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NPN.

The influence of the work of Patsy Hage, Marius Romme and Sandra Escher.

The first UK hearing voices group was formed in 1988 in Manchester. It was inspired by the work of Marius Romme and Sandra Escher from Maastricht University in the Netherlands and a Dutch self-help group, Foundation Resonance. In some ways, the origin of the work of the Hearing voices network can be traced back to the partnership of voice- hearer Patsy Hage and Professor Marius Romme.

Many consider Patsy Hage to be the ‘founder’ of the Hearing Voices movement. It was Patsy’s insistence that Marius Romme take her experience of hearing voices seriously that was the impetus for ground-breaking research conducted in the Netherlands.

“I indeed met Marius (Romme) many years ago when I was in a difficult situation. I didn’t like my voices then; I was afraid of them and Marius as a social psychiatrist was willing to talk with me. It was about a year before I could explain ... It took me a year to convince him ... (that my voices were) ... a reality for me, and I must fight them.”

Marius Romme was willing to listen. Apparently, this following statement of Patsy’s made a difference:

“You believe in a god we never see or hear, so why shouldn’t you believe in the voices I really do hear?” (Patsy Hage quoted James in 200, p.31)

At Patsy’s urging, Marius Romme began to listen differently to the experience of voice-hearers and as a consequence decided to create opportunities for people to come together to talk about the voices, their effects and tactics, and the ways in voice-hearers were trying to understand their experiences and cope with them.

In conjunction with Sandra Escher, Marius Romme also decided to conduct research into the experience of hearing voices and this research turned conventional psychiatric understandings on their head...

[In the course of our research] ... “we met a considerable number of men and women who heard voices but had never been psychiatric patients nor considered themselves mentally ill. Nor, for that manner, were they seen as mentally ill by family and friends. When we first met these people, we were quite astounded because, like most psychiatrists and indeed most people, we were used to regarding people who hear voices as mentally distressed. We were forced to change our ideas when we were confronted with well-balanced, healthy people who simply happened to hear voices; voices what were not heard by those around them, and which they experienced as coming from outside.” (Romme and Escher quoted in British physiological society division of clinical psychology 2000, p.g13.)

The research of Romme and Escher continued when they published the highly respected source resource,

‘Making sense of voices: a guide for mental health professionals working with voice hearers’ (2000).

Their research work has involved developing a thorough research questionnaire that many of those within the hearing voices believe to be a helping starting point to therapeutic conversations. This questionnaire elicits a thorough account of each voice-hearer's experiences and history including:

- . The nature of the experience
- . The characteristics of the voices
- . Life history up to the onset of the voices
- . The circumstance of the first onset
- . Triggers
- . The content of the voices
- . Personal theory about the voices
- . The impact of voices on the hearer
- . The influence of the hearer on the voices
- . Coping mechanisms
- . Childhood experiences

. The social network of voice-hearer

. Treatment history

(Romme and Escher 2000, pg.20)

Their work has been influential in a number of ways. Firstly, it has shown that the experience of hearing voices is not a necessary sign of illness or for that matter distress. Secondly, it has created a momentum to encourage health professional to seriously engage with people's experiences of voices.

Where it was once thought that to ask people about their voices was to encourage 'delusions' this is now changing.

Thirdly, links are being made between experience of trauma and hearing voices. A 1987 survey showed that about 70% of respondents had had some traumatic experience which they connected with hearing voices (quoted in Rommes and Escher 2000, p.21). This in turn has significant repercussions for therapeutic practice. As Romme and Escher (2000) describe, this work is inviting a different approach to the experience of hearing voices:

People With Emotional Neglect Think They Need These 6 Things

1. **Self-reliance:** All children naturally go to their parents for emotional support and understanding. What if Mom and Dad aren't able or willing to give it? Emotionally neglected kids learn that asking for help risks disappointment or rejection. As adults, they think their happiness depends on complete self-sufficiency.
2. **To never, ever appear needy or emotional:** To the emotionally neglected person, emotional need equals weakness. If you can't trust your own parents to accept and meet your emotional needs, who can you trust? No one. So, you too often hide your anger, hurt, sadness, or grief. You may even end up stifling your own joy.
3. **To make no mistakes:** It's okay for others to make mistakes or be wrong, as long as it isn't you. You hold yourself to a different, perhaps superhuman standard.
4. **To avoid questions about your feelings:** Does being asked what you are feeling seem like a violation of your personal boundaries? When strong feelings are present, do you try to escape the room?
5. **To have no conflict:** Emotionally neglected people carry a sense of "peace at any price" in

their back pockets. Conflict feels like a major threat to your happiness if you were never taught the skills needed to identify and understand strong feelings. If you don't know how to process or express your emotions, conflicts may feel like just too much for you.

