

Living with Aggressive Voices

Rufus May

www.rufusmay.com

Marcello Macario & Alessandra Santoni

Savona Sept 2011

Angry and controlling voices

- Originate from relationships that are controlling and aggressive
- Represent the need for control and the need to express difficult feelings such as hatred and anger. They may be protective in that they give the person a sense of control (albeit directed by a voice) and an outlet for dark emotions.

Aggressive Voices are ambassadors for buried thoughts and emotions

For example:

- Disappointment, regret, remorse.
- Self blame, shame, embarrassment, self doubt.
- Protective feelings such as outrage and fury.

What the voices say are big clues to these buried thoughts and feelings. We need to incorporate what they are saying into the work of self understanding and awareness, so we are no longer overwhelmed by their accusations.




Blaming Voices are very important

- They are telling us that there is a big need for the person to learn to defend themselves in a new way: To no longer be the scapegoat who takes all the blame.
- We can practice defending ourselves in order to deal with the voices uncomfortable message of blame.
- We can learn from voices what we need to face in ourselves and become more compassionate to: We often benefit from doing this work with a therapist or other supporter.


Exercise for two people

- One person says strongly “You are to blame”
- The other person says “I am not to blame”
- Repeat this many times then swap roles and repeat the exercise.



We can adapt this for the accusations or commands voices make

- ‘Kill yourself’... ‘I don’t want to kill myself’ or ‘I’ve decided I want to live.’
- ‘You are a slag’... ‘I am respectable’.
- ‘Everyone hates you’... ‘Some people like me’
- ‘Do what I say or I will kill your family’... ‘You cannot kill anybody. I am taking back control of my life.’



In practicing resisting the aggression and the controlling tactics of the voices we try to be assertive and constructive. We don't want to be trying to humiliate the voices. Where possible we can acknowledge their original protective role.

Setting boundaries

- We need to learn to do this in a firm but fair way.
- When we disprove propaganda such as the voice claiming it can kill people or refuse to do what a controlling voice is demanding we do not want to seek to punish the voice. If we can give it a different role as advisor or motivator, this can help the voice be integrated into our lives. A good example of this is going to a circuit training or martial arts class. Often aggressive voices join the person in attempting to complete the exercises or hit the punch bag.



Finding Grounding activities

- Is it important to find activities that we can immerse ourselves in.

For example: Yoga, martial arts, gardening, woodwork, scything, writing, socialising, spiritual practice, meditation, walking in nature, engaging with animals

Conclusion

- We need to understand the original protective functions of aggressive voices.
- Practice resisting their controlling tactics.
- Find outlets for difficult thoughts and feelings.
- Learn from voices what we need to face in ourselves and become more compassionate to.
- When we make progress in resisting aggressive voices, take a firm but fair approach and acknowledge what we are learning from them.
- Find grounding activities that we can invest our attention in.