

An Introduction to Accepting Voices

Hearing distressing voices is one of the most common experiences of people diagnosed with a psychotic disorder. Research has shown that many people continue to hear voices even after prolonged use of medication. As a consequence, people who hear voices commonly live lives that are low in quality and high in distress. In the last two decades, voices hearers around the world, working with understanding allies, have organised, to bring together ideas and strategies for a more effective response to these difficulties.

This course has been designed to bring these ideas and strategies to practitioners, voices hearers, family members and friends, so you can understand the experience of hearing voices and interventions that can be used to enable the voice hearers to take control of their experience.

“...to assist people to cope we should not give them therapy that does not work. We should let people decide for themselves what helps or not. It takes time for people to accept that hearing voices is something that belongs to them.” **Professor Marius Romme**

Focusing on the research and practice of accepting and working with voices, *An Introduction to Accepting Voices*, explores ways in which you can introduce accepting voices into your life or workplace. Today in twenty-six countries across the world, voice hearers, nurses, psychiatrists and psychologists are developing techniques to assist people who hear voices focus on their experience, get to know their voices better and learn to cope with them.

This approach, pioneered by the work of the psychiatrist Professor Marius Romme and Dr. Sandra Escher, takes the position that it is no longer sustainable to think of hearing voices as part of a disease, such as schizophrenia. Instead, it is argued that hearing voices should be regarded as a meaningful real, although sometimes painful, fearful or overwhelming experience, that speaks to the person in a metaphorical way about their lives, emotions and environments.

Learning Outcomes:

- Develop an awareness of what it feels like to hear voices.
- Explore why do people hear voices?
- Examine the theory and practice around accepting voices.
- Learn about ways to support someone who is finding their voices overwhelming – or if a voice hearer know what to do when voices are overwhelming.
- Explore the approach of structuring contact with voices.
- Gain a firm foundation on how to work with voices.
- Develop confidence so you can start supporting a voice hearer or for voice hearers to better understand your experience and decide what to do next.

Outline of the Course

Lesson 1 – What do Voices Mean?

Lesson 2 – What to do about Voices that causes Problems

Lesson 3 – Assisting people who Hear Voices in their Recovery Journey

Lesson 4 – Involving Family Members and Friends

Lesson 5 – Working with Voices

Lesson 6 – Taking Accepting Voices into Life and Work

Lesson 7 – Taking your Learning Forward

The course will take students up to **30 hours** to complete, please see below for breakdown of this time.

Course Description

Module	Description	Length
<u>Lesson 1</u> What do Voices Mean?	In this lesson, we provide an introduction to the major themes and issues raised by the hearing voices approach and their relevance to the lives of people who hear voices. The lesson looks at the overview of the philosophy; research and practice; core concepts and values that underpin the hearing voices approach; explore what makes this approach so distinctive. By the end of this lesson, you will have developed a theoretical understanding of the hearing voices approach and how it can be applied in your life. Hearing voices is not generally talked about because it is thought of as a socially stigmatising and unwanted experience. Because of these prevailing attitudes, it is important to point out that this has by no means always been the case. In fact, there are many people who hear voices who can cope with their voices and regard them as a positive part of their lives. Neither is it the case that voices have always been regarded as a negative experience, throughout history and even today there are people who hear voices who find their voices inspirational and comforting. These are facts, that on the face of it are hard to square with the extremely negative ways that the experience is regarded by psychiatry. However, it is also the case that voices can and do have a very disturbing effect, both for the person who hears voices, and their family members/friends. The voices can be hostile, controlling and seek to undermine the voice hearers own self esteem. Many people feel overwhelmed by the consequences of the experience and end up seeking medical assistance. It often seems as if there is little that people themselves and the people around them can do to regain control of their lives. The sense of powerlessness that this can bring seems to be an almost inevitable feature of the experience and is reinforced by the fact that most medical advice presumes that the person suffering from the experience of hearing voices is a passive victim of the experience and generally avoids talking about voices at all. The hearing voices approach has shown that this does not need to be the case. In this module we explore the voice hearing experience in terms of its significance and the changing ideas about the meaning. We also provide an opportunity to experience what it is like to hear voices.	6 hours of learning time

