

HVNWA



Voices guide to the galaxy of the festive season.

This HVNWA guide has been put together as a resource to assist in understanding some of the difficulties that voice hearers may encounter at this time of the year. It explores some coping strategies to assist and provides some current local support contacts.

For some people, the bright lights of Christmas can emphasize challenges, like experiencing distress from hearing distressing voices. It may be the season of goodwill, but for many there is a darker side to the coming holiday celebrations that some voice hearers recognize triggers their distress. There are many reasons why the festive period can be very difficult for people, not just voice hearers. However, for voice hearers some of these difficulties lie at the root of their voices.

Here are just a few of the possible challenging situations this holiday period can evoke:

Loneliness

Holiday time can be a stark reminder of the often difficult challenges of being alone and feeling lonely. If you are feeling isolated and alone voices can have a not so nice way of reminding you why this may be. Don't listen to their negativity. Take the power back by planning yourself an ultimate day/season of listen to your favourite music, do your favourite activities, go to your favourite places, hire out all your favourite movies, cook your favourite meal, self-nurture activities etc.. Make it a special time for yourself. It doesn't need to be dictated by any voices or anyone else but you. OR Ask around-you never know, people may be in the same position as you. OR volunteer- gift wrapping in shopping centers, fundraising, helping out with meals etc. This is really in keeping with the real spirit of Christmas. It is also a great way of becoming part of the community, meeting new people and it helps with those feelings of loneliness.

Mission Australia is this year celebrating the 38th annual **Christmas Lunch in the Park**. On Christmas Day, 2000 people from all walks of life will celebrate the spirit of Christmas. If you're by yourself this Christmas, down on your luck or just need some companionship, here are the details: **Coming along?**

Where: Wellington Square Park, East Perth. **When:** Wednesday, 25 December 2013

Time: 11.30am - 2.00pm **free buses** will be running to-and-from Wellington Street Bus Station from 10.30am onwards, so jump on-board!

Socialising

There is a great deal of pressure to be enjoying yourself and socializing. If this is something you do not do often and are not comfortable with this it can feel awkward, false and challenging. The anticlimax of New Year can hit people particularly hard. Seeing everyone else apparently having fun all around them can be really tough, especially if they are on their own, or even if they are with family and friends. Voices may react to these feelings surfacing from unresolved issues.

Family relationships

The popular image of Christmas is of happy families, a warm glow inside and a relaxed, contented time. Christmas is punctuated with generous meals, social gatherings, entertainment and an openness and generosity not so apparent at other times of the year. These images are presented to us through advertising, television and through long held cultural expectations. Whatever we think of Christmas, it can be a time of stress and reflection about our own lives and our relationships with others.

In modern life, the traditional idea of Christmas, as the time when all the family get together, can be complicated by the breakdown of many families through divorce, separation and mental health issues. Where this has occurred, there can be difficulties. There is enormous potential for pain when arrangements are not fairly and properly made between all family members. And if you have the children with you, it can be a time of sadness for them if the other parent is not present or time has to be shared. Try to be fair in your dealings with the other parent and be open to some flexibility if it is required. If you have the children over Christmas, encourage them to telephone their other parent.

Anniversaries such as Christmas can bring memories flooding back about absent family members and other Christmas times when all the family have been together. For many who have lost contact with a family members, Christmas can bring about feelings of loss and grief. Where there has been death in a family, Christmas like other special occasions, can bring back painful reminders. Be open to such feelings and discuss them. It is often better to bring the memory or loss into the open rather than hide it away, but not always easy. We know that voices may be holders of emotions and this grief and loss becoming more active as the feelings, memories and emotions resurface. This can be a huge challenge at this time.

Money worries

People are often tempted beyond their means to provide presents on Christmas Day. Planning your celebrations around what you can afford to spend is wise. Remember, Christmas is just one day and it's far more important to have a financially fit New Year. A lot of people are already experiencing severe debt problems; however, it is good to realize that there is no debt situation that isn't solvable, somehow. No matter how bad you think your case is, there's a pathway through it. The hardest things are asking for help and knowing whom to ask? There are financial support services available in most suburbs of Perth.

Financial Counselling Helpline: 1800 007 007

Quick Voices Coping Strategies for the festive season

1. Don't give yourself a hard time.
2. Spot the signs of change.
3. Look after yourself.
4. Confide in someone you trust.
5. Ask for help.

1. Don't give yourself a hard time

People expect to be happy during the festive season and New Year. When reality doesn't turn out that way, it can be even more disappointing. Don't blame yourself if you're not feeling great, you are not alone. Reach out and talk about your disappointment. Having unrealistically high expectations can lead to disappointment and a sense of failure. It is hard to live up to all these expectations and it is easy to end up feeling stressed and anxious. The pressure is on to have fun, to socialise, entertain and be generous. But you don't have to. Like most potentially stressful situations, with a little planning and preparation, you can avoid some of the more unpleasant aspects.

