

## Resources:

### **Rethink Careers Support**

C/O Day Resource Centre  
Bedford Health Village  
3 Kimbolton Road  
Bedford  
Bedford  
MK40 3JR

Tel: 01234 310 035

Website: <http://www.rethink.org/>

### **Hearing Voices Support Group**

A support group for voice-hearers that meets every week 12:00 – 13:00 at the Day Resource Centre, Bedford. For more information please contact John Wiper or Jackie Mugridge on 01234 310 044

### **Hearing Voices Network**

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor 79 Lever Street  
Manchester  
M1 1FI

Tel: 0845 122 8641

Web site: <http://www.hearing-voices.org/>

### **Mind**

The National Association for Mental Health in the United Kingdom campaigns on behalf of those with mental illness.

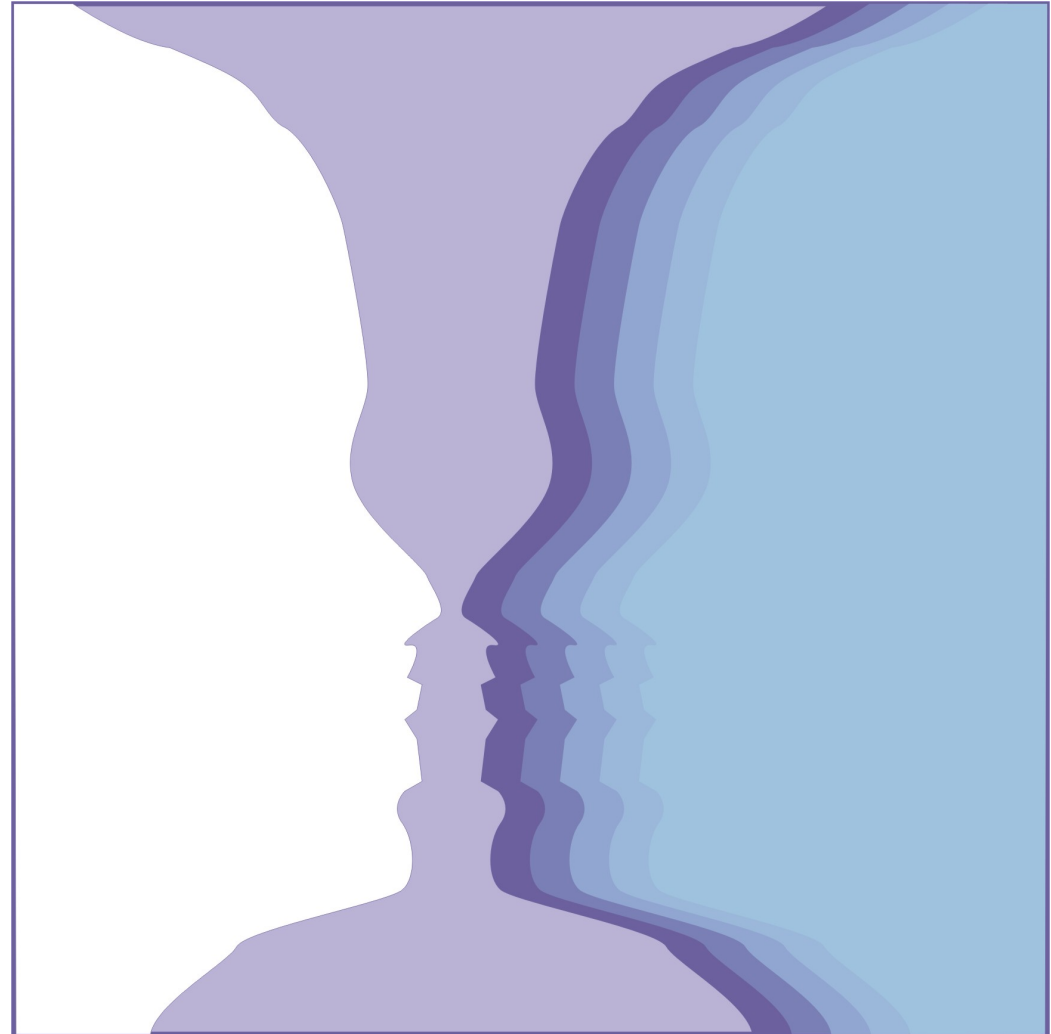
Website: <http://www.mind.org.uk/>

### **Intervoice**

Articles about people who can cope with their voices or even have positive experiences.

Website: <http://intervoiceonline.org/>

## **Voice Hearing:** Information and tips for friends, family and carers



*Produced by: John Wiper and Jackie Mugridge, with thanks to The Hearing Voices Support Group.*

Hearing voices (sometimes medically termed as auditory hallucinations) is regarded as a symptom of conditions such as schizophrenia, manic depression and psychosis. However the experience of hearing voices is NOT confined to people who are in contact with mental health services or who have a diagnosis of mental illness.

