

# Ways to Cope when Hearing Voices

- **Use your own voice**
  - Talk to someone else, or read out loud
  - Hum or sing quietly to yourself
  - Count to yourself or repeat “I am OK”
- **Distract yourself**
  - Shift attention away from the voices and onto things outside of yourself
    - Try housework, gardening, sports
  - If you are indoors, change rooms or go outdoors
  - If you are outdoors, take a walk or a car ride, or go indoors
- **Use an earplug** in one ear, then the other
  - Sometimes the voices stop when you take it out
  - Experiment with this for at least a week
- **Take a “time out”** – Being with other people can be stressful
  - Being alone for a short time can help you calm down
  - But staying alone too long when distressed can make the voices worse
- **Tell the voices to stop**
  - Say “Stop” out loud as soon as the voices start
  - Then quickly think of something pleasant and do something active to take your mind off the voices
- **Challenge what the voices tell you**
  - We don’t always believe what people say to us, so we don’t have to believe what the voices say
  - You can challenge them to “prove it” – ask people around you to see if what the voices say is true or not
  - You can tell the voices you are too busy to listen now
- **Consider the voices as your thoughts**
  - Instead of saying “My voices said I’m worthless,” say “My thoughts are telling me negative things.” (Those thoughts are not true.)
  - Sometimes what the voices say are what we really think about ourselves
  - It can be less “scary” if we use our own voice to say them

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- ***Avoid caffeine, cold medicine with antihistamines, alcohol, or other substances that can make your voices worse***
  - Let your psychiatrist know about effects of medications – Report any new or worsening voices
- ***Practice tuning out the voices***
  - Start by practicing with a friend who talks to you while the TV and radio is turned on loud
  - You can get better at ignoring the noise, and can use those skills to tune out the voices
- ***Keep a record of when you hear voices***
  - Carry paper and a pen– Write when they started, where they started, what they said, and when they stopped
  - You might find patterns that can help you develop your own coping techniques
- **Talk to other people or be with a person you trust**
- **Get active by walking, jogging, riding a bike, or doing other physical activities**
- **Take care of your health and get enough sleep - Voices can be worse with:**
  - Physical illnesses including fevers, flu, or anemia
  - Premenstrual syndrome (PMS)
  - Not eating well enough, or being low on vitamins
- **Practice relaxation skills** - Learn to relax, even when the voices start
  - Practice when you are not hearing voices
  - One simple technique is to sit down or lie down and, beginning at your toes, tense and then relax them while taking a slow breath in and out.
  - Then move up to your lower legs, tensing and relaxing them while breathing in and out.
  - Keep going all the way up to your head.

Author of the reference used for “Ways to Cope” with hallucinations is unknown – Please contact us if you know who wrote them.