2. Spot the signs of change

If the future seems bleak, and you have lost interest in everything, you need to take stock of your situation. Watch out for the following signs of emotional distress:

- difficulties getting to sleep
- problems eating
- excessive drinking or drug taking
- isolating, disconnecting from others
- any change in the content or frequency of your voices
- being anxious
- being angry
- being scared

Emotions and voices are often your body's signal that something is not quite right. If you are hearing new or more voices, more often or louder, or the content changes, reflect on how you are feeling. Perhaps try and find a feeling word to express it and then reflect on what has been happening. The change is often quite understandable given the current circumstances. Take it seriously and take action. Listen to your voices and body and apply your self-nurture and coping strategies.



3. Look after yourself and your voices

If your body is healthy, your mind is more able to cope, and often your voices are less distracting.

- Eat sensibly and drink plenty of water.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Don't rely on alcohol or drugs to get you through.
- Exercise.
- Take time out for yourself.
- Make a time to listen to your voices every day.
- Give yourself and your voices a positive Christmas treat.

4. Confide in someone you trust

Find someone you trust, who understands and knows that you hear voices and who'll keep what you say confidential. Then tell them about what your voices are saying and your current challenges. Unexpressed emotions can increase voices and prevent you coping with everyday life. Once you talk about your challenges and voices, you'll find you've got more energy, you think more clearly and you're more able to sort things out and get on with life.

5. Ask for help

Know when you need to get help and don't be afraid of asking. It is often a very difficult thing to do to ask for what you need. But it is often the best way to relieving distress, isolation and overwhelm.

Worried about someone else hearing distressing voices?

- Ask the person what has happened? How they are feeling? Are they hearing voices? If so, do they want to talk about them? And then listen to the answers.
- Ask them how they normally cope when distressed and what has worked in the past.
- No matter how much you want to help, it's difficult to support someone who is struggling with distress from hearing distressing voices on your own.

- Encourage the person to seek help and offer to assist them in doing so if they want your help to do this. You could offer to contact a family member, doctor, support person with, or for them, or find them a phone number for a helpline.
- If you're helping someone who feels distressed and hearing distressing voices make sure you remember to take care of yourself too. You also can call a helpline and will benefit from talking with your support networks after assisting someone in distress. See helplines available at the back of this resource.

HVNWA Support Contact List December 2013

Please NOTE:

Hearing Voices Network of WA is a program of Richmond Fellowship

IT IS NOT A CRISIS SUPPORT SERVICE

Richmond Fellowship of WA Office Hours are:

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm call 93508800

**We are closed weekends and all Public Holidays (Office closed
between Christmas & New Year)**

**Please note HVNWA staff and volunteers work part time and can be
contacted on 93508800 if no one is available, please leave a message
and we will get back to you as soon as we can.**

Alternatively you can email us at: hvnwa@rfwa.org.au

Emergency Services and Help Lines – WA

For immediate assistance – ALL HOURS contact:

Ambulance/ Police/ Fire - 000 or 112 (mobiles)

Police Assistance- Non Urgent - 131444

Kids Helpline - 1800 551800

Lifeline – 13 11 14

Men’s Line Australia – 1300 789 978

Healthdirect Australia – 1800 022 222 (24 Hour medical advice)

Alcohol & Drug Information Service – 9442 5000

Samaritan Crisis Line – 9381 5555

**For confidential mental health emergency assessment,
support and referral services:**

Mental Health Emergency Response Line

(Metro) 1300 555 788

(Peel) Free call 1800 822676

If you require urgent medical care, you can also visit your nearest

Public Hospital Emergency Department

Armadale-Kelmscott Memorial Hospital

3056 Albany Highway, Mount Nasura WA 6112 Tel: (08) 9391 2000

Fremantle Hospital and Health Service

South Terrace (Near Alma St), Fremantle WA 6160 Tel: (08) 9431 3333

Joondalup Health Campus

Cnr Grand Boulevard & Shenton Ave, Joondalup WA 6027 Tel: (08) 9400 9400

Rockingham General Hospital

Elanora Drive, Coo loongup WA 6168 Tel: (08) 9599 4000

Royal Perth Hospital

Wellington Street, Perth WA 6000 Tel: (08) 9224 2244

Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital

Hospital Avenue, Nedlands WA 6009 Tel: (08) 9346 3333

St John of God Hospital Murdoch

100 Murdoch Drive, Murdoch WA 6150 Tel: (08) 9366 1111

Swan District Hospital Campus

Eveline Road, Middle Swan WA 6056 Tel: (08) 9347 5244

Professionals Trained in the Hearing Voices Approach in

Private Practice

*Non urgent and by appointment only to work with voices.

Theresa Hewlett (Psychologist) Foothills Area

Mobile: 0413 881 126

Email: theresahew@bigpond.com

(Medicare and other rebates available)

Natalia Fidyka (Psychologist) Fremantle Area

Mobile: 0425 112 149

Email: nfpsychology@gmail.com

(Medicare and other rebates available)

David Rivett (Counsellor) Hills Area

Mobile 0408 929 186

Email: davidrivett@inet.net.au

(No Medicare rebate, fees apply and are negotiable)