

Why a Hearing Voices Café?

Research shows that about three in four of us will have at least one such experience of hearing a voice others don't – in one study 48% of married people said they heard, saw, otherwise sensed the presence of their deceased spouse; in another even 38% of medical students said they had heard a voice others hadn't.

The majority of people who hear voices are fine with their experience – either not troubled by it or have even come to regard it as valuable.

In some cultures it is those who don't hear voices who are cause for concern. Even in our culture there are many successful people who hear voices.

Yes, some people do suffer and research shows us that individuals who have endured adverse experiences especially in early years, and who have then been left to deal with it by themselves are many times more likely to suffer.

In general 3 in 4 of us will have some kind of unusual voice hearing experience at least once, often around testing life events, and about 10% of us will have some kind of voice-hearing experience on a regular basis – or about 700,000,000 people.

Put another way, that's about as common as left handedness - which, until not too long ago was also regarded as a problem to be eradicated.

It's time we had a different story.



Hearing Voices Café Toronto

The first Monday each month, Fall 2015

6pm to 8pm

Venue

Coffee and All That Jazz

72 Howard Park Avenue

Toronto

Roncesvalles / Howard Park Ave

Streetcars: 506 College, 501 King, 505 Dundas

Hosted by

Recovery Network: Toronto

www.recoverynet.ca



www.facebook.com/HearingVoicesCafe

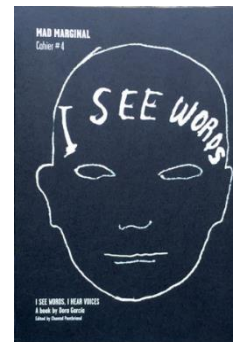
In association with and inspired by the work of artist Dora Garcia whose exhibition is in Toronto through Fall 2015.

I SEE WORDS, I HEAR VOICES

The Powerplant

25th Sep 2015 to Jan2016.

www.thepowerplant.org



Hearing Voices Café Toronto

Mon 5th Oct | Mon 2nd Nov | Mon 7th Dec

6pm to 8pm

Hosted by: **recoverynetwork:Toronto**



What is a hearing voices café?

We take inspiration from the work of artist Dora García.

The designation "Hearing Voices Café" actually applies to every well-patronized coffee shop. At the same time, the phrase "hearing voices" is also associated with the phenomenon of hearing inner voices.

I believe the hearing voices approach is emancipatory, creating new roles not only for voice hearers but also for workers and for carers too

Just because a person hears voices does not mean that they are ill but if it leads to them becoming isolated then they can become very ill indeed.

Hearing Voices Café

To hear oneself speak is maybe the minimal definition of consciousness



Artist Dora García installation - a gathering place for people who hear voices, hosted by the Traumzeit Café in Hamburg. Oct 2014.
<http://thehearingvoicescafe.doragarcia.org/>

What happens at a Hearing Voices Café?

People will come together, talk, hear, listen. You can come to ask questions, pick up information leaflets, buy a button, read a poem, share your experience in your words.

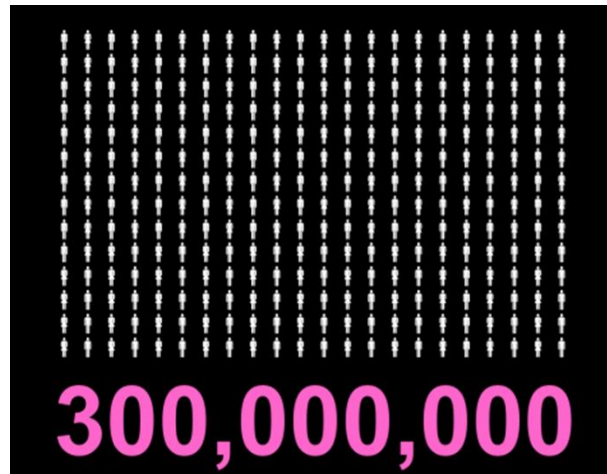
Come join a different, more curious, conversation about the many ways we can experience being human.

We will have short talks, readings, conversation, and laughter.

Or, since the café is open as normal, you can simply visit the café, enjoy a coffee, tea, a snack or light meal – and join in the conversation and hear the polyphony of many voices.

Who hears voices?

Research shows between 4% and 15% of us hear voices. Even the low end of that range means this many people - each tiny figure represents one million of us.



What do we mean by "hearing voices"?

Like many other experiences, hearing voices that others don't is one that can be difficult to convey to others and for them to understand. Our goal is to help people explore and understand what it can be like, how common it can be; and to understand in ways that are not based in fear and control. This can lead us to greater acceptance of our selves and each other.

Voices as diversity of experience

We believe hearing voices is human variation – another example of the rich diversity of what it means to be human.

Toronto is proud of its diversity and is learning to embrace it as strength for the richness it brings but diversity, goes much deeper than the way we look, the ways we celebrate and the food we eat. We are diverse on the outside in our appearances and our culture - but we are also far more diverse on the inside – how we experience the world.

Voices and culture

More people around the world hear voices than live in North America. Yet in our culture we have come to believe the story we tell ourselves and each other that people who hear voices must be regarded as sick, broken, dangerous, less than human and need to be fixed or controlled.

How culture shapes people's experience

It is worth reminding ourselves that in some cultures it is the people who don't hear voices and who don't talk about it who are the ones who are regarded as troubled and unwell.

Research shows that people's difficult experiences with voices differs with the culture they are part of – in one study people who heard voices in Western Africa explained their voices as god like, deities, offering help and guidance; instruction on how to be a good person; in Western India as family and relatives nagging and reminding them of duty to family and to do chores; and the West of America people experienced their voices as demonic, violent and threatening.

We believe that hearing voices:

- is part of human experience, a human variation.
- does not necessarily mean that a person is ill, but if the experience means that they become isolated then they can become very ill indeed.
- is not necessarily the problem but that supporting people who do struggle as they learn to live with their experience is something that we need to get much better at -and each of us can play a role in that.