<u>Lesson 2</u> What to do about Voices that cause Problems	If you hear voices, you can use your own experiences, your own contacts with services, with mental health workers you trust and with other people who hear voices to start talking about and listening to other people's experiences. If you are a worker, you could start by accepting the experience as a reality and ask what has happened in the life of the voice hearer that could possibly relate to their problems and to begin to explore the life issue or complaint that first led to the experiences. In this lesson we explore ways that people with overwhelming voices can develop ways of living with and accepting voices as part of themselves.	5 hours of learning time
<u>Lesson 3</u> Assisting people who Hear Voices in their Recovery Journey	In this lesson you will explore ways in which you can begin to use the methods and techniques provided, in order to build your confidence in working with people who hear voices or on changing your relationships with your own voices.	4 hours of learning time
<u>Lesson 4</u> Involving Family Members and Friends	People who hear voices say that supportive family members and friends play a very important part in assisting them in their recovery journey. Unfortunately, there is little information about the hearing voices approach available for families, and services sometimes do not seek to involve them. It is helpful for the person who hear voices, their family and friends - to be aware of the causes and meaning of hearing voices and the ways that they can help. In this module we consider how to assist family members and friends become part of the recovery journey.	4 hours of learning time
<u>Lesson 5</u> Working with Voices	In this lesson we listen to voice hearers and draw on the experience of the hearing voices approach to consider implications for practice. Amongst the issues that we will address are the following – 1) How to develop positive attitudes to voice hearers, respecting their expertise and experience as valid; 2) How to understand the role of childhood trauma, particularly abuse and neglect in the development of voices; 3) How to develop skills so as to work with voices hearers and their voices. On completion of this lesson, you will be familiar with the concepts and techniques needed to help a voice hearer work with their voices.	5 hours of learning time
<u>Lesson 6</u> Taking Accepting Voices into Your Life and Work	In this lesson, we now would like you to consider how you could develop some first steps of a Personal Plan, for working with your own voices or people who are hearing voices. We will guide you through developing an Action Plan for taking your learning forward. You will also be able to watch a video of Ron Coleman talking about his own personal experiences and how he took accepting voices into his life and work.	4 hours of learning time
<u>Lesson 7</u> Taking your Learning Forward	In this final lesson, we pull everything together, as you reflect on the first steps you will take in your life and work, from all that you have learnt from this course.	2 hours

Course Leader

The course leader is Karen Taylor, drawing on the experiences of her late husband Ron Coleman who was a voice hearer, and established many hearing voices group and was an early founder of the UK Hearing Voices Network.

Karen Taylor worked in NHS in England with both older people and adults of working age as an RMN. She has personal experience of designing, implementing and managing innovative community care services. After leaving worked with Ron Coleman bringing the hearing voices and recovery approach to many Countries. She put all her experiences into running recovery house projects, her learning on working with psychosis is rooted in practice and living with a voice hearer for over 20 years. Recovery from psychosis is possible for everyone, people can learn to understand their experience and move on. Karen has experience in working with families and believes real healing occurs when dialogue happens. Karen has co-authored the workbook, 'Working to Recovery' Based in Scotland, Karen is Director of 'Working to Recovery Ltd'. She also has a Diploma in Practical Spirituality and Wellness and is a trained spiritual companion. This has led to her setting up Midwife of the Soul.

This course was written by Paul Baker.

Certificate of Attendance

This course was CPD Approved in 2015. Although we no longer provide CPD Accredited Certificate for the completion of this course, the certificate we provide for the completion of this course is acceptable for portfolios.

Sample of the Course Certificate

