

## **VOICE HEARING: A QUESTIONNAIRE**

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This questionnaire was originally designed as a research tool to elicit information from people who hear voices. It has proved to be extremely useful in getting a much fuller picture of the shared experiences of voice hearers and the results have subsequently been used to develop a range of coping strategies that can help voice hearers to come to terms with their experience.

As a result of using this questionnaire, we discovered that as well as its value for research, it also proved to be a good way of beginning the process of exploring the voice experience for individual voice hearers - and - as a means of developing the confidence of mental health workers who want to work with voice hearers.

It is important to stress that this questionnaire was developed by voice hearers in partnership with mental health professionals and that voice hearers are regarded as being the experts and full partners in the process of finding solutions to the difficulties that hearing voices can sometimes cause.

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## Hearing Voices: A structured questionnaire

### Introduction for voice hearers:

This questionnaire has been designed for people who hear voices. It is intended to help you to understand your experience better. It is our view that your voice hearing experiences gives you knowledge and expertise that no one else, other than voice hearers, can possibly have. Therefore we would like to ask you to share this knowledge by completing the questionnaire so that we can all achieve a fuller understanding of what these experiences mean. If you are exploring your voice experiences with someone else, such as a friend, therapist or mental health worker, then filling in this questionnaire could be a way to help them understand what is happening to you.

We are particularly interested to find out in what circumstances you hear voices and what methods you use to cope with them. We want this questionnaire to be useful, not only to the person who fills it in, but also to other voice hearers. For instance, perhaps you have devised a method that enables you to overpower the voices, if so, it might be possible to teach others to do the same. For this reason the results of the questionnaire are being used for our research into voices and we would like to ask your permission to use your completed questionnaire for this purpose. We would also like to be able to contact you again should we need to ask you to clarify any of your answers. We want to be able to do this so that we get all the facts right, which is very important in research work. After completion, a summary of the interview will be given to you for your own use. Your identity and other information about your experience will be confidential and only used with your consent.

Since the interview is a long one (it can take a minimum of one and half hours to fill in, sometimes longer) and the questions require you to think a lot about your experience, you may want to conduct the interview over two sessions, rather than one. Please feel free to let the interviewer know if you are getting tired or upset and the interview can be continued at another session.

I give my permission for the completed questionnaire to be used for research purposes, we will request your expressed consent to publish any of the information you provide in this questionnaire for any other purpose (for instance publishing extracts of your responses for use in providing helpful information to other voice hearers).

YES/NO

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Contact telephone number/address

**Information for interviewers:**

This questionnaire has been designed to increase knowledge and awareness of the voice hearing experience. It can be used as a way of opening up discussion about voices with someone you are working with, as the interview can encourage and stimulate dialogue about the voices. For some voice hearers, this could be the first time that they have talked about their experience and for many it will be the first time this has been done in a structured and considered way. The voice hearer may disclose information that may have been unknown to you or to any service working with them. Therefore, the interview is a potentially intense experience for the voice hearer and interviewer and it is necessary to consider the availability of follow up support (such as someone to talk to, a telephone number to call, availability of supervision for the interviewer etc.). It could be that the voices become more active or angry as a result of the interview. It is our experience to date, however, that this is rarely a problem and that most voice hearers find the questionnaire an enjoyable and positive experience as it provides a safe and structured way to talk about their voices. The questionnaire can also be a way of building trust between the voice hearer and the person they are working with and can create favourable conditions for further discussion and action about how to cope with the voices, such as joining a self help group and developing other coping strategies. The interview should be conducted in a mutually acceptable place, it should feel safe, quiet and be free from interruptions. If you have not previously met the voice hearer or only know them slightly, it would be valuable to hold a preliminary meeting to explain the purpose of the questionnaire and to answer any questions the respondent may have, this helps to build trust. This pre-interview should be unstructured and informal, although in answering the questionnaire itself it is important to follow the question format. This questionnaire has been designed for adults (over 16 years), if required there is a specific questionnaire for children which can be obtained from the address below. Please ensure a summary of the completed questionnaire is given to the respondent.

