Hearing Voices & Alternate Realities

From Fear to Freedom

Canadian Mental Health Association
Peel Dufferin
Mental health for all

Association canadienne pour la santé mentale
Peel Dufferin
La santé mentale pour tous

Your Presenters

Hearing Voices & Alternate Realities

Jodie Grigsby

- Individual who identifies as living with mental health diagnoses – in Recovery
- B.A./B.S.W
- Co-facilitator of the peer support group
- Hearing Voices Facilitator
- Creator and Lead Co-Facilitator of Alternate Realities
- 9 years of front line experience;
- one year of supervisory experience

Hearing Voices & Alternate Realities

Karyn Hand

- Lived experience with the mental health and addictions system
- BSW, RSW
- Co-creator of the peer support group Hearing Voices; Group Consultant for the Alternate Realities

- 25 years of experience working in the mental health system
- Manager of the Recovery West Program
- Practice Lead - Peer Community of Practice at CMHA Peel Dufferin

Areas Covered

- History of the Hearing Voices Group
- The Hearing Voices Group
  - Interviewing the Voices Techniques
  - Review of techniques that can be utilized in both group and one on one clinical sessions
  - Group examples
- The Alternate Realities Group
- Questions, Consultations, 'Yes But……'

Recovery West

First - Some Back Ground

Recovery West was created

- As a result of a 3 yr. transformation of a former mental health Club House to a Recovery Based Groups program, and
- Joining with the Peer Drop-in Program offered at CMHA Peel Dufferin
- Our Team decided to create a program model that did not currently exist
- One of the key objectives of the program redesign was to increase opportunities for both formal and informal peer support

Recovery West

First Some Back Ground

Recovery West

- Open Monday – Friday 9:00 am to 4:00 pm
- Self referral and Orientation required
- Approximately 20 different groups weekly, plus activities

Recovery West Drop-In

- Open Tuesday – Friday 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm
- Walk-in, No referral
- 7 groups weekly, plus WRAP and Smoking Cessation

Why a Hearing Voices Group?

- Identified gap in our peer support community
- Researched and Trained –
  - Peer staff attended Hearing Voices training facilitated by Kevin Healey
  - **Working with Voices II – Victim to Victor** by Ron Coleman and Mike Smith, 2005
  - **Living with Voices** by M Romme, S Escher et al 2013

Hearing Voices

Working with Voices II Victim to Victor

- Ron Coleman and Mike Smith, 2005
- Group encourages participants to explore their own life history in relation to their voice hearing, then moving forward to other positive growth exercises[1]
- Encourages participants to plan their own future and life again[1]
- Is especially helpful for those who are feeling too overpowered by their voices to become their master[1]

[1] http://www.workingtorecovery.co.uk/products/victim-to-victor-workbooks/working-with-voices-victim-to-victor-workbook.aspx

Hearing Voices

Our Hearing Voices Group is a safe environment that encourages and promotes:

- Self-Empowerment
- Interdependence
- A view of members as
  'experts by experience'

Group Provides:

- Acceptance and a sense that one is not alone
- A safe place to talk about voices
- An opportunity to learn what the voices mean and how to gain control over the experience
- An opportunity to build stronger social networks and supports, and

Hearing Voices Network New South Wales website: http://voicesnsw.com.au

Hearing Voices: Peer Support Group

The Basics

- Offered through Recovery West Drop-In – no referral required
- September 2014 first Hearing Voices group Facilitated by 2 Peer Support Workers with lived experience
  - One Voice Hearer and One Non-Voice Hearer
- The Hearing Voices Group is open to anyone who identifies as a Voice Hearer.
- A Co-Facilitated group that must include **at least one facilitator** who has lived experiences with Voices
- Content is directed by Participants based on needs identified resulting from their experiences

Hearing Voices

Structure of the Group

- Open Group
- Weekly
- One Hour
- Topics rotate through
- Membership varies from 6 people to 15 weekly
- Regular attenders and new people weekly

Eleanor Langdon

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AgZHOSxN5cE

Hearing Voices

Topics Covered in Group

- Locate Fear(s)
- Time Line: Life Story
- How to identify their Voices
- Locate initial experience with Voice to align with experiences on timeline
- Learn to identify meaning assigned to experience with Voice
- Connection between physical and mental health
- Identify components of a healthy relationship
- Trigger identification
- Self-Esteem
- Spiritual practices
- Hobbies

Hearing Voices Guiding Principles

Validation

a. Not Collusion

- Confirmation Facilitator does not share the experience
- Facilitator Validates participant experience;

"I believe it is happening for you"

Hearing Voices Guiding Principles

Validation

b. Role of Facilitator:

- Facilitators cannot promise voice will stop;
- Facilitators might not be able to hear the voice no matter how hard they try
- Facilitators can help lessen participants' sense of fear and help increase skills to manage, set boundaries and change the nature of the relationship participants have their voices

Hearing Voices

Curiosity

- Express curiosity; ask questions
- Demonstrate a willingness to listen to understand rather than respond
- Facilitators position themselves as an ally rather than expert
- Encourage participants to support each other with the sharing of knowledge and experience

•Participants are placed as the expert of their own experience co-facilitators support; they guide the curriculum based on identification of strengths and needs

Hearing Voices

Be Trauma Informed

- Many individuals have had an experience of trauma that informs their perception of the Voice they encounter

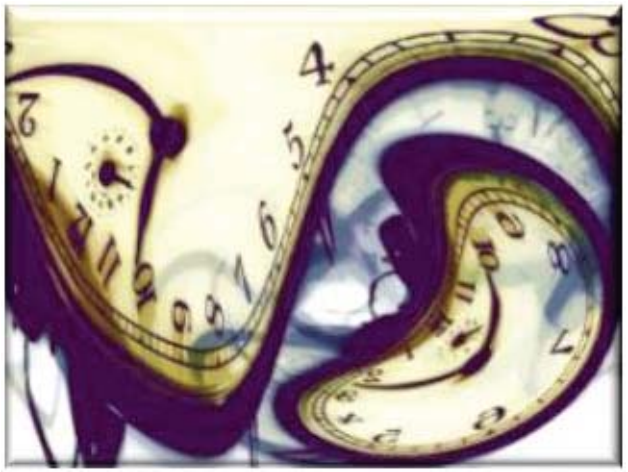
- This does not mean facilitators need to offer psychotherapy, however the ability to link their experience to an life altering event can offer an individual a small measure of control when coupled with a mindfulness or grounding skill
    - o identification of fear + intense emotion
    - o Support with emotional dysregulation

Hearing Voices

Cognitive Distortions

A Definition

Irrational, inflated thoughts or beliefs that distort a person's perception of reality, usually in a negative way.



How they are used the Group

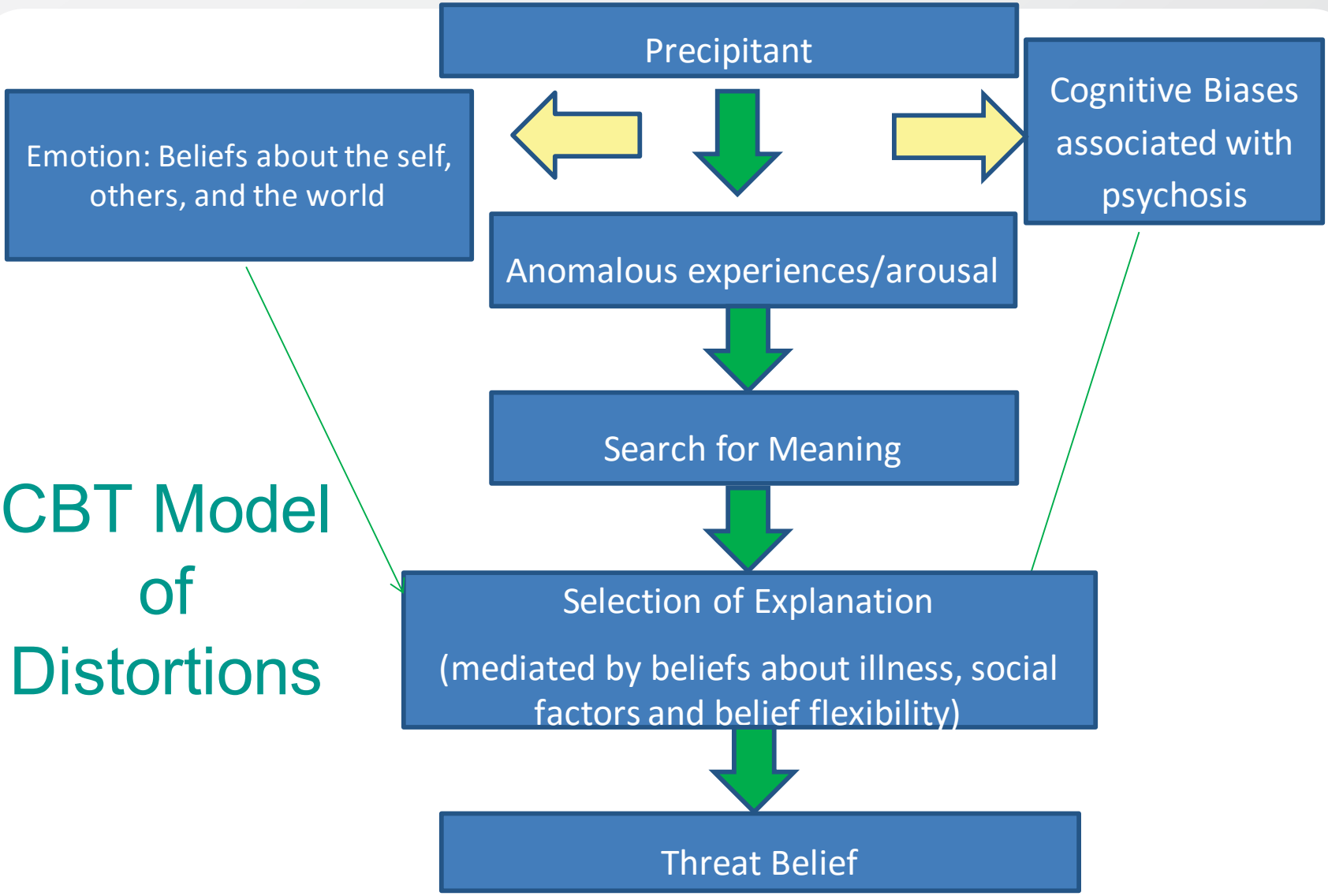
Members discuss how the interpretation and meaning that they give to events shape the experiences they have with psychosis

