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**Manchester Early  
Intervention Team –  
Understanding  
Psychosis**

Improving Lives

## Introductions

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## Service

Greater Manchester Mental  
Health Trust

Early intervention for Psychosis  
service  
(14 – 65 yrs.)

## What is Psychosis?



“A condition defined by unusual experiences and sometimes difficulties with reality”

### ***Typical experiences may include;***

- Hearing voices when no-one is there
- Seeing, tasting, smelling or feeling things that others don't
- Holding strong beliefs that others around you do not share

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## Normalisation & Psychoeducation

### **Main principles:**

- Greater understanding
- Relate to common responses
- Minimise distress
- Instils hope

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- Overall, around one in six adults (17%) surveyed in England met the criteria for a common mental disorder in 2014.  
- *Adult survey of Mental health & Wellbeing, England (2014)*
- Up to 10% of people will at some point in their life hear a voice talking to them when no-one is there  
- *Johns (2014)*
- There are probably 500,000 people in the UK with a diagnosis of Schizophrenia. A similar number to bipolar disorder.  
- *Schizophrenia Commission (2012)*

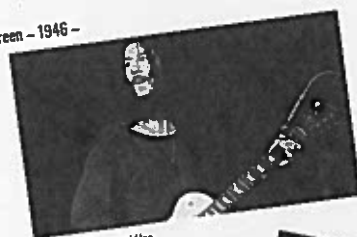
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Vinnie Jones (English Footballer & Actor)

John Frusciante  
(Guitarist, ex Red Hot Chili Peppers)

Peter Green - 1946 -



Guitarist and Founder of Fleetwood Mac  
Age of 19 (September 21)

Zinedine Zidane (French Footballer)

Vincent van Gogh - 1853 - 1890



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Any you can think of and would like to share?

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Normal



Abnormal

Research also suggests that nearly one in three people hold at least one belief that might be considered paranoid: 'paranoia is so common as to be almost normal'. Bebbington, et al. 2013.

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It all started when I became depressed and emotionally unwell after the breakup of a relationship

I reacted to the breakup in what could be seen as an unhealthy way; I threw myself into working harder, longer hours, isolated myself from friends and family and put myself in a stressful position by starting my own business.

I found myself working non-stop, never took days off and worked tirelessly through the nights, leaving myself with little sleep. When I did get my head down, I would bury it deep in the pillow and cry night after night. I was drained, overloaded and lonely, feeling like I had nobody to turn to for help.

After 18 months of this stressful cycle, things got worse, I became erratic, unstable and irritable. I started thinking I was being sent signs and messages from angels and God telling me to do things. I started hearing voices that were guiding my every move. I believed what I was experiencing was spiritual and began telling people I was psychic. I crashed my business van because I thought angels were telling me it could fly.

The psychosis continued for over a year, I was hospitalised several times, my business was ruined, I was in debt and my future seemed bleak.

But now, two years since my first admission, things are much better. My medication has helped, so has the continuous support from EI. I help my symptoms by cooking, taking walks and doing lots of art. I've been working part-time and hope to return to full-time soon. I've learnt that recovery is an ongoing process that takes time and patience.

Naddine, 29

Example from  
our service



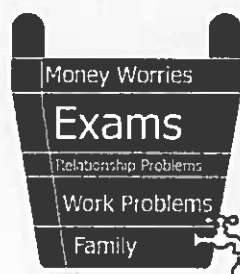
## Trauma, Abuse and Psychosis

NOT "What's wrong with you?" - - - - > BUT "What happened to you?"

- Recent research has begun to focus on the similarities between psychosis and PTSD
- In one study of a psychiatric inpatient population – 63% of people had experienced domestic abuse in the year before admission (Cascardi et al, 1996)
- Holowka et al (2003) – 85% of adults with a diagnosis of Schizophrenia had experience of some form of child abuse or neglect
- Read & Argyle (1999) – Hallucinations occur in 53% of people who experienced Child Sexual Abuse (CSA), 58% of people who experienced Child Physical Abuse (CPA) and 71% of people who experienced both
- Read et al (2004) – Paranoid delusions present in 40% of survivors of CSA
- Several studies have found a "dose-effect" relationship – so the more severe/frequent the abuse, the more severe the psychosis

## Stress Vulnerability Model

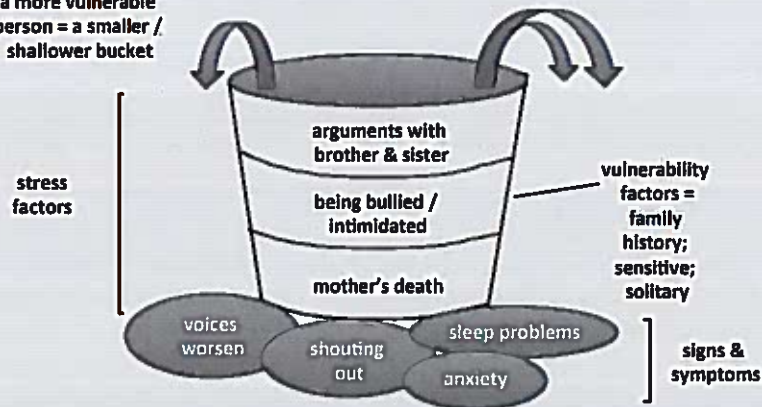
The stress bucket – Brabban & Turkington, 2002



We all need  
a tap to  
release the  
pressure

### **more vulnerable = a shallower bucket**

a more vulnerable person = a smaller / shallower bucket



John Butler 2014

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## When to use it?