If you would be prepared to share your completed questionnaire with INTERVOICE to help with our research please send to, all information will be treated with the strictest confidence: Paul Baker at [admin@intervoiceonline.org](mailto:admin@intervoiceonline.org)

## Hearing Voices: A structured questionnaire

Please answer the following questions, if there is information that you do not wish to disclose then you of course have the right to say "I do not wish to answer".

### 1. PERSONAL INFORMATION

Age: 66

☒ Male ☐ Female

Marital status: single

Children: 0

Employment status: DSP  
(not in workforce)

Nationality/Ethnic origin: Australian

### 2. ASPECTS OF THE EXPERIENCE ITSELF

This interview is intended to encourage a dialogue about your experience. This interview will enable us to learn a lot more about your experience and the way you cope with your voices.

2.1 I would like you to give me a broad view of any extraordinary or bizarre experiences you have had recently or in the past.

When I was doing radio work, sent out a CB call out  
Heard my voice come back to me.

2.2 How many voices do you hear? 2

At what age did you first hear the voices? - 1st voice - 15 on; went at 32  
other 2 started immediately after. was delirious at the  
time the 2nd 2 voices started.

Number of voices (2) now (1) at the start

Your age when they began (15) years old

2.3 Can these sounds/voice(s) also be heard by other people

yes ☒ no

Can you explain why/why not?

they sound like they're from over my left shoulder  
But I know there's nobody there.

"I'm crazy they're not"

They must be coming from me because they  
react to my circumstance at the time.

(voices responded 'we're here for the long haul;  
4 probably think I can't get rid of them. Because  
I'm not clever enough)

## Hearing Voices: A structured questionnaire

2.4 Where are the sounds/voice(s) coming from (where are they located)?

Now *over the left shoulder; behind me*

At the start - *little female voice (#1) was in front of me.*  
*1st speak in her voice then respond in mine*

Are they:

In your head

yes/no

Through your ears

yes/no

Somewhere else within your body

yes/no

The voices appear to come from somewhere outside your body

yes/no

2.5 Concerning the voices you hear:

2.6 Are these voices coming from you or do they come from someone else? *They must be coming from me.*

(We are trying to establish how the voice hearer perceives their voices (me/not me) when they are experiencing them)

The voices are coming from within myself (ego-syntonic/me)

Yes/No

The voices are coming from someone else - or - something outside myself (ego-dystonic/not me)

Yes/No

Can you explain why? *No*

*I've asked why they can't go away. - They say 'you can try beating us up but we'll still be here in the end'*

2.6 Are you able to carry on a dialogue with the voices or communicate in any way with them?

Yes/no

Can you give an example?

*When I'm worried about something, they chime in with my worries + I'll go back & forth in dialogue; speak it when by myself.*

2.7 Do you ever have any other unusual experiences such as visions, altered states of perception, out of body experiences etc? If so, would you please describe them: -

*For a long time I couldn't look in a mirror as frightened of what I might see. (the demons) as when sitting, catch something out of corner of eye*

*5 Visions of demons when unwell*

*Makes me feel better if I speak it out loud. - as things become clearer when speaking the issue out loud*

## Hearing Voices: A structured questionnaire

### 3. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE VOICES

3.1 Do you hear one or more voices?

How many? *2*

Has it always been like this? *No*

Has the number of voices ever changed? *Yes.*

Number of voices at the beginning

*(1) - female, friendly, helpful*

Number of voices heard now

*(2) - male + female; not friendly*

3.2 Are you able to indicate who the voices belong to and/or the names you have given to the voices

no	name	age	gender	contents/tone	frequency
1	<i>bikie</i>	<i>50s</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>swears/abuses me</i>	<i>once/twice/day to constant</i>
2	<i>offsider</i>	<i>40s</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>she makes the</i>	<i>"</i>
3				<i>negative statements</i>	
4					
5				<i>"you're useless;</i>	<i>(hear them</i>
6				<i>drive off the road"</i>	<i>together)</i>
etc					

3.3 Does the manner or tone of the voices remind you of someone you know or used to know?  
If yes, who?

*I've never known any bikies*

*I don't know negative people like that.*

3.4 The number of times you hear voices and the amount of time they take up, may vary from day to day, however, can you tell me:

On average how many times a day (over a 24 hour period) do you hear your voices?