Cognitive Distortions

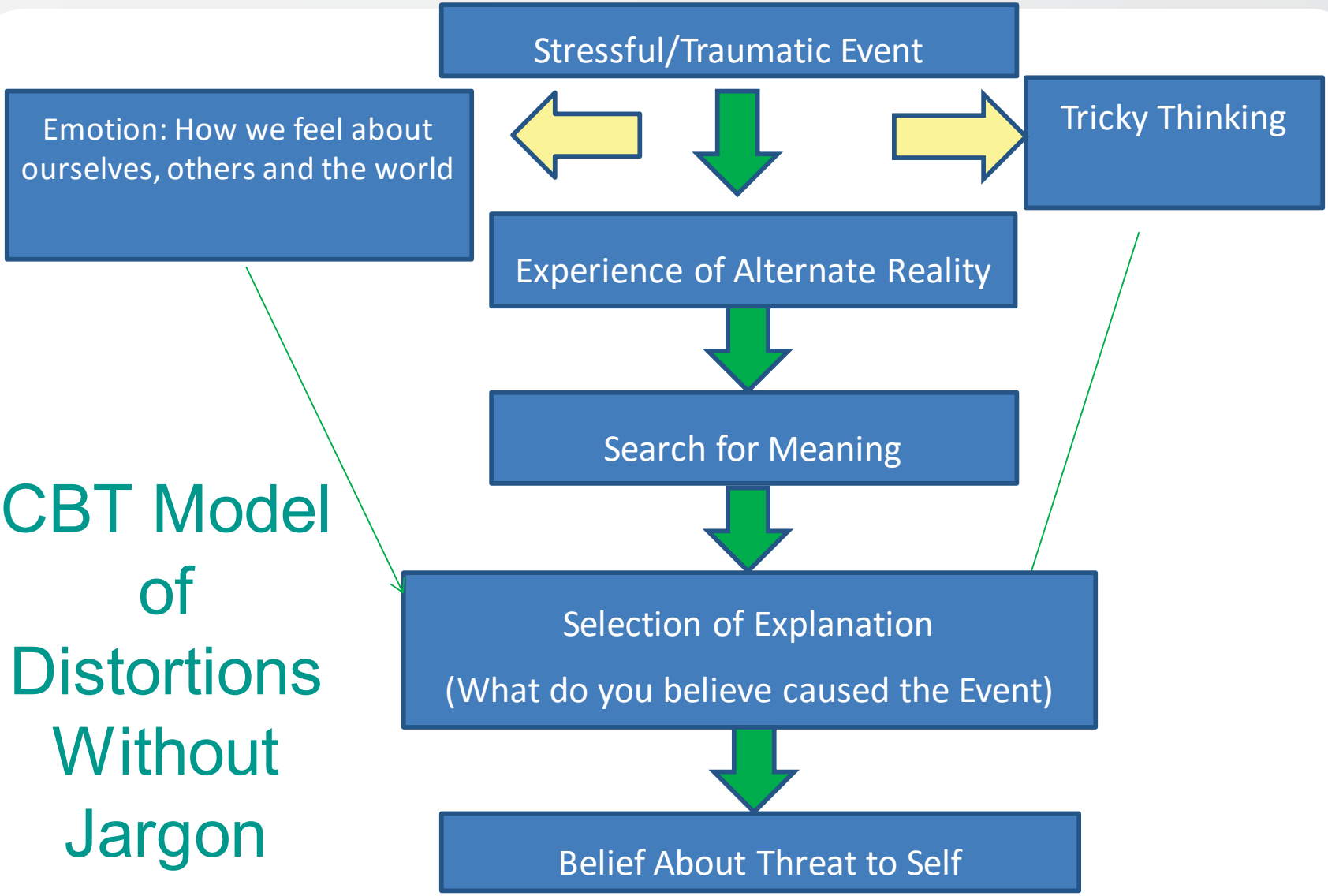
Some Examples

George's Cognitive Distortions

CBT Model of Distortions



CBT Model of Distortions Without Jargon



Example of Module: Voice Interview

Identifying Participants' Experience

Participants are asked to identify the voices they are hearing now

- Where is the voice coming from?

  Ask questions such as: When was the voice first heard?

  Where did come from?

- Why are you here?

  Ask questions such as: Why did you choose me?

  What purpose do you have in my life and journey?

Hearing Voices

Module: Voice Interview

Participants' Gather Information About Their Experience

Participants are asked to answer the following questions:

- Are they the same gender as you? (yes, no, mixed, don't know?)
- Are you hearing voices now (yes, no, maybe?)
- Do you see the voices as well? (yes, no, maybe?)
- Are the voices in the room?
- How are they speaking? (loud, quiet….)
- Are the Voices coming from within me?
  Or from someone/something else?
- Are they distinct, separate voices? mumbling, whispering, crowds?

Hearing Voices

Module: Voice Interview

Participants are asked to Monitor their Voices (COMET Workbook)

Time & Location	Event: What do the voices say?	Thought: What crossed your mind? Did you have any ideas or images?	How were you feeling? Sad, Happy, Angry, Scared on a scale from 0 - 100	Behaviour: What did you do?
			Sad Happy Angry Scared I am feeling ____ out of 100	

Module: Voice Interview

Participants' Identify Characteristics of their Voice(s)

Participants are asked to answer the following questions:

- Are the Voices clear? Is it difficult to understand what they are telling me? Do they use words? Music? Sounds?
- Do the Voices sound like me or someone else? Do I recognize the Voice as someone I know?
- If the Voice sounds like me, does it reflect how I am feeling?
  - If I feel unhappy, does the Voice punish me?
  - If I feel happy does the Voice encourage me?
  - If I feel afraid or vulnerable does the Voice threaten me?
  - If I feel good does the Voice go away, or is it easier for me to ignore?