6. **To keep most people at a distance:** “Don’t come too close” may become your silent rule, whether you realize it or not. If someone gets too close, you fear they may see your imperfections. The best way to feel safe and happy may require keeping people from knowing your true self.

What They Actually Need to Be Happy

- **To learn to ask for help and accept it:** Mutual dependence opens the door to happiness. Once help is accepted, it’s empowering. Accepting support from others can feel risky at first, but once that risk is taken, validation, comfort, and consolation will make you stronger, not weaker. You realize that what you always believed about weakness was never true.
- **To accept and realize your needs are valid and real:** Your parents taught you that your emotional needs weren’t valid. You were shown that having needs made you seem weak. That sense was carved in stone for you and has silently steered your life. When you accept the feelings that come up for you, you also accept

your deepest, authentic self. This is a requirement for true happiness.

- **To learn the voice of compassionate responsibility and use it:** If you can say to a friend, “It’s okay, nobody’s perfect,” you can turn that same compassion toward yourself. You know that everyone makes mistakes, and that includes you. Once you accept and own your own mistakes, you can learn from them and grow. Then, you are being accountable and compassionate to yourself.
- **To become comfortable identifying and sharing your feelings:** When you can name a feeling, you take some of its power away, and then you can begin to process it and, if needed, share it with someone else. The more you learn these skills, the more rewarding your relationships will be.
- **To view conflict as a normal part of life:** No one wants conflict, yet it is a fact of life, and it is what helps us grow. Facing conflict is the way to address problems as they happen, allowing your personal power to grow and strengthen your relationships.
- **To let the people in your life get closer to you:** Research shows that human connection contributes the most to human happiness. Close relationships bring warmth and growth and feelings of belonging and safety, all of which lay the groundwork for more happiness.

Change Is Not as Hard as You Think

It all boils down to three simple things: taking risks, embracing change, and doing things that might feel wrong, because of what you learned as a child.

So, you will need courage, motivation, and trust to walk down



the healing path. Courage to let go of old messages and habits, motivation to keep taking steps forward, and trust in yourself to know that you are doing the right thing.

As you take one step forward followed by another, then another, you'll notice a small change followed by another small change. With one

little different action or choice at a time, you'll be inviting your happiness back. The healthy way.

Tactile Experiences & how I cope with them

Many people experience tactile experiences, that is, a feeling that someone or something is actually touching you. In some cases, this touch can seem to be of a sexual nature and can be extremely distressing.

It is perhaps understandable that for each individual or set of circumstances there is no right or wrong way of coping with what is happening to a person. However, I can say I had similar experiences with the sensation that spirits were entering me in a sexual way, I can perhaps discuss what helped get rid of them.

Bear in mind that voices, thoughts and feelings are individual to each person. They are your thoughts and feelings and are individual to you. It is of equal importance to recognise that if you believe this then it is in your power to switch them off.

I will stress that medication has helped me at this point. However, it can only do so much. I did have to work very hard to believe I was responsible for the thoughts or feelings in the first place.

Looking back, I can see how I invited these sensations of “tactile spirits” into my being. I accept that to begin with I enjoyed what was happening to me and how I felt afterwards; sexually, emotionally and physically, it felt good, and I felt okay with it. However, I also felt bad and guilty. Sex is a taboo area. I found it too sensitive an area to talk about with others. There were times I felt out of control by what was happening. It began as a useful way of exploring my

sexual being. Sometimes harmless and sometimes fun; it then became unnatural and uncomfortable. I wanted it to stop. It had become intrusive.

I began having sexual feelings when I didn't want them. I felt hot and cold areas on my body, and I felt "things being done to me". The more I panicked about this the more tactile they became. By now I could hear what they were saying and the names they were calling me. The voices told me I was a "pervert" etc. If I told a doctor all my sexual thoughts, it would be in my notes for all to see. What would my friends and family think of me? The more I tried to get a hold over this the worse I thought of myself.

Talking to friends who understood about my voice hearing experiences assured me I was quite "normal". But there were issues around sex and my own sexuality I needed help with. I took the plunge and went to a psychologist in relation to these and other difficulties.

My belief system is such that the voices are tormenting me about certain issues. These could very well be unresolved issues coming forwards in times when I am most vulnerable. I have a choice. I can deny the experience is a part of me and suppress it. Or I can open it up in a safe environment by myself or with a person who has relevant training, or a close friend I can trust, or both. I kept a private diary/journal to keep note of issues that came up over and over again, I showed this nobody. Issues that I couldn't control or could make little sense of I talked about with people I trusted including the psychologist.

If I felt sexual feelings, I didn't want (usually these happened when I was in bed) I physically changed the position I was in. I put the TV, radio or Walkman on. I kept the journal going at night. I didn't listen to the thought, I also took my medication.

