



# The Recovery Process Part 1

**(For Facilitators and Self-Help  
Group Members)**

## Important Steps to Recovery with Voices

### What does Recovery Mean?

#### It Means:

- Taking life back into your own hands
- Living your own life, not the life of your voices.
- Functioning well and being independent.
- Finding a purpose in life – a personal and social recovery.

### Four Important Elements of Recovery (as defined by well-known (recovered) voice hearer Ron Coleman)

- **Involve Others** – Because you need to get direction, hope, support and friendship.
- **Work on the Self** – Self-esteem, Self-confidence, Self-awareness and Self-Acceptance.
- **Make Choices** – Become responsible for your own decisions and find a purpose in life.
- **Take Ownership** – Learn to “own” your own voice hearing experiences.

### Issues Important in Recovery from the Distress with Voices

1. **Meeting someone who takes an interest in the voice hearer as a person. Don (a voice hearer) tells his therapist:**

*I was spoken to as a person, I became an identity. You were interested in a theatre play I had written. Before that I was treated as a patient; lived in a no-man's-land; there was a cessation of my feelings. When you lowered my medication I woke up and became clear in my mind.*

2. **Giving hope by showing a way out and normalising the experience. Mien (a voice hearer) was told by his psychotherapist:**

*I am not mad but that they (the voices) were related to my past, and that it is a rather normal experience you can talk about with others. It helped me to realise voices express what is happening with you. It is something that belongs to me.*

### **3. Meeting people who accept the voices as real.**

#### **Karina (a voice hearer) tells:**

*What helped me was the support I got from the hearing Voices Network, feeling a part of something and being accepted for who I was. I felt the support I got from these people was invaluable.*

### **4. Becoming actively interested in your experience of the voices.**

#### **Ami (a voice hearer) tells:**

*I came across advertising on a billboard that somebody would give a lecture about hearing voices, a woman called Liz Bodil. This was the turning point. She also sold books. The book "Accepting Voices" I read in one night. I just felt this was for me. This described my experience and also said there is a reason for voices.*

### **5. Recognising the voices as personal.**

#### **Daan (a voice hearer tells)**

*I thought I was bad because the voices called me all sorts of names. Later I realised that the voices were related to the physical abuse because they had the same characteristics of those who abused me. Then I noticed the voices became more or less intrusive depending on the situation I was in. They became bad when there were conflicts in the house. So they were kind of a mirror of my living situation.*

### **6. Changing the power structure between you and your voices**

#### **Eleanor (a voice hearer) tells:**

*I realised that the fear I felt had created this vicious circle of avoidance and isolation. I tentatively began to test out what the voices claimed. One night he said: "I want you to cut off your toe and if you don't I'll kill your family". It was the hardest thing I've ever had to do but I said "Just do it". It was a terrible night but nothing happened, so I realised he hadn't much power.*

### **7. Making Changes**

#### **Jeanette (a voice hearer) tells:**

*My first choice was staying alive, which had consequences, for instance looking after myself. The next choice was to find out that I was ok. I started to think "Why do I have such high demands on myself; what is so bad about me?"*

### **8. Changing the relationship with your voices**

#### **Debra (a voice hearer) tells:**

*I decided that everything I was doing so far was not working for me, so doing the exact opposite made sense to me. First I changed my attitude towards them. I embraced them as friends and welcomed their intrusions, greeting them with kindness and respect. As a consequence my fear reduced, which in turn alleviated the distress I felt; now when I heard a voice my anxiety level didn't increase. I also began exploring other areas of my life and discovered*

*what role the voices played in my life; the need to feel connected to someone; the need to belong.*

**9. Recognising one's own emotions and accepting them.**

**Eleanor (a voice hearer) tells:**

*Everyone has their private demons, and his (the voice's) demonic aspects were the unaccepted aspects of my self-image. The contempt and loathing that he expresses is actually to do with me in that it reflects how I feel about myself. He is like a very form of my own insecurities, my own self-doubt.*

(Reference – The content and quotes included in this document were extracted from the book – “Living with Voices – 50 Stories of Recovery,” by Romme, Escher, Dillon, Morris and Corstens)

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