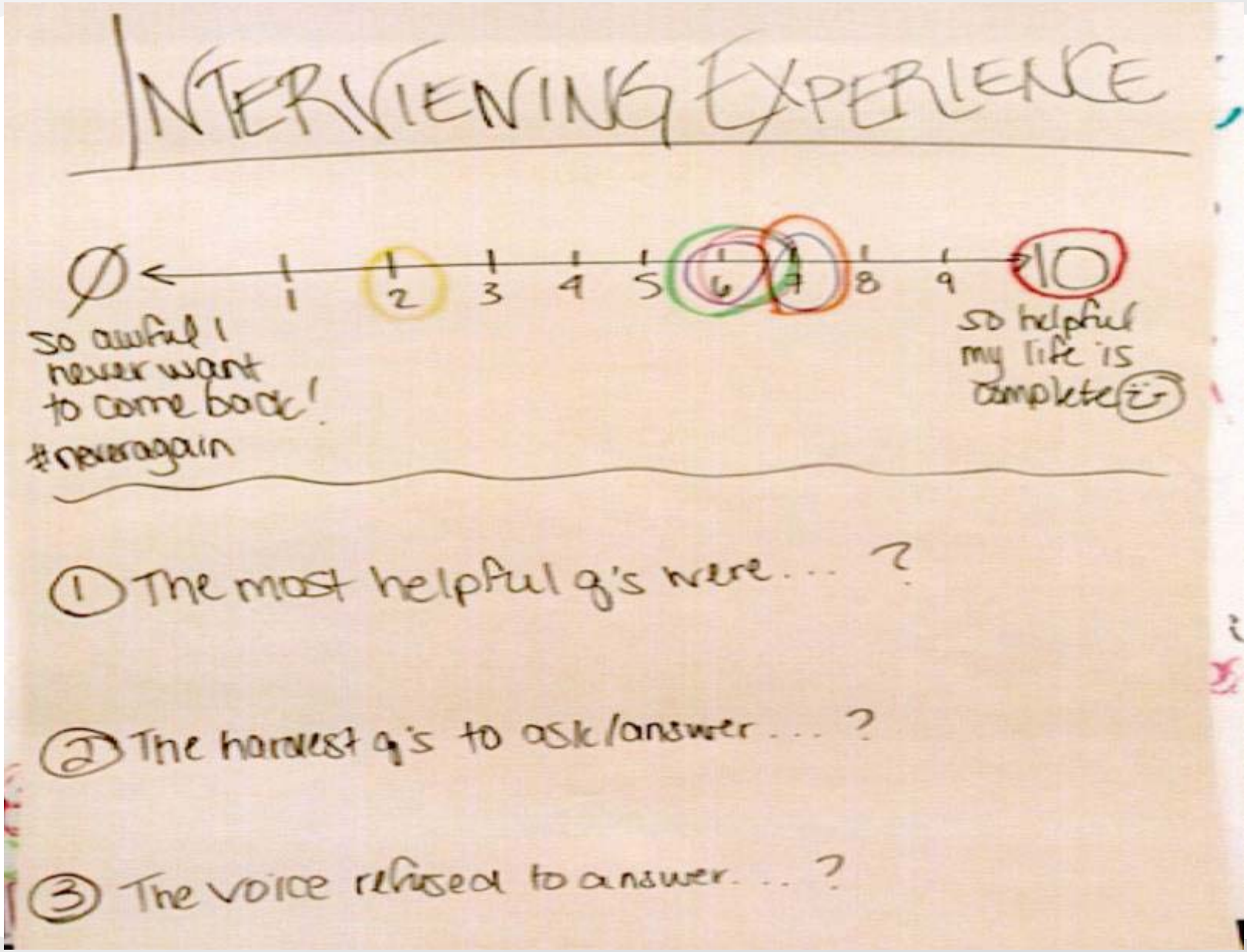
Hearing Voices

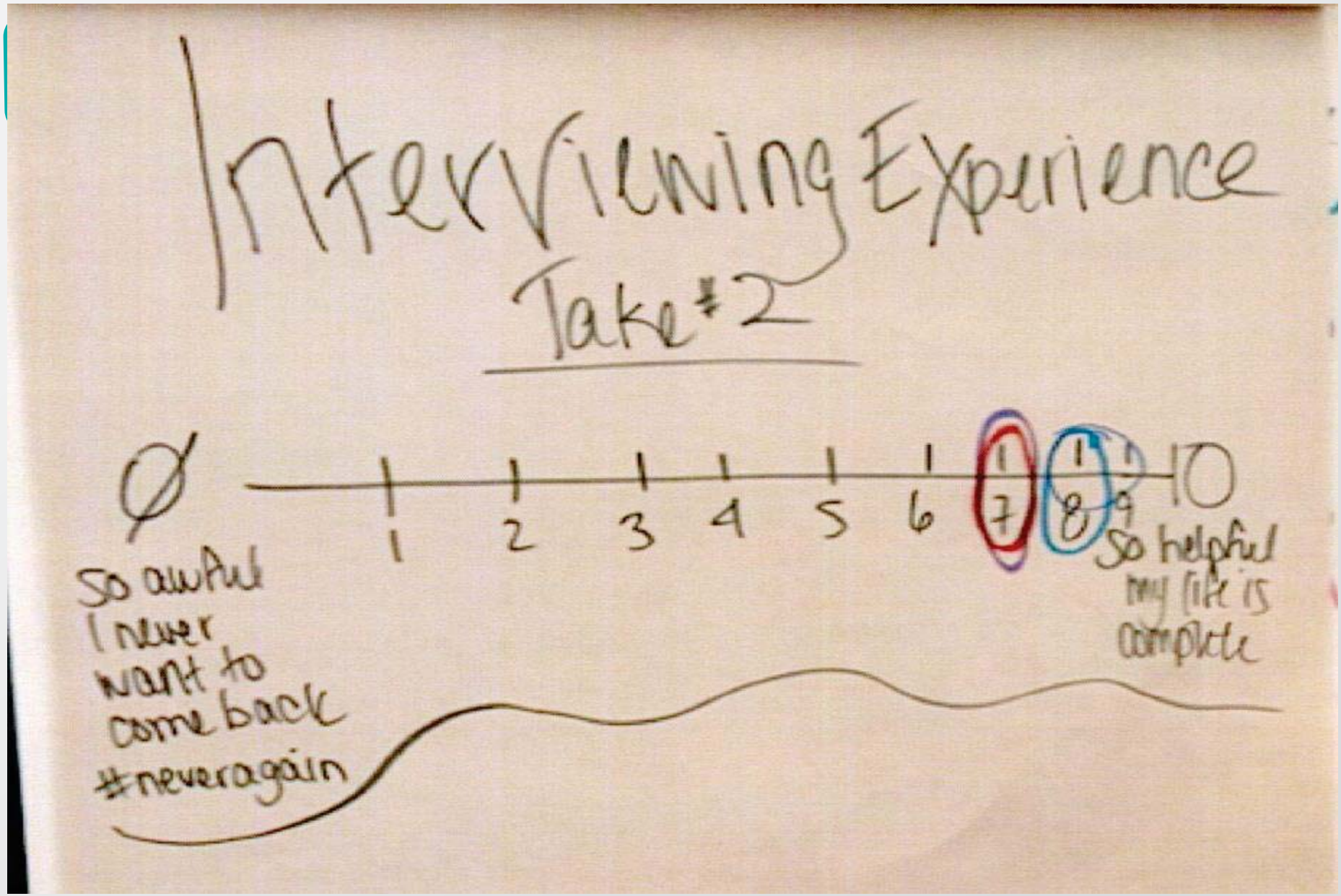
Module: Voice Interview

Participants' are asked how they Experience their Voice(s)

Participants are asked to answer the following questions:

- Can I understand the Voice?
- Are they thoughts that someone is placing in my brain/head?
- Is it telepathic communication?
- Is it other people's feelings and thoughts that I am sensitive to feel?
- Do I hear Voices through my ears or through some other way?
- Can other people hear these Voices? If not, why?
- Can the Voices influence you?
- Do you hear good Voices or bad Voices, or neutral?
- How often do you hear Voices? Is there a pattern?


INTERVIEWING EXPERIENCE
0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
So awful I never want to come back! #neveragain
So helpful my life is complete
1) The most helpful q's were... ?
2) The hardest q's to ask/answer... ?
3) The voice refused to answer... ?


Interviewing Experience
Take #2
0
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2
3
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7
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9
10
So awful I never want to come back #neveragain
So helpful my life is complete

#1) The most helpful q's were...

- Finding out where the voice comes from - before I couldn't recognize it.
- Monitoring your voices chart (exploring self: learn about how feelings & voice impact each other)
