facilitator. Between 7 and 8 pm PST is not a support group but is for anyone who is interested in how the voice world works. Attendees will explore the voice world in its entirety and how

Francisco (MHASF), offers an online adult support group Wednesday evenings at 6pm.

[Join Wednesday meeting](#)

the physics of the physical world applies to the voice world.

[Join Sunday meeting](#)

The HVN-USA Family and Friends Group (friends, lovers, and caretakers)are welcome) meets online for 90 minutes Wednesdays 3:00-4:30 pm PST, 6:00-7:30 pm (EST). To join contact [cindy@westernmassrlc.org](mailto:cindy@westernmassrlc.org).



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