

Toronto Hearing Voices Group – Our Charter

This Group ...

- **Is open to individuals who sometimes hear things, see things, smell things, feel things, and/or think things that others don't and that when they try to talk with others about it, *they get their freak on**.**
- Is founded by, run by people with first person lived experience of taboo experiences that get called “psychosis”
- Accepts that voices and visions and other experiences, especially those that get called “psychosis” are real experiences, and without reservation
- Respects each member as expert in their own experience
- Encourages self-determination
- Encourages us to find new, simple and descriptive language for talking about our experiences as a way to empower ourselves and each other.
- Actively discourages use of professionalized terms because of the dehumanizing power that can have over people lives and experience of living.
- Sanctions the freedom to talk about anything not just voices and visions
- Accepts people as they are and regards everyone as both equal and worthy of our respect.
- Makes no assumption of illness.
- Focuses primarily on sharing experiences, support and empathy.
- We share our own experiences and refrain from espousing theories we might hold about others' experiences and others' lives.
- Is a community to which people can choose to belong; a self-help group, we are not a clinical group offering treatment nor therapy, and we are not a mental health service - so neither accepts nor requires referrals.

Each of us...

- Is free to interpret our own experiences in any way we choose.
- Is free to challenge social norms.
- Makes our own choice to come, to stay and go when we like.
- Chooses not to join the chorus of those telling each other what is wrong with them and what they need do.
- Chooses not to tell others how to interpret their experience.
- Chooses to co-create safe space for each other by abiding with this charter – or to come back when we can.
- Takes personal responsibility for our own choices and actions.
- Takes responsibility for expressing any needs we may have – we do not hold others responsible for guessing what we might need.

* Note if you do not yourself have these experiences yourself but want to support those who do, or if you're just curious and want to learn more then we ask that you first join us at the Hearing Voices Café.