- q's that asked about characteristics of voice (helpful connecting feelings to type of voice hearing)
- understanding "content" & "context" of voice - save me more info

#2) The hardest question(s) to ask/answer were...

- if there are any patterns → hard to identify
- is it telepathic communication → hard to distinguish if reality based or part of hearing voices experience
- where is the voice coming from → this was tricky to identify source
- hard to refrain from becoming angry when the voice's purpose is to cause frustration

#3) The voice refused to answer...

out of 4

yes

no

Hearing Voices

Interviewing Techniques

One-on-One Sessions

- If unable to interview given level of distress or fear it can be helpful to support the interview process
- Avoid any judgement when recording the interview
- Radical Acceptance and Narrative Techniques can be helpful; skills or handouts from CBT/DBT can also be effective depending on how the individual is able to separate from what they are hearing
- Treat any Voice with respect; if Voice is negative, demonstrate effective boundary setting
- Support reframing the message

Hearing Voices

Example Module:
Dealing with Scary Voices

Some Voices can be helpful, comforting and funny. Others can be frightening and might instead:

- Threaten you or other people you care about
- Say nasty or hurtful things to you
- Say things that make you worry other people are going to hurt you
- Tell you to do things that you don't want to do
- Tell you not to do things that you want to do

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Hearing Voices

Module: Dealing with Scary Voices

Here are 6 Strategies to help you with a Voice that is giving you trouble

1. Say “No”, or “Not Yet”
   - No matter what the Voices say
     – You are in control of your own body
2. Challenge Them
   - Write a mantra
   - Talking back
   - Get a second opinion
3. Ignore Them

Module: Dealing with Scary Voices

4. Use Your Imagination

- Determine what the voices look like and find a way to lessen their power. Put a funny hat on their head, change the sound of the Voice etc.

5. Listen with Kindness

- Not agreeing with nasty Voices but responding with something like, “someone must have really hurt you to make you say such horrible things. I’m sorry you feel so badly”

6. Express Yourself

- If the Voice(s) sounds angry, hurt or distressed – you might have some feelings that need to be addressed. See if you can safely express your feelings.

Hearing Voices

Module: Dealing with Scary Voices

Developing your own Personal Tool Box

1. Identify what strategy you would like to use
2. Identify how you are feeling

There are 4 main types of things coping strategies can help with:

1. Calming & Safety
2. Blocking
3. Expressing
4. Empowering

Hearing Voices

Module: Dealing with Scary Voices

How are you Feeling?