- Mindful of consistently
- When building rapport/engagement with clients
- New clients
- When clients are drawing unhelpful conclusions about their mental health (e.g. "I'm going mad")

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## Caution?

Don't indicate to clients that their unusual and unsubstantiated beliefs are actually factually correct.

Be aware that by providing an alternative explanation to what they hold you're not being dismissive.

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## Questions?

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## Section 2: How common are these experiences?

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### Key points

These experiences are common: up to 10 per cent of the general population hear voices at some point in their life, and very many people have beliefs that those around them find strange.

Whilst these experiences are very distressing for some, others have similar experiences but don't come into contact with mental health services because they don't find them particularly distressing.

Some people see them as helpful or even as spiritual experiences.

As we explain below, the idea that these experiences are symptoms of mental illnesses is a controversial one. Nevertheless, until recently much research published in academic journals was based on this assumption, and so the only estimates available tend to be numbers of people who have received a certain diagnosis. The past decade, however (since, indeed, the publication of our first report),<sup>1</sup> has seen a steady increase in research exploring individual experiences such as hearing voices.<sup>2</sup> Researchers have also discovered that many people will not be counted in any figures because they do not find their experiences distressing and therefore do not seek help from mental health professionals.<sup>3</sup> However, much research still relies on psychiatric diagnoses given to people who come into contact with services. Common diagnoses given to people who have these sorts of experiences are schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Other terms that people might have encountered are: paranoia, psychosis, psychotic illness, delusional disorder, schizoaffective disorder, manic depression and psychotic depression.

### **2.1. How many people have 'psychotic' experiences? How many are given a diagnosis of schizophrenia?**

These experiences are quite common. Up to 10 per cent of people will at some point in their life hear a voice talking to them when there is no-one there.<sup>4</sup> About one person in every hundred receives a diagnosis of schizophrenia, so there are probably about 500,000 people in the UK who have received the diagnosis. A similar number of people receive a diagnosis of bipolar disorder (also known as manic depression).<sup>5</sup> As we will make clear later in this report, there is a very great deal of variability in these figures – people's life circumstances affect both how likely they are to experience certain problems, and also how likely they then are to receive a certain diagnosis.

### **2.2. People who do not use mental health services**

A number of surveys have revealed that many people hear voices regularly. Most of these people have never thought of themselves, or been thought of as mentally ill.<sup>6</sup> The main thing that appears to distinguish them from those who come into contact with mental health services is the extent to which they, or those around them, find the experience distressing or frightening. For example, someone might go to a doctor if they or their family members are worried that their beliefs or



experiences might lead them to do something risky.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, a large proportion of the general population holds beliefs that others might consider unusual or paranoid, for example beliefs about alien abduction, ghosts or telepathy.<sup>8</sup> As we explain later, people's experiences vary in nature, frequency and intensity, and appear to lie on a continuum. In other words, many of us occasionally have puzzling experiences or hold some beliefs that others regard as peculiar or eccentric. Relatively fewer of us have frequent or severe experiences, or beliefs that others find strange and worrying.

### People who have psychotic experiences but don't come into contact with services

When you can't find a way out when you get into a complex situation, they (voices) help guide you. You don't have to listen, you don't have to take their advice but it's nice that they give it anyway.

Karen <sup>9</sup>

Many people who have these experiences feel that they are very significant in their lives. Some people believe that they have religious or spiritual significance. Some explain them in terms of supernatural or religious forces, or see them as giving them a deeper understanding of, or insight into the world.<sup>10</sup>

### Psychotic experiences and spiritual experiences

There are people who have developed a very positive relationship with the experience of hearing voices, and have managed without any psychiatric treatment or support. They have adopted a theoretical frame of reference (such as parapsychology, reincarnation, metaphysics, the collective unconscious, or the spirituality of a higher consciousness) which connects them with others rather than isolating them: they have found a perspective that offers them a language in which to share their experiences. They enjoy a feeling of acceptance; their own rights are recognised, and they develop a sense of identity which can help them to make constructive use of their experiences for the benefit of themselves and others.

Marius Romme & Sandra Escher <sup>11</sup>



Information regarding 'intrusive thoughts' in the general population

- Studies have reported that between 41% and 99% of the general population experience some sort of intrusive thought(s)
- Studies have found that people are most upset by thoughts that are about: i) harm (e.g. running the car off the road, hurting themselves), ii) accident (e.g. leaving the house without doing something important) and iii) unacceptable sex (e.g. sex against their own preference)

Most common types of intrusive thoughts in the general population

Thought	Frequency (%)	
	Men	Women
Strangers naked	80	51
Having sex in a public place	67-78	49-55
Home unlocked/intruder	69	77
Heat/stove on, accident	66	79
People around me being naked	63	44
Having sex with an 'unacceptable' person	63	48
Having sex with an authority figure	62	38-51
Insulting a stranger	59	50
Running car off the road	56	64
Insulting family	55	59
Hitting animals/people	54	46
Authority figure being naked	53	42
Swerving into traffic	52	55
Disgusting sex act	52	43
Hurting family	50	42
Breaking wind in public	49	31
Insulting authority	48	34
Hurting stranger	48	18
Doing something during sex upsetting to partner	47	23
Jumping off high place	46	39
Saying something upsetting to partner during sex	46	39
Kissing authority figure	44	37
Catching an STD	43	60
Breaking window	43	26
Scratching car paint	43	26
Causing a public scene	43	47
Bumping into people	43	37

Information from Byers et al (1998) and Purdon & Clark (1993)

