

# VOICES, PSYCHOSIS & TRAUMA

## INFORMATION SHEET

### Trauma is one of the most significant predictors of psychosis and voices

Although there are now dozens of studies strongly linking trauma and other major life stressors to voices and psychosis, these links remain under-recognized publicly and in many mental health services settings.

Types of trauma or adversity that have been connected to the development of voices and psychosis include both sexual and physical abuse, bullying, the death of a close family member, and disruptions to childhood relationships such as spending time in foster care



or being abandoned by a parent or caregiver. Structural discrimination (for example racism, racial segregation, and extreme poverty) also have established connections to the development of psychosis,

In addition, many forms of

trauma experienced after a diagnosis can significantly shape the experience of voices, psychosis and/or distress. These include trauma experienced due to involuntary treatment, discrimination and/or social exclusion. See the back side of this sheet for statistics.

A peer's perspective:

*"My voices started when I was a kid, in the midst of experiences of serious abuse, and I always knew they were connected. Other things that happened later in my life have also clearly influenced my voices. However, in my experience clinicians rarely ask me about these connections and I feel like trauma mostly just gets swept under the rug."*

**HEARING VOICES  
NETWORK  
BAY AREA**



*Voices, Visions & Other Unusual or Extreme Experiences*

## Some statistics:

- People who have been sexually assaulted as children are 3.3 times more likely to see visual hallucinations and 3.5 times more likely to hear voices than those who have not (Shevlin et al., 2011).
- Rates of psychosis are significantly higher in certain ethnic minority groups. However, recent research suggests that childhood trauma at least partially mediates this relationship. That is, rates of psychosis are higher *because* rates of childhood adversity are higher (Berg et al., 2015).
- While sexual abuse has been linked most strongly to voices, experiences that disrupt child-parent attachment bonds such as neglect or abandonment, are more strongly correlated with the later development of delusions and paranoia (Bentall et al., 2014).



## The Hearing Voices Movement offers hope, support and alternative ways of working with voices, visions & beliefs.

The **Bay Area Hearing Voices Network** is a regional hearing voices movement group that includes voice hearers, peers, family members and professional allies in the community. Together, we work to change assumptions made about voices and unusual experiences, and to create learning and healing opportunities for people across the Bay Area. At the heart of our approach is the conviction that voices and other experiences are often deeply meaningful and that opportunities to explore meaning are fundamental to healing.

### What we offer:

- Peer and family 'Voices, Visions & Beliefs' support groups
- Trainings, workshops & presentations on group facilitation, the hearing voices movement & alternative approaches
- Events and community gatherings
- A venue for organizing, consciousness raising and cultural change

**Find out more:**

**Visit** [www.bayareahearingvoices.org](http://www.bayareahearingvoices.org)

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