

Techniques for Managing Voices That Are Distressing

1. Using Your Own Voice

Some research suggests that using your own voice can make distressing voices go away. Possible techniques include:

- speaking to someone when voices start up.
- humming or singing quietly to yourself.
- counting under your breath.
- repeating a mantra to yourself such as *I am safe, I am okay*.
- reading out loud.

2. Using Earplugs

Some people have found that using an earplug in one ear can greatly reduce or eliminate distressing voices. In this technique you will need an earplug. They can be purchased at the drugstore or pharmacy. Read and follow the directions on how to use the earplug.

Each time the voices start up, put an earplug in your left ear. See what happens. Sometimes the voices stop altogether. Sometimes they stop only when you take the earplug out. Sometimes you have to try the earplug in your right ear.

You will have to experiment with this technique to see what works for you. You may have to keep trying for a week or more in order to get results. The good news is that in some studies, over half the people who tried this got some relief, and for several people the voices disappeared completely for several months.

3. Listening to Headphones

Listening to talk or music through headphones can bring temporary relief. The key to this technique is not how loud you play the music, but that you really like the music and actively listen to it.

Be creative! Try listening to a sports broadcast or radio talk show. Some people have made tapes in which they describe really happy places and events in their lives.

Research

1. **Immediate Effectiveness and Long Term Use of Treatment in 20 Cases, Nelson, H.E. Thraser, S., Barnes, T.R.E. British Journal of Medicine. 1991, 302, p. 327**

	One or more Treatments	Ear Plug	Sub-vocal Counting	Tape Player
Patients Attempting Treatment	17	8	13	15
Patients Reporting Some Immediate Beneficial Effects	16	8	5	14
Patients Using Treatment Long Term	11	4	2	7

2. **Patients' techniques for coping with schizophrenia: An exploratory study. Vaughn Carr British Journal of Medical Psychology, 1988, 61, 339-352.**

92 research participants diagnosed with schizophrenia reported 350 individual coping techniques in addition to the 57 strategies that they were asked to rate.

Technique	Example
Passive Diversion	Listening to music
Active Diversion	Playing an instrument
Activity	Going for a walk
Change in Environment	Van Ride
Increase Socialization	Phone call
Activity	Walking
Inactivity	Waiting
Postural Change	Lying down
Suppression of Ideas	
Decrease Socialization	Being alone
Shifting Attention	Thinking about something else
Problem Solving	

“From the foregoing it should appear obvious that schizophrenic patients are not simply passive victims of their illness. On the contrary...patients can play an active role in the management of their illness, particularly in the containment of its symptoms. The experience of schizophrenia is evidently a learning process in which patients make active attempts to master the illness and not have it dominate them.”