I felt that the medication prescribed was going to help me. It had done in the past and there was no reason why it shouldn't in the future. If you can think positively about all types of coping strategies (even medicated ones) the chances, it will help. When you decide to take responsibility for your own recovery medication can assist in the process.

The mind does play some horrible tricks. For me, it seemed worse after an occasion when I stopped taking the tablets.

My beliefs system was such that these so called "spirit voices" told me really good and interesting things to start off with. They led me to believe I was spiritual and that were from spiritual realms. A lot of the stuff was in fact very informative and very helpful and boosted my level of self-esteem.

However, "bad voices" can deceive in a way that make you think they are "good voices", it's a way of bringing you in to make you listen, be more attentive. As I have found out this can in fact change into something less desirable, I had to stop giving this process credit and recognise it as my own subconscious. That was hard because I wanted to believe the good stuff was from a higher realm and not a way of boosting my ego.

A good friend and spiritual advisor helped me sort out a lot of issues I have mentioned. She felt that it, what I perceived as “the good guys” were “helpful influences” assisting me in a spiritual way they would not be evasive or intrusive. If they are harmful or hurtful they are not “helpful influences”.

Also, if you asked the “good guys” to leave they would go. However, they would not feel hurt or rejected by you. They would know or understand. Be careful at this point not to hold on to these types of voices. At this stage these are your thoughts. Be aware of this. In taking responsibility for your recovery, you have to work hard to change fixed thoughts.

Another suggestion that may also help is essential oils (not altogether) flicked on the bedclothes or around the room. For example, as a calmativ and aid to sleep try 3 drops of yellow mandarin and 1 drop benzoine in an oil burner. Don’t use oils meant to be used in burners in the bath. It must be pure essential oil for the bath.

Tips for coping with distressing experiences

When people first suggested these things to me, I didn’t think any of them would work, because that was the frame of mind, I had set myself. I did have to change the way I was thinking in order for this belief pattern to change itself for the better.

Some tips that may help include:

Keep your sleeping area relaxed and calm. Open the window during the daytime; close it at night to stop you getting cold and if it feels like a relaxed atmosphere, you have a better chance of dozing off.

*If getting off to sleep is a problem, try and keep busy during the day so you feel physically more tired at night. Don't doze during the day. Also buy some relaxation tapes and play them at night or have the radio on quite low.

*Don't drink stimulants such as tea or coffee after 6pm/
Drink alternatives such as decaf or a warm glass of milk.

*Friends that you can perhaps talk to during that day may also help or ring up the Network.

*If I found myself worrying about my thoughts I tried to distract myself by thinking really nice thoughts about others or myself. My friend once told me if you think positively, you bring positivity to yourself. Vice versa if you think negatively about yourself

There are other things such as doing a job for somebody else, so you feel nicer inside. It could be going to post a letter for a neighbour who can't get out, or cleaning for others. Do not wear yourself out to the bone though. There are loads of things like writing a letter or going for a walk in the park, taking control of your life.

Anon

Ways to support someone with paranoia

Consider the following tips on what to do or how to respond to someone experiencing paranoia.

Don't deny their experience

“People living with paranoia usually have a severe conviction of being in danger that others don't necessarily share, and hence it can be very threatening

This doesn't mean that the experience isn't real for them, though.

“Challenging one's experiences in a confrontational manner never ever helps,” this may alienate the person or lead them to be more aggressive, argumentative, and eventually agitated and possibly hostile.”

Remembering paranoia isn't a personal choice try and understand it from their perspective

“Partners and loved ones can help people experiencing paranoia feel seen and supported by not denying their experience or telling them their experience isn't real,”

Finding the balance between not confirming their fears but not denying them either. For example, you can try saying something like “It sounds like you're really scared right now.”

Be kind and understanding

Offering kindness and compassion can reassure them that they're supported and going to be OK, even if they don't feel like it at the moment.

"It's important to remember that paranoia does not summarize the individual," "Don't be afraid to shine a light on what's beautiful in them to help them cope with intense feelings of insecurity, fear, or disappointment that they might have."

To do this mention

- their past accomplishments
- recent milestones they've met
- a notable way they made you feel at some point

Educate yourself about paranoia

Learning about paranoia, including what it is and what it isn't, can help you become more informed as someone trying to offer support.

You can do this by:

- reading articles

- reading books
- Looking for support networks

Ask what you can do to help

Simply ask: “What can I do to help?”

Other questions you can ask them include:

- what song they like
- which TV show they enjoy
- what makes them feel better
- what usually soothes them

Once you learn these answers, you can utilize them to help distract or calm down your loved one.

Reassure their safety

The most important thing to do is to help your loved one feel as safe as possible in the moment — physically, mentally, and emotionally.

To do this, try comforting them through their fears or helping them access relaxation and grounding strategies.

You can also “remind them of a similar experience that happened previously where they were suspicious of someone yet they found out that there was nothing to it and ask them if this could be the case now.”



