

Welcome

Hearing Voices Living Fully



Hearing Voices Living Fully



My Mother

Claire

Silly, nice, understanding, gentle

Mother of Paul

Lover of books, environment, games

Who feels silliness, happiness, love

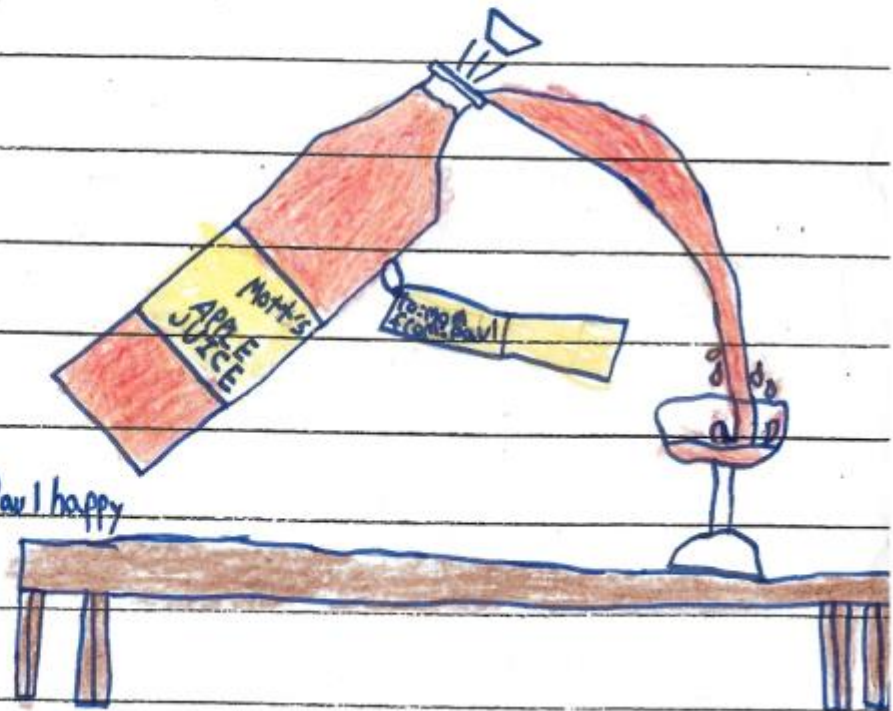
Who needs sleep, food, love

Who gives gifts, fun, laughter

Who would like to see Arthur & Paul happy

My mother is kind, cute, & comforting

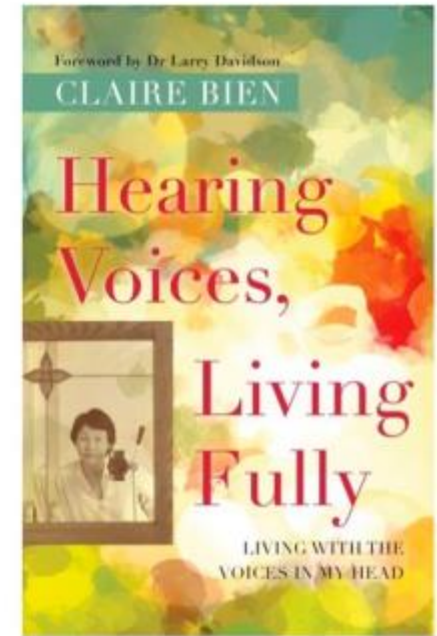
Bien



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Triggers for Hearing Voices

- Trauma
- Maternal distress during gestation
- Immigration, especially before age four and during adolescence
- Emotional neglect
- Bereavement/loss
- A move to a new community
- Social isolation
- Foreign travel
- Not living up to own expectations or to expectations of those close to you

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Triggers for Hearing Voices

- A new job
- Racism
- Matters of the human spirit
- Spiritual experiences
- Abuse
- Going off to college
- Lack of sleep
- Work on an intensive, isolating project like writing a book or dissertation