- All of these strategies work best if you can identify how you are feeling when the Voice feels most powerful.
- Work on the most intense feeling that is most troubling first

Examples of Feelings

1. Worry, Stress and Anxiety

   How can you manage these feelings?

   - Distraction (get busy, dance, clean…..)
   - Relax (music, meditate, bubble bath…..)
   - Identify the cause of the feeling

Hearing Voices

Module: Dealing with Scary Voices

Examples of Feelings

2. Anger or Frustration

How can you manage these feelings?

- Express Yourself (shadow boxing, run, kick ball, scream….)
- Relax (deep breaths, relaxation, music, imagine a safe place..)
- Identify the cause of the feeling

3. Fear, Paranoia

How can you manage these feelings?

- Distraction (thinking games, read, music, talk to someone)
- Calm yourself (music, meditate, breathe, bubble bath…..)
- Create a safe space

Module: Dealing with Scary Voices

Examples of Feelings

4. Loneliness or Isolation

How can you manage these feelings?

- Feel good about yourself (treat yourself, ask for help, list 10 positive things about yourself….)
- Find a Connection (online support, peer support, friend….)
- Getting Out There (join a gym, hobby, volunteer…..)

5. Overwhelmed

How can you manage these feelings?

- Tell someone
- Breathe
- Ground yourself
- One step at a time

Alternate Realities

The Tie that Binds

- The Alternate Realities group was developed through needs identified by participants within the Hearing Voices group and members of the community

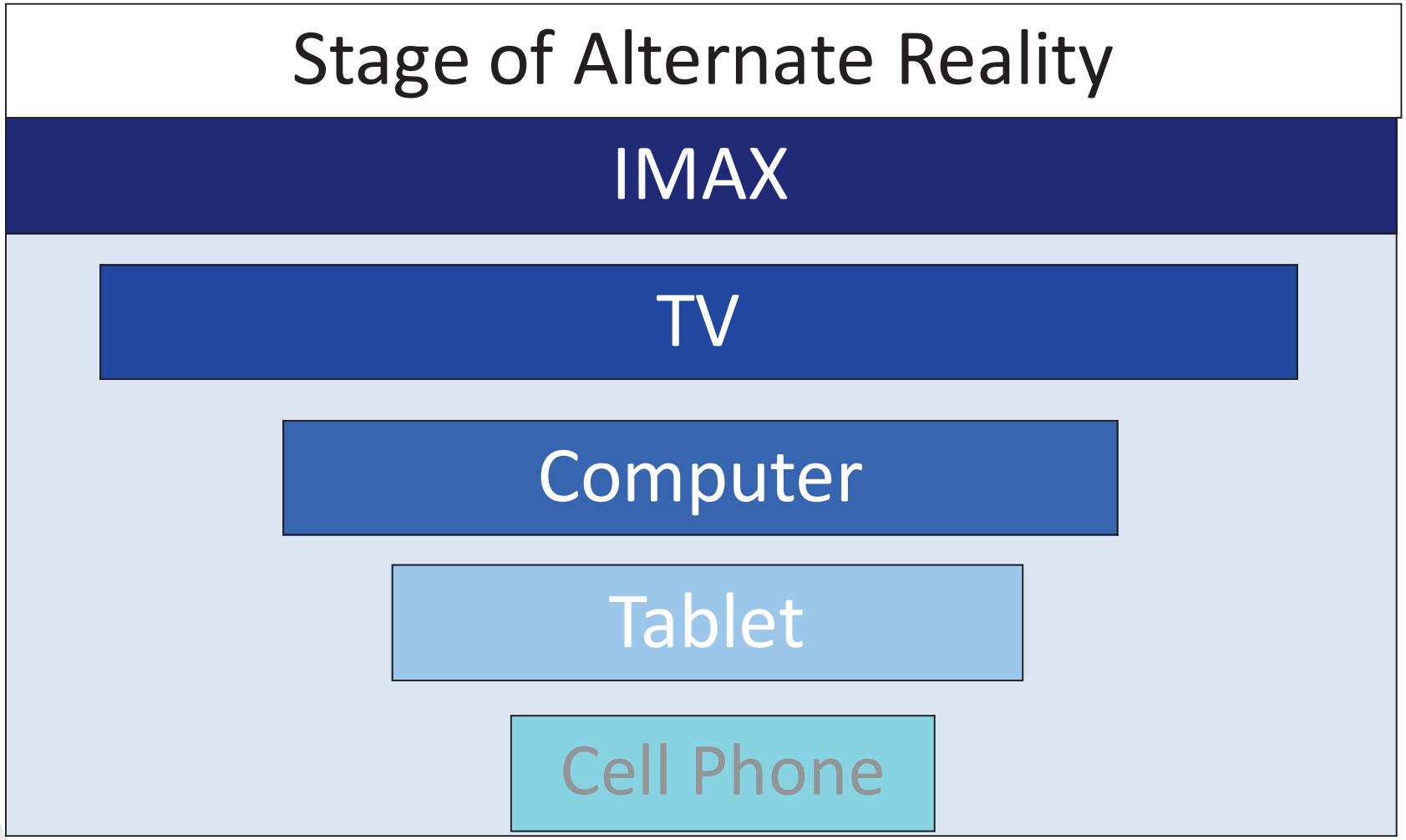
•Alternate Realities was created to provide a safe space for individuals who identify having an experience that was not be shared by others.