*6 times per 24hrs - from calling my name to tirade of*

How much time of the day do they take up? *circumstance;*

*2 hours per day*

*Most difficult is when they're whispering & struggle to understand what they're saying.*

## Hearing Voices: A structured questionnaire

### 4. YOUR PERSONAL HISTORY OF VOICE HEARING

4.1 Let us return to the time when you first started to hear voices.

How old were you when you first heard voices (age)?

I was 15 years old.

How many years or months have you been hearing voices? - 50

1. told conversation w. her; trying to work something out; ask for  
clues to resolve something. when she went, I lost all my confidence  
2 or 3. over 2 voices - the worst part of me.

4.2 Can you describe the circumstances when you first heard them? (please describe what happened with each voice)

4.3 We have put together a list of the kinds of circumstances that other voice hearers say they experienced before they heard voices.

These kind of life events may also have happened to you, do you recognise any of them as being similar to your own experience?

What age were you when this event occurred? 15

#### circumstances

The result of a serious physical injury or a serious illness

no yes - high fever  
(not delirious)

An admission to a general hospital or being given an anaesthetic

yes/no - age and year

Living on your own for the first time

yes/no - age and year

Following:

A divorce or the break up of a close/intimate relationship

yes/no - age and year

The first menstruation or a pregnancy/abortion

yes/no - age and year

A major decline in the health situation of a loved one

yes/no - age and year

Admission to a psychiatric hospital

yes/no - age and year

Changes in employment status (starting work, change of job, promotion)

yes/no - age and year

Loss of employment status (retirement, redundancy, unable to work)

yes/no - age and year

After:

The death of a close friend or family member

yes/no - age and year

Beginning a course of study

yes/no - age and year

7

School certificate - worried me a bit.  
7th yr exam - so didn't do school. →  
commuted from coast to Homebush.  
Pressure from study.

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You found yourself unemployed/fired/redundant

yes/no - age and year

Falling in love and being rejected

yes/no - age and year 17

A move to a new residence, school or college

yes/no - age and year 15

Problems within a religious community or other spiritual sect

yes/no - age and year

Attending a séance, satanic ritual, spiritual event

yes/no - age and year

Being present at a suicide or contemplating/attempting suicide

yes/no - age and year

During severe tension in your home or within your relationship

yes/no - age and year

When a child left home/ or the last child left home

yes/no - age and year

4.4 Are one or more of these circumstances related to the fact of you hearing voices? If so, could you describe how?

Seance

Closer to 17, had a relationship - unrequited love. When I got sick years later I was in a similar situation (age 32) - undermined my understanding of people - didn't know how I should react.

16 - attended a seance; all hold hands. Something happened. I was talking nonsense & when it stopped I had a pounding headache for days. Other people were taken aback. Similar to when I got unwell at work; I was delirious. I was channeling, I was talking but not English. Gibberish. I was vocalising the voices.

15 moved to Union for 12 mos then moved into new house. episode - lost the use of my left side.

At rifle range waiting

Hyperventilated & lost O<sub>2</sub> supply.

Ambulance gave me O<sub>2</sub> → release Ca into system, which impeded movement in left side.

Restricted use of left leg for 10-14 days

When I got sensation back, took 2 yrs to fully recover

Study stress - never good at exams. Stress. Big black wall coming up. Only maths exam I passed. Temp of 41-42

8 moving - future shock; too much & too quickly. - was at same time period. A tremendous reach to my life.

