The Maastricht Interview:

Social and biographical approaches to voice hearing and problematic thoughts, beliefs & paranoia - A lived experience perspective

CAIRNS 16th & 17th November 2015
Seville Mercy Conference Centre

The Maastricht Interview course encourages practitioners to explore the experience of voice hearing and build trust, openness and understanding in their work with people who hear voices. It will enable practitioners to:

- Assist people to overcome the shame of talking about voices
- Acknowledge and validate the experience of voice hearing
- Support people to overcome feelings of shame related to talking about voices
- Support the person to gain a better understanding of why they hear voices

WHO IS IT FOR?
This course is designed for professionals who are working in mental health and psychiatric services such as social workers, support workers, nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists and psychotherapists

PRESENTED BY PETER BULLIMORE

Peter Bullimore is a voice hearer who spent ten years as a psychiatric patient enduring many bouts of severe paranoia. Through learning holistic approaches and with support of the Hearing Voices Network he was able to reclaim his life from the system. Peter facilitates hearing voices and paranoia support groups in Sheffield. He also runs Asylum Associates, and is the founder member of the Paranoia Network.
RATIONALE
Traditionally mental health workers do not talk to people directly about their voice hearing experiences because it is believed that it reinforces socially unacceptable behavior and madness. The tradition lets us believe that voices have no relevant meaning other than manifestation of an illness, usually schizophrenia. People who experience hearing voices are mostly treated according to this traditional ideas, which means that the voices and other so called psychotic experiences like paranoia, intrusive thoughts etc. and even self-harm are seen as symptoms of an illness, with the consequence that professionals try to treat the suspected illness and mostly not attend to the persons experiences and the consequences of those experiences for the individual.

Most voice hearers as well as people with paranoia feel that the traditional approach does not relate to their experience, but the reference alienates them from their experience and is not very helpful. Hearing voices and the other experiences are meaning full experiences they are open for learning to cope with, the voices as well as with the problems that are the root of them. This assumption that such experiences in itself are not a sign of an illness but might lead to illness is based on contemporary epidemiological research. In relation to voice hearing epidemiological studies give evidence that about 10% of the general population hears voices; most of those voice hearers do not feel the need for mental health care.

The traditional approach focuses on the inabilities instead of the persons own abilities to learn to cope with the voices and the other experiences. The ability to use their experience instead of being used by them. It therefore is beneficial that professionals are trained in a different approach that is better related to the person’s experiences. Who can do this in a more convincing way than those who know the experience themselves and have learned to cope with them? In this course the focus will be hearing voices. For the other different experiences there is a need of personal knowledge and experience. For instance different interviews to explore the different experiences, the accepting and making sense method of understanding and working with service user’s experiences is a systematic one. It is now an international movement of professionals, voice hearers and carers, and has furthered understanding and practical strategies, especially by self-help support groups in 24 countries. It stimulates voice hearers to take back the necessary power for their recovery. It enables practitioners to help people who hear voices achieve this.

This workshop introduces the course member to these approaches through understanding the principles of the approach, exercising the interview which explores the experience and learn about short-term strategies for voice hearers to take control of the experience.

SYNOPSIS
The traditional approach to working with voice hearers focusses upon inabilities and deficits, rather than individuals’ inherent ability to understand and cope with their voices and other experiences.

This course is grounded on acceptance of lived experiences of voice hearing. Participants will be taught to employ the Maastricht Interview, an assessment tool developed by Dr Sandra Escher and Professor Marius Romme, which provides a structured method for understanding and working with a voice hearer’s experience.

AIM:
“To develop sufficient knowledge and self reflection to train, professionals in mental health care, in applying a structured approach to understanding voice hearing experiences, and strategies for helping voice hearers manage their experience.”
LEARNING OUTCOMES

By completion of the workshop, delegates will have had the opportunity to demonstrate the ability to:

1. To talk to a voice hearer about his/her experiences in a comprehensive way.

2. Have knowledge of different frames of reference about voice hearing in relation to historical evidence and epidemiological data and be able to discuss these.

3. Demonstrate competence in the use of the Maastricht hearing voices interview and recording the experiences of voice hearers.

4. Understand and be able to teach about the difference in role between the interviewer and the interviewee. The interviewer role needs an ability to extract information and be an objective listener, suppressing therapeutic ambitions or comments.

5. Demonstrate competence to teach, making a normalising relationship with people hearing voices, in which the person feels interest, acceptance and respect.

6. Demonstrate competence in identifying and exploring those strategies that enhance the control of the voice hearer over their voices.

7. Demonstrate competence to teach about the possible relationships of voices with the individual life history and in the understanding of metaphors in what the voices say.

8. Demonstrate the competence of teaching the main elements of recovery from distress with voices.

9. Demonstrate that the aim of the course for the professional is the difficult and sensitive task to change their attitude towards hearing voices.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

DAY ONE
• There will be a maximum of 25 workers and 2 or 3 voices hearers present, the voice hearers will come from the hearing voices network.
• There will be a presentation and overview of how to use the Maastricht Interview.
• Workers will work in groups and they will interview a voice hearer using the Maastricht Interview and they will then be required to write a report of the interview the information will be carefully distilled and used to form a construct of the experience.

DAY TWO
• The workers will interview a second voice hearer and write up the second interview.
• They will then have to develop a construct of the experiences of the people they interviewed.

They will look to answer two questions:

1. What do the voices represent in the person’s life?
2. Whom do the voices represent?

• They will then be asked to feed them back, and they will be compared to the reports and constructs, that have already been completed by Professor Marius Romme & Dr Sandra Escher.
• If there are any mistakes they can be rectified and the worker will have a correct report and construct, as an outline to use with other voice hearers.

*The Maastricht Interview is the precursor to Voice dialogue training for professionals to support ongoing practice development.

**Voice dialogue training will be offered in early 2016.
CAIRNS COURSE DETAILS:

DATES: 16\textsuperscript{th} & 17\textsuperscript{th} November 2015
VENUE: Seville Mercy Conference Centre, 35 Bauhinia Avenue EARLVILLE QLD 4870
PRICE: $550 Including GST (a small number of places may attract a subsidy through a bursary application for specialist skills development (please contact us for details).

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