I'd Wish by Sarah

*If the rain came pouring down
If it made you sigh and frown
Then just to see you smile again
I'd wish the sun to shine instead*

*If your garden was dry and bare
If the sight filled you with despair
Then I would wish upon a star
I'd wish for trees and flowers fair*

*If a fire burned your dreams
If all you had were broken screams
Then just to have you whole once more
I'd wish for you twelve dreams more*

*And if one day you chose to leave
If you left and wrote no more
Then just to see you one more time*

*I'd wish
I'd wish you back again*

The Moon

She hangs aloft pale and shining,
Bathing everything in her happy glow;
She hears her lovers' mournful howl
And turns her face to hide her tears,
Taking the light and leaving shadows instead

The Stars

*The bright pinpricks in the sky sparkle as I gaze at them,
Winking at me like old friends sharing a secret.
I stare back, tracing the familiar patterns over and over
again;
And remembering nights with you when we would lie under
the stars,
Tracing the same patterns and sharing our dreams and
secrets;
Secrets and dreams now only remembered by me and the
distant stars.*

For online Hearing Voices & Paranoia Support Groups, join our online group meetings on ZOOM.

Thursday 3pm -4.30pm with Paul

Meeting ID 88460268952 Password 375878

Sundays: HVN USA on ZOOM 6:30p - 8:00p USA Time with Cindee.

11.30pm – 1.00 am UK Time Meeting ID 827 5463 8654
No Password Needed

Saturdays Texas USA HVN Meeting on ZOOM

10am-11.30 USA Time with Paul

4pm-5.30pm UK Time

Meeting ID 85737775621 No Password Needed

Families/friends can contact

families@usahearingvoices.org for support groups.

Sheffield Hearing Voices & Paranoia Support Group.

The group runs face to face every Monday

11.00am-12.00pm at the Gardner's Rest

105 Neepsend Lane,

Sheffield S3 8AT

Contact peterbullimore@yahoo.co.uk Tel 07590837694

Online Hearing Voices Group in Ireland

An online group for people who hear voices or experience paranoia and unusual beliefs. Please contact derekpwalsh.dw@gmail.com for further information. The group meet every Sunday at 6.15pm over Zoom.

The group link <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81086179561>

Unusual beliefs group St Mungo's

Every Thursday 2.30-3.30

93 Shirland Road, London W9 2EL

Contact Helen Claire Taylor (tayloh15@lsbu.ac.uk)

'Talking Heads' Support Group

runs on every first Tuesday of the month at

Brunswick Centre,

Strand Close off Beverley Road

Hull, HU2 9DB

3pm – 4:30pm.

People with voices/visions and unusual beliefs are welcome. Contact Dan 07816 864727

Doncaster Hearing Voices Group

The Wellness Centre

45 Montrose Avenue

Intake

Doncaster

DN2 6PL

Tel: 01302618507



The Muslim Hearing Voices Group
themuslimvoice.org.uk

Tennessee Voices and Paranoia Collective

Meeting location: Nashville Public Library Bellevue
Branch, 720 Baugh Rd,
Nashville,
TN, 37221

Time: Tuesdays at 3:30 starting on March 4th.

The group will be a hybrid meeting. [Join Zoom Meeting](#)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83043345272?pwd=QkVETKEJ5lZtVz32kUa6xXMWvazdpE.1>

Meeting ID: 830 4334 5272

Passcode: 095416

Join us at Butterflies and Beyond. A new weekly peer support group designed for new parents, parent-to-be and anyone who may have experienced birth trauma.

We will provide a nurturing environment for you to share, learn and heal during your parenthood and pregnancy journey.

What to expect:

- •A friendly discussion in a safe environment
- •Practical support and guidance
- •Sharing experiences and challenges
- •Building community and connection with other parents

All parents and caregivers are welcome. Bring your little ones along. No registration, just come as you are.

Our first session starts on 1st May. We'd love to see you there. For more information contact. lynsey@peoplefocused.org.uk



A weekly peer support group for new parents, parent-to-be and anyone who may have experienced birth trauma.

Join us in a safe space where you can share your experiences and build connections with other parents.

Refreshments provided. Just turn up

Thursdays - 10-11am

Safespace, People Focused Group
45 Montrose Avenue, Intake. DN2 6PL

Maastricht Interview Training for Hearing Voices & Problematic Thought Beliefs & Paranoia Is available online and face to face from the National Paranoia Network.

Training available...

- **How to use the Maastricht Interview for Hearing Voices & Problematic Thoughts**
- **Beliefs & Paranoia**
- **Working through Paranoia**
- **Making Sense of Hearing Voices**
- **Working with Childhood Trauma**

Training can be delivered across the world.
For more information and costings email
peterbullimore@yahoo.co.uk