No idea what I wanted to do; exhausted 20 commuting. Studying was hard; not getting home till 7pm; Leave at 6:10am.



## Hearing Voices: A structured questionnaire

### 5. WHAT TRIGGERS THE VOICES?

5.1 Have you noticed whether the voices tend to be present when you take part in particular activities or that they arise in certain kinds of circumstances? Can you describe what these are?

*Trying to retrieve information; take every opportunity to have a go at me. If I'm getting angry - more pronounced.*

5.2 Have you noticed whether the voices are present when you feel certain emotions? Check the following list, do they occur when are experiencing emotions such as:

- ☒ insecurity
- ☒ jealousy
- ☒ fear
- ☒ grief
- ☒ doubt
- ☒ fatigue - defence as less
- ☒ in love
- ☒ depressed or sad *more frequent*
- ☒ anger or depression
- ☒ happiness
- ☒ your own sexual feelings
- ☒ loneliness
- ☒ the sexual feelings of others
- ☒ powerlessness

Can you describe how the voices react? (For instance are they comforting and helpful or frightening and unhelpful?) Do they have an effect on the emotion you are feeling, for instance making you more or less depressed - or - more or less happy.

*More or less depressed -*

*Use colourful adjectives to run me down.*

*Make me more angry in them but less angry in the world.*

5.3 Are you hearing the voices now?. If so, are the voices commenting on this questionnaire, what are they saying?

*Not right now*

*Yes. Saying 'I'm going away but I*

*won't be coming back. They seem to think that something will happen while I'm away & I won't be the same as I am now.*

*I think they're just trying to get at me.*

*Planting seeds that things won't go well.*

## Hearing Voices: A structured questionnaire

### 6. WHAT DO THE VOICES SAY?

6.1 Do you hear positive (friendly) voices? What do they say; what do they do? Give an example.

originally - 15yo - 32 - friendly female voice  
Had discussions w/ her; positive suggestions;  
helped in problem solving

6.2 Do you hear negative (unfriendly) voices? What do they say? What do they do? Give an example.

Negative voices started when in hospital in FEP.  
Told me to harm myself; run me down; swear at me.  
over & over → doubt. eg. your life's a waste; will never amount to anything.  
eg. run off the road; that tele. pole has your name on it

6.3 Do the voices talk about specific subjects/persons? Can you describe them? What do the voices say? Do these subjects interest you as well?

about me; in unflattering way.  
Negative  
→ gets me down.

### 7. WHAT INFLUENCE DO THE VOICES HAVE ON YOUR WAY OF LIFE?

We would like to ask you what kind of influence the voices have on you:

7.1 Are you afraid of the voices? Why? Have you always been afraid? Please give an example.

wouldn't like to meet them.  
yes; rough angry persona. always been afraid of them.

7.2 Do the voices upset you? How do they do this? Please give an example.

yes. Seems I'm never good enough. I've tried my hardest & told I'm not cutting mustard.

7.3 Do the voices disturb your daily activities? How do they do this? Please give an example.

yes; by chiming in when I'm trying to work on something.  
Overpower my consciousness.

7.4 Do the voices confuse you? How do they do this? Please give an example.

yes  
When I think I've done something really good - voice  
tells me I'm useless.

7.5 Would you experience the voices as:

	now	at the beginning
predominantly positive	yes/no	yes/no
predominantly negative	yes/no	yes/no
neutral	yes/no	yes/no
negative as well as positive	yes/no	yes/no

Now voices been there a lot longer

## Hearing Voices: A structured questionnaire

### 8. YOUR INTERPRETATION OF THE ORIGIN OF THE VOICES

As a voice hearer you have probably wanted to find an explanation for why you hear voices, you may already have developed your own interpretation of the meaning of the voices. Professionals do the same, however, they will not have the same ideas, this is because they are considering the meaning of the voices from a different frame of reference (often a medical or biological perspective). Here, we are concerned with what you think might cause the voices and how you identify them.