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Triggers for Hearing Voices

From Intervoice –World Hearing Voices Network website

- Insecurity
- Fear
- Aggression
- One's own sexual feelings
- The sexual feelings of others
- Losing control – in familiar situations (repeating history) as well as in new or unexpected situations
- Meeting and spending time with new people
- Feeling the energy and emotions of others in the same room

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Factors that exacerbate voices

- A sense of powerlessness
- Fear, Shame, Guilt
- Self-doubt
- Inability to find affirmation and support
- Isolation
- Ignoring the voices for too long
- Gaining power over your voices—shifting the power balance
- More (discussion)

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Factors that Foster Resilience

- Optimism
- Facing our fears
- Faith
- Social Supports
- Creating conditions that allow us to feel valued-altruism
- Ethical behavior
- Not personalizing things that happen
- Supporting, mentoring others



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Factors that Foster Resilience, continued

- Exercise/physical fitness
- Cognitive and emotional flexibility
- Finding meaning, purpose, and opportunities for growth
- Taking stress breaks
 - Often this means removing ourselves from toxic situations and people. This can be very difficult, especially when the toxic situations are with family members and long-time friends. (Oftentimes the wrong kind of support seems better than no support at all.)



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Factors That Contributed to My Own Resilience

- Loving, stable family
- Well socialized. I knew myself and who I was independent of my parents/family.
- Older age (31) at onset of negative voices
- History of paid employment
- Self-knowledge and acceptance of who I was
 - This allowed me to stand up to the difficult/seductive voices in my head (not unlike standing up to the difficult/seductive people in my life)
- Never abused or truly bullied



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Coping Skills - Then

- Being forced to focus on my son's needs and my responsibilities to and for him helped keep me present and focused.
- Family and Friends
- General satisfaction with life and work
- My faith community
- Choir - singing
- Volunteering and participating in small groups within my faith community
- Writing
- Photography



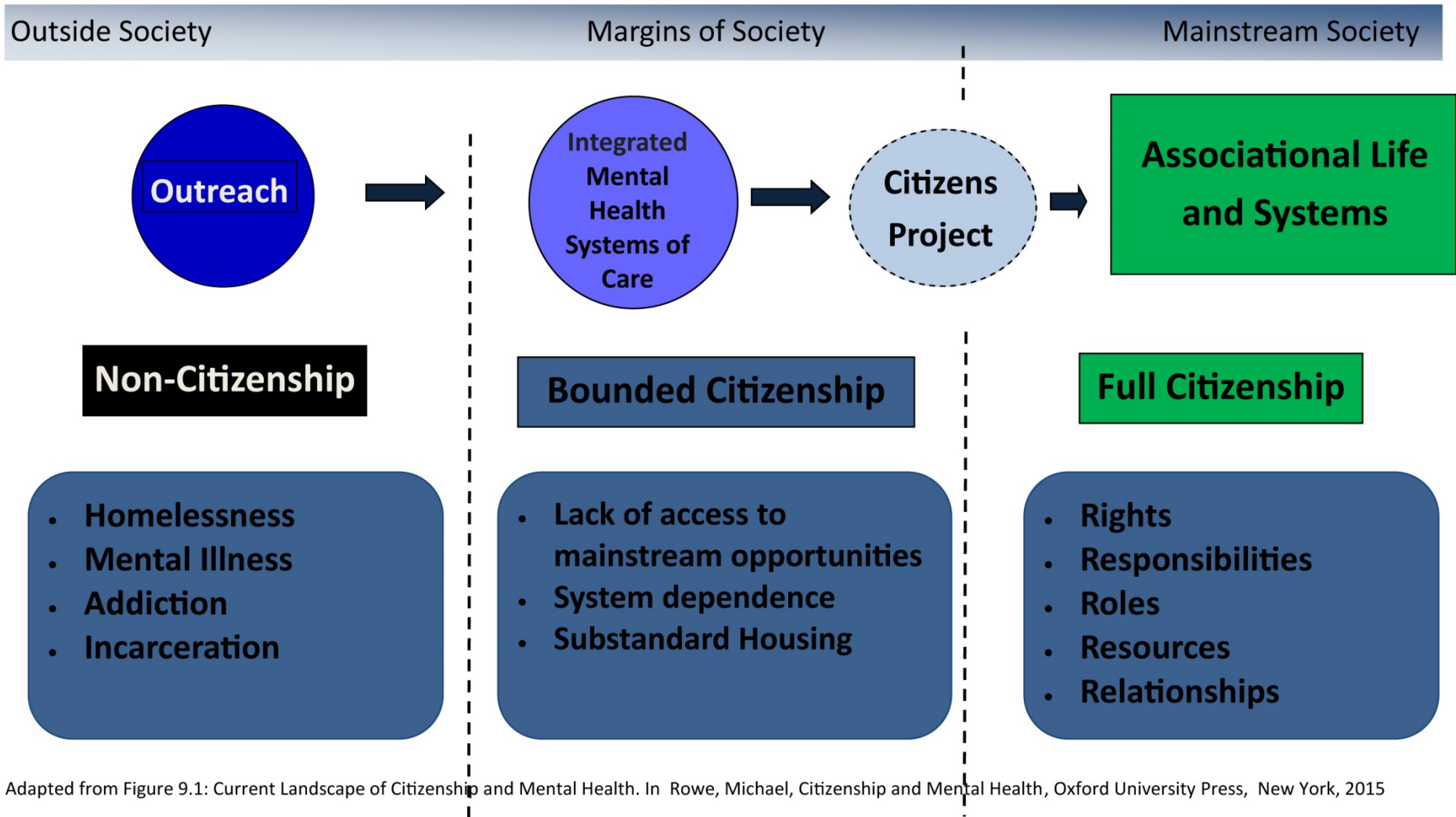
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Coping Skills - Now

