

## Hearing Voices That Are Distressing

### Guided Reflection

1. How has this experience influenced your perception of people who hear voices that are distressing?

This experience gave me just a small bit of insight into how challenging it must be to have auditory hallucinations and still try to function in society as a “normal” person would. Not only was it hard to stay focused on a specific task with all the background noise but then a negative narrative playing almost constantly would make functioning very hard. Often when growing up or even as an adult, we hear that negative thinking directly effects how we feel about ourselves daily and that we should change this thinking. I can’t imagine not having any control over the “voices in my head”.

2. Give a detailed account of which activity you found most difficult during the voice hearing experience. What was it that you found difficult about this activity?

The whole experience was difficult for me. I have trouble concentrating and completing tasks on a normal basis due to ADHD so the extra noise made it difficult for me to sit still and accomplish anything. I got up and walked around but the noise continued making it next to impossible for me to focus.

3. What are some communication strategies that you could use with a patient experiencing hearing voices that are distressing? Be specific and give examples.

Most importantly as healthcare professionals we need to remember the importance of remaining non-judgmental when communicating with patients. Communication techniques that may be beneficial to the therapeutic relationship when a patient is hearing distressing voices might

include validating their feelings, grounding/re-orientating and asking the patient open-ended questions. Validating the patient's feelings could be as simple as letting them know that "it's ok" to feel whatever emotion they are feeling while hearing the voices. Grounding or re-orientating the patient would include having the patient use their other senses to attempt to "drown out" the voices or even focus on other sounds in their immediate environment to help ease their anxiety. Open-ended questions might help encourage communication with the patient as well. Questions like, "Can you tell me more about the voices you are hearing?" or "Tell me how the voices are making you feel." This would give the patient the opportunity to talk about what is going on and not feel judged. By leading with empathy, the nurse may simply be a positive voice for the patient while they deal with the distressing voices in their head.

4. What are some assessment questions that you would anticipate asking a patient for whom you are providing care and who is experiencing unwanted auditory hallucination? List at least 3 questions.
  - What impact do the voices have on your daily life?
  - Can you describe the kinds of things do the voices are saying to you?
  - Are you able to distinguish between reality and the voices you are hearing?
5. What are some therapeutic nursing interventions that might be used for a patient who is experiencing unwanted auditory hallucination?

Again, being non-judgmental is very important while establishing a rapport with any patient so that they feel comfortable opening up and discussing how they are feeling with you. The nurse must encourage self-care and promote independence while validating the patient's concerns and feelings. Psychoeducation is important as well. The nurse must educate the patient on their mental health condition and establish coping skills for the patient to utilize while dealing with distressing voices.

6. How will this experience influence your future nursing practice?

This experience just reminds me that we need to make sure we practice self-awareness throughout whatever field that we go into. Things may not always be as they seem so it's important to remember the patient is a person first. Mental health is a real health problem and all patients deserved to be treated with dignity and respect.