8.1 Who do you perceive or think the voices might be? For instance do you identify them as someone you know or used to know?

*The voices are coming from a living person:*

1. who is part of your daily life

yes/no

2. your parents or another family member

yes/no

3. who is unknown to you

yes/no

*The voices are from a deceased person:*

4. who was very well known to you

yes/no

5. who was unknown to you

yes/no

6. symptoms of an illness

yes/no

7. one or more parts of your personality

yes/no

*The voices are:*

8. A good guide

yes/no

9. A ghost or someone from out the past(reincarnation)

yes/no

10. Gods, ghosts, angels

yes/no

11. A good spirit

yes/no

12. A bad spirit or devil

yes/no

13. Entities (such as a spiritual person or power that you cannot see, although you can feel or hear its presence)

yes/no

14. Extraordinary perceptions (telepathy, mediumistic)

yes/no

15. A result of the pain of other people or from something else around you

yes/no

8.2 Please describe your own interpretation of what causes your experience and what your theory is for why you have this experience. Please explain why you think this.

8.3 Do the different voices each have their own explanation for why they exist? If so, why do you think this is?

8.2: It's possible I have a certain amount of fear, I have never met my voices, they're bitches; maybe I have a fear of bitches.  
Maybe there was a time bitches appealed to me but not able to go down that path.  
Something that's invaded me.

schiz. I can do without them, might be a long time but can't as part of life for so long.  
my neg side feel I'm getting rid of them.  
if they're of keeping me in line - if they're also with me.

So I know  
something as  
could be  
it didn't  
tell me  
4

She'd offered to have the answers or her contacts (any knowledge but needed help accessing

technical  
things;  
problems

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no 1

## Hearing Voices: A structured questionnaire

### 10. COPING STRATEGIES

*What do you do when you hear voices?*

We have just discussed your relationship with the voices. I would like to know exactly what you do when you hear voices.

If the answer to any of the following questions is yes, please ask how many times they have tried this and what the effect is.

#### 10.1 COGNITIVE STRATEGIES

no.	strategy	yes/no	if yes, describe
1.	Send the voices away	No	
2.	Ignore the voices	Yes	- as much as I can.
3.	Concentrate on listening	No	- concentrate on listening to something else
4.	Listen selectively	Yes	- hard to resist; v. loud & domineering or whispering & straining to hear.
5.	Think about something else	-	Main strategy
6.	Make a deal with the voices	No	
7.	Try to limit contact with the voices	-	Yes; always try to do that; to not engage in them.

#### 10.2 BEHAVIORAL STRATEGIES

no.	strategy	yes/no	if yes, describe
8.	Start to do something	Yes	- something requiring concentration
9.	Try to escape the voices	No	
10.	Telephone someone	No	
11.	Visit someone	No	
12.	Distract yourself	Yes	- main strategy
13.	Keep a diary about the voices	No	
14.	Carry out certain rituals/behaviours	-	Try not to engage.

## Hearing Voices: A structured questionnaire

### 10.3 PHYSIOLOGICAL STRATEGIES

no.	strategy	yes/no	if yes, describe
15.	Relaxation exercises like yoga	NO	
16.	Medication	Yes	
17.	Alcohol and drugs	No	
18.	Food	No	

10.4 Which coping method do you use most? — *Distraction*

How often do you use it? *1-3 times per hour*

Do you use it systematically? *Yes*

If not, why?

10.5 What is the result of using these methods? (do you find that you have more or less power over the voices)

*I don't have any power over them. They just come.*

10.6 If you know that the voices appear in certain circumstances (such as entering a crowded room), would this effect what would do if you knew you were going to face such an experience (for instance would do try to avoid it, find an alternative or try not to be influenced).

*-Avoid crowds*

*New situations*

*If anxious about something, they're worse.*

10.7 In the past have you tried something that seemed to help?

*No. I'd keep on using it if found something.*

*— distraction*