

Using Cognitive Behavioral Therapy on the Term Schizophrenia

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Throughout my lifetime I have experienced symptoms of schizophrenia, such as hallucinations, dissociations, and paranoia. At times, these symptoms have influenced my life in a very profound way. A lot of the times I did not realize the impact the symptoms had on me and the people that I cared most about. Later on in life, I discovered the ability to identify these symptoms of schizophrenia and I used them to label my own psychic processes vs me going to a medical doctor or psychiatrist and having them label and diagnose by authority. This ability to label and classify my own strains of symptoms led me to a new kind of empowerment. It led me to a very deep self-knowledge. I believe that it is within this self-knowledge that resides a hidden strength. To me, having the self-knowledge to identify