Guiding Principles of Alt Realities

Stages of Alternate Reality: Locating Self

- Participants learn and identify which types of Alternate Reality they've experienced and/or or are experiencing
- Locate each experience within the various stages of Alternate Reality
- Learn to identify various coping strategies that are helpful dependant upon which stage they are in
- Understanding that the stages are on a continuum and participants may move between stages depending upon factors such as stress levels, social opportunities (or lack thereof, diet, fear, perception of fear, etc.

Alternate Realities



Hearing Voices & Alternate Realities

The Similarities

- Once individual(s) are able to establish their type of Alternate Reality; position it on the continuum and identify relevant/helpful coping strategies…
- We move into interviewing and creating a time line for **each type of experience**
- Format remains the same for groups and one-on-one sessions

Interviewing Modules

Hearing Voices and Alternate Realities

- The Interviewing process for Alternate Realities and Voices is essentially the same.
- Interview the "Experience" in the same way as we interview the "Voice(s)"

For example:

- First identify what is the Alternate Reality – is it smelling, has God sent you on a quest, is someone following you?
- If there is more than one type of Alternate Reality:
  - we need to scale it(Imax, Monitor, Cell Phone)
  - Decide which one we will work on first (Imax down to Cell)

Alternate Realities Group

Example Module: #5 Investigating Alice

Synopsis of Alice

Alice in Wonderland is about a young girl, Alice, who is sitting along the bank of a river when she notices a rabbit in clothing run by. The rabbit says he is late and jumps down a hold through which Alice follows. This is where her adventure begins with many bizarre happenings and meetings with different people.

Alternate Realities Group

Example Module: #5 Investigating Alice

- Video Clip – Alice Grows and Shrinks

- While you watch the movie clip
  - Which character do you identify with
  - Which types of Alternate Reality can you name?
  - What emotions do the characters seem to be experiencing?

.

Investigating Alice

Alice Shrinks and Grows

Alice Shrinks and Grows

Alternate Realities Group

Example Module: #5 Investigating Alice

- Video Clip – Clothe the Girl

- While you watch the movie clip
  - Which character do you identify with?
  - Which types of Alternate Reality can you name?
  - What emotions do the characters seem to be experiencing?

.

Investigating Alice

Clothe the Girl

Clothe the Girl

Hearing Voices & Alternate Realities

What do our Participants say?

"Overall by participating (in the group) I was able to understand the hearing voices better, to do the coping strategies, practice mindfulness, and identify the time line as well, manage and take care of myself day to day better. I feel that I have improved my condition and on hearing voices as the voices are less now and I was able to do grounding techniques and better understand and be aware of the hearing voices. All this is a result of me participating in the hearing voices group every week"

Hearing Voices & Alternate Realities

What do our Participants say?

"Part of the course content that I like, is, how to work with voices to achieve success from a victimized state on toward a more controlled state of mind."

Hearing Voices & Alternate Realities

What do our Participants say?

"The Grounding techniques which I learned have been a helpful distraction from the voices. I have learned to use boundaries to cope with my illness. I now use assertive communication skill and my personal Bill of Rights when interacting with others in society. I learned when to say "No!"

Hearing Voices & Alternate Realities

What a Family Member said

"Today my brother tried the **Voices Group.** He came home to tell us how much he enjoyed the group. He then told me all about the voices he hears sometimes while using the machinery at work. Today, as far as I know, is the first time he has ever told anyone about hearing voices. And he is so comfortable and articulate talking about it with me. I think the voices have been with him on and off for most of his life. What a breakthrough. Thank you to all at RW for running this very special peer group that has given my brother the opportunity to connect and share for the first time in his life."

Hearing Voices & Alternate Realities

Thank You!

Contact

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