- Work
- Social justice/social action-focused volunteer work
 - Acknowledging and embracing my experience—using what I have learned to provide hope to others
- Singing
- Writing
- Meditation
- Requirement that I be fully honest with myself and others. From that foundation of strength, there's little that can undo me for very long (especially since I also have the wise advice of my kind (guardian angel) voices

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Premodel of Citizenship and Mental Health



Adapted from Figure 9.1: Current Landscape of Citizenship and Mental Health. In Rowe, Michael, Citizenship and Mental Health, Oxford University Press, New York, 2015

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I believe that my successful, unmedicated recovery is attributable to substantial **resources**, including education in counseling psychology and a discipline of self-guided and professional therapy. As a result, I never lost my rights.

Relationships in the form of family and friends and later my faith community. I also think late onset helped. I had a clear sense of who I was (**role**) and I had worked in professional jobs (**valued role**) And because I was older, and had grown up in a loving family that taught me not only to be fair-minded, but also to trust myself, I knew what my rights as an individual were. So when the bully voices began making unreasonable demands, I was able to stand up to them.

But it was my decision to take **responsibility** for my young son as well as for myself—that marked the true turning point

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I also learned that many of the techniques I had used in 1990-1992 to regain control over my mind and my life:

- Laughter
- Argument
- Negotiation
- Acceptance when appropriate

And an unwavering determination to live as fully as I could in the physical and material world—these are tried and true methods of the Hearing Voices Movement. These really are aspects of citizenship—to feel that I have the right to stand up to and engage with the voices in my head—as well with as the people in my life—in these and other ways.

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Good advice the voices have given me over the years

- Laugh
- Keep doing the things you love, even when some voices mock you for doing them.
- Don't act on anything the voices tell you (to do) without real-world input
- If you start to get scared, stop listening. Then find someone you trust and talk, play a game, watch a movie, or just hang out. If no one is available, call someone. Later, when you've calmed down and it's convenient, turn back to the voices and consider what they're saying, and whether it's correct, or true.

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Good Advice continued

- If you don't believe what the voices are saying is true, ask questions. Or state your own position. When I have done this, the disagreeable voices always back off—the kind and helpful ones become even more supportive.

Managing the voices as we manage the difficult (and kind) people in our lives

- A lot of people, myself included, manage their voices as they manage other relationships—asking the voices to respect their needs and responsibilities to themselves and other people.