Hearing voices is a common experience for many people, especially in certain situations:

- After prolonged lack of sleep – for example exhausted mothers of new born babies often report clearly hearing their babies crying only to find them sound asleep.
- After traumatic events – people who have experienced very frightening or distressing events such as sexual, physical or emotional abuse commonly report hearing voices. Soldiers often report being troubled by various experiences (e.g. Hearing shouting, explosions, gunfire) years after being involved in conflict.
- In situations where people are isolated from the outside world – for example prisoners in solitary confinement or people alone at sea.
- As with other illnesses we all have our own unique level of vulnerability to developing mental health issues. This is determined by genetic and early biological factors such as physical illness. Also early life experiences and alcohol and drug use. Stress has an impact on vulnerability that can then trigger the onset.

According to one study 55% of the 'normal' population hears voices at some time in their lives. **3% (6 in every 200) of the population hear voices regularly but most do not enter the psychiatric services** (Hearing Voices Organisation, 2005).

**To put this in to perspective 0.5% (1 in every 200) in the UK suffer from epilepsy.**

Offer warmth, support, love and laughter...and look after yourself. Contact carers' support to reduce your own sense of isolation.

## Famous people who heard voices

### Answers

- 1 Ghandi
- 2 Karl Jung
- 3 Winston Churchill
- 4 Jesus
- 5 Anthony Hopkins
- 6 Socrates
- 7 Emanuel Swedenborg
- 8 Moses
- 9 Zoë Wannamaker
- 10 Teresa de Avila
- 11 Joan Of Arc

*"During the days when I was living alone in a foreign city - I was a young man at the time - I quite often heard my name suddenly called by an unmistakeable and beloved voice"*

Sigmund Freud (1901-1966)

## What helps?

Hearing voices may seem alien to you but can you think for a moment about any experiences you have had that have no logical explanation? Have you ever had an annoying song stuck in your head, or experienced déjà vu? Have you experienced nightmares or sleep walking? Clairvoyants claim to hear the voices of the dead and mediums can tell you your future. Accept the voices exist, that they are a real experience for the person. Do not try to deny the experience. Saying things such as "that isn't real its all in your mind" will only cause more distress.

Find out as much information as you can about voice hearing. Ask the voice hearer about their own experiences - they are after all the expert.

Sometimes the voices can be critical or give the individual unreasonable demands. They may tell the voice hearer that they are useless, worthless and should kill themselves. This can have a profound effect on self-esteem and leave the voice hearer feeling powerless. In this context the voices are like bullies. Bullies get strength by silencing their victims and isolating them.

Be a good listener. Encourage the voice-hearer to talk about their experiences and also about normal everyday stuff. Communication will help people to accept their voices, improve confidence and reduce the sense of isolation.

Give credit for small achievements – show appreciation. Try not to be critical or too over protective. Encourage them to make plans, goals and to take control of their lives.

Encourage some activity or social contact every day. They may wish to be alone however this can sometimes have a negative effect.

Try to work out together what helps and make plans around this. Offer practical help like helping out with housework or shopping. Reduce stress in the family by tackling the causes.

## What do we know about common features of Voices?

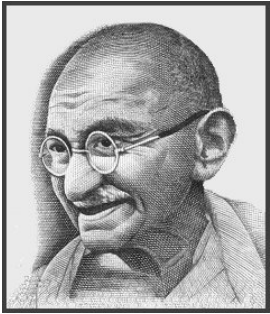
Whilst voices feel very personal to the voice hearer, people who hear distressing voices often share the following experiences:

- Often voices first start during a difficult time in a person's life, and existing voices get worse. Examples of these difficult times include times of change (leaving home, starting university or work), times of loss (bereavement, end of a relationship, unemployment); ongoing stressful situations (stress at work, money or housing issues, being in a highly critical or abusive relationship).
- Voices are often most frequent, distressing or difficult to cope with when people are tired stressed, physically unwell, alone or with no support, or feeling bad about themselves.
- Voices often seem to be linked to things in the voice hearer's life. For example they may sound like someone known to the voice hearer. Often they make statements which may be similar to the individuals own feeling or fears, or they may refer to things which are going on in the individuals life.
- The way in which the voice hearer copes with their voices and their beliefs about them relate to their level of distress. Therefore it is the coping with the voices that is the problem and not the voices themselves.
- Research has shown that there are many people who hear voices, some of whom have never had psychiatric intervention, who cope well and find it a positive experience, inspirational and comforting.

# Famous people who heard voices

Can you match the pictures to the names of these famous people who heard voices?  
The names are written below

1



**Non-violent leader of Indian independence**

2



**Founder of Analytical Psychology, Psychiatrist**

3



**British Prime Minister**

4



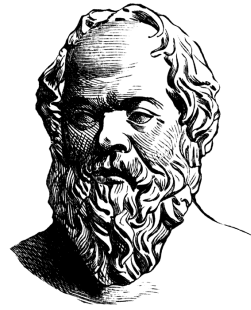
**Son of God (Christian)**

5



**Oscar winning Actor**

6



**Greek Philosopher**

7



**Scientist, Philosopher & Theologian**

8



**Hebrew Liberator**

9



**Stage, Television & Film Actor**

10



**Reforming Nun and patroness of Spain**

11



**Military leader, Saint!**

**Joan of Arc, Teresa de Avila, Sir Winston Churchill, Gandhi, Anthony Hopkins, Jesus, Karl Jung, Moses, Socrates, Emanuel Swedenborg, Zoë Wannamaker**