



# The Recovery Process Part 4

**(Not for Distribution to Self-Help  
Group Members)**

## **Making Sense of Voices: The Relationship between the Voices and Life History (Part A)**

What do voice hearers say about the relationship between the voices and their lives?

These links are:

1. **What happened at the onset of the voices:** feeling threatened, enduring high levels of stress, traumatising experience of abuse, emotional neglect, being bullied etc.

**Mieke (a voice) hearer says:**

*I start to hear voices when I am in a threatening situation. The voices express my emotional struggle with wanting to face my problems and wanting to fly away.*

2. **What the voices say:** their possible reference to trauma experiences and to difficult emotions, feeling worthless or guilty, or in need of support.

**Karina (a voice hearer) says:**

*The strongest and most negative voices came from the people I used to go to school with. These were a mixed group. I was bullied at school and a lot of the content of the voices came from this time, like I was carrying past voices around with me in the present.*

3. **Emotions Triggering Voices:** For example, feelings of insecurity or aggression.

**Antje (a voice hearer) says:**

*It took me a while to see a relationship between the voices and my life. Out of the relationships was the relationship between my emotions and the way the voices spoke. When I was angry and didn't express my anger, they became angry with me.*

4. **The characteristics of the voices:** Indicating one or more people involved in the trauma, or troubling emotions.

**Lisette (a voice hearer) says:**

*My therapist made me aware that there was a resemblance between my voices and my stepfather. When she told me this I got a flashback and I saw my stepfather. I understood that they are not the same but that the voice sounds like him and asks me to do the same things. When I became aware of the resemblance between my voice called Stefan and my stepfather, I could complete the jigsaw. It all fitted together.*

5. **The age of the different voices:** indicating the time when different traumas happened.

**Jolanda (a voice hearer) says:**

*I hear three voices and they all have names: Nina, Eve and Hannah. I hear them through my ears. All three are female. Nina is about 7 years of age. She is still a*

*child. Nina originates from a long time ago and she is connected to the sexual abuse. I think Eva is 18 or 20 years old...Eva came when I was 18 and my family withdrew the formal complaint to the police about the person who had sexually abused me.*

- 6. The use of voices:** Voices can be a survival strategy or, in psychotherapeutic language, a defence mechanism against overwhelming or specific negative emotions.

**Jolanda (a voice hearer) says:**

*Nina cries a lot but is also immediately present when other people, or I myself, want to have bodily contact. At that moment Nina sets the rules. She does not get angry but she takes control over me and behaves like a 7 year old child. I might even say things that come from Nina. If something happens that I do not want, I hear Nina crying.*

- 7. Voices can also be indirectly related to trauma:**

**Ami (a voice hearer) says:**

*When I was born I initially stayed in hospital with my mother who had cancer. As a child my body did not function well. My teeth were discoloured and I had difficulty walking because of twisted legs. As a small child I had A lot of therapy which planted the idea I was not good enough. My sisters didn't like me. I was a nuisance to them as they had to take me to therapy. I was very unhappy. In my family the message was "keep your emotions to yourself". I learned to lie, I kept as silent as a mouse. Bullying came easily to my family.*

*My first suicide attempt, at age 24, was a reaction to the fact that I could not recognise my feelings. I was very much in love and it went to my head. I was so happy that I was afraid of going mad, I could not cope. He first time I heard voices I recognised as such I was 49. They were neighbours, 2 girls living next to me. I had been homeless for many years and I had just acquired an apartment. I wanted to lead a new life and make new friends.*

*To get new friends I knew I had to lie about myself. After 2 months of this I became psychotic for about 6 weeks. I isolated myself with a concept of the future in which I would be alone in my flat. I was paranoid. I would hide myself in the flat, crouching down behind the windows when somebody passed so as not to be seen. This was when the voices came.*

(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 & Corstens)

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