

## Reassurance Program

Tips from our reassurance program

# How to Support People: Hearing Voices

Every day, we provide support to clients through our Reassurance program. Many of our clients are distressed by hearing voices.

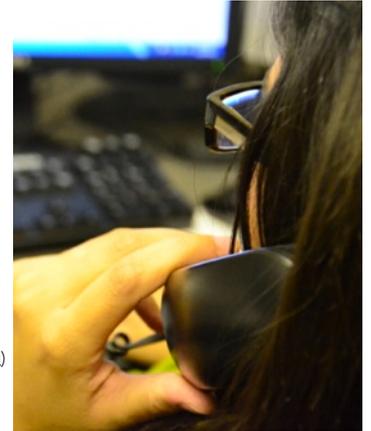
Voices are unlike hearing the voice of a person nearby. The person hearing voices is not responsible for the content of the dialogue and they don't know what the voice is going to say next. You might have experienced something similar when you hear a song in your head over and over.

The voices some people may hear in their mind can speak to the listener all day, and can interfere with daily life. The voice might punish the listener if they don't do what it says (eg. Not leaving a party when the voice tells them to).

[www.intervoiceonline.org](http://www.intervoiceonline.org)

We've experienced this on our lines, one caller told us:

*"My mother's voice is in my head, telling me to kill myself. I am a bad person. I can't get the voice out of my head"*



How can we help callers who hear voices?:

- **Perform mental health "First Aid"**. Be calm, take a deep breath and help them settle their anxiety. Let them know they can take their time. Do a grounding exercise such as where a caller looks around the room and tells you about 5 objects they see.
- **Accept the experience as a reality.** Just because you cannot hear someone's voices, it does not mean the voices are not real. Hearing voices is a very real experience for those who hear them. Validate their experience as real.
- **Help them give up shame and guilt** by being accepting. Understand that there were things that contributed to their thoughts.
- **Help the client link the voices to problems in their lives.** Gently ask about their lives and about current challenges. Helpful questions include:
  - "That voice sounds pretty mean, I can understand why you feel scared. When did you first start hearing it?"
  - "You mentioned that you recently lost your job. Did the voices get more frequent after that?"
- **Be patient.** It takes time for people to feel safe, especially if they feel estranged from family and friends as a result of their illness or are not ready to talk about difficult or shameful experiences.

**Here are some facts about hearing voices** [www.intervoiceonline.org](http://www.intervoiceonline.org):

- **4-10%** of people across the world hear voices.
- **70-90%** of people who hear voices do so following traumatic events.
- Voices can be male/female, child, adult, human or non-human.
- People may hear one voice or many, but one often dominates over others.
- Voices can be heard in: the head, ears, outside the head
- Voices can reflect the hearer's (often unexpressed) emotional state

Hearing voices is just one of many areas we provide support with through our Reassurance Program. Our volunteers provide regularly scheduled phone calls to clients needing emotional support, social interaction, crisis response, community information as well as medication reminders.

**Support is available to adults between the ages of 18 to 55 in Peel Region.**  
**For more information about the Reassurance Program or to register: 905-459-8439 ext. 5**