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Good advice/Managing the Voices , continued

- Standing up to the voices can be a very good thing – especially if you know what they’re saying is not true or if they’re telling you to do things that you know are wrong – that will hurt you or someone else.
- ***It’s a really good idea to practice standing up to your voices with support—an HVN support group, friends, your therapist (my example/ discussion)***
- When you have the time, asking the voices questions (e.g., why do they say the things they say to you—why do they hold this or that opinion) can be very helpful. The kind voices often respond in very helpful ways. The negative voices often have nothing to say—so I tend to feel free to dismiss them—and they lose their power over me.

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Good advice/Managing the Voices continued

- Kind voices don't tell you to do things that you know are wrong.
- Trust yourself and what you know to be true.
- Stand your ground – if you speak the truth, the voices can't argue.
- Be reasonable and respectful, but stand your ground.
- Making an appointment to talk often works.
- The voices often lie. Even the kind ones.

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Good advice/Managing the Voices, continued

- The voices are fallible.
- The negative voices aren't omniscient but it often (though not always) seems as if the positive voices are.
- More?

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Benefits of Peer Supports, including HVN Support Groups

- I'm not alone!
- Feeling understood
- Opportunity to learn from others
- Learning to stand up to and negotiate with the voices
- Friendship with others with shared perspectives, beliefs, experiences
- Acquiring greater understanding of self
- Ability to achieve a sense of normalcy

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Benefits of Peer Supports, including HVN Support Groups

- Desire to share what one has learned and achieved with others—Sharing *Hope*
- Helping others fosters resilience and helps maintain recovery
- Acquiring a sense of mission and purpose – (We need to change the system!) creating the possibility not only of recovery and community reintegration, but also of self-actualization

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Specific Coping Strategies

Targeted
Strategies

Distraction
and
Blocking

Negotiation

Social
Adaptations

Finding
Meaning

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Distraction/Blocking

- Getting Physical
- Using headphones
- Yoga
- Sub vocalizing
- Meditation
- Wearing sunglasses
- Affirmations
- Loud music
- Ear plugs

LOOK!
A Distraction!



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Negotiation

- Talking back to the voices
- Making an appointment with the voices
- Half-hearted attempts to comply with the voices
- Attending to the voices (what do they want or need?)
- Voice dialoguing



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Social Adaptations



Using a cell phone to talk to voices
Using headphones to discourage others from engaging with you
Saying you are hard of hearing to explain why you may ask someone to repeat themselves.
Texting instead of talking

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Finding Meaning

- What is the message, metaphor, symbolism, meaning?
- Looking at the context of the experience
- Voice mapping
- Asking when do they come and in relation to what?
- Sharing your experience at Hearing Voices groups and asking for feedback.



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Targeted Strategies

- Researching the particular beliefs or phenomena that one is experiencing—knowledge is power
- Using holy water, smudging, or house cleaning to deal with distressing spiritual experiences
- Finding gifts people have given you; keeping them with you to remind you of their love

Discussion

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Selected Resources

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Whitaker, R. *Mad in America: Bad Science, Bad Medicine, and the Enduring Mistreatment of the Mentally Ill* (2010). Revised paperback edition. New York: Basic Books.

Whitaker, Robert. *Anatomy of an Epidemic: Magic Bullets, Psychiatric Drugs, and the Astonishing Rise of Mental Illness in America* (2011). New York: Broadway Books.

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Selected Resources, Continued

Williams, Paris. *Rethinking Madness: Towards a Paradigm Shift in Our Understanding and Treatment of Psychosis* (2012). San Rafael, CA: Sky Edge Publishing.

Working to Recovery. How to Start and Run a Hearing Voices Group (available from www.workingto-recovery.co.uk).

Websites:

Connecticut Hearing Voices Network website: <http://www.cthvn.org>

Healing Voices Movie: <http://healingvoicesmovie.com/>

Hearing Voices Network USA website: www.hearingvoicesusa.org

Intervoice, the website of the International Hearing Voices Network: <http://www.intervoiceonline.org/about-intervoice/national-networks-2/england>

Triggers for Psychosis: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/psychosis/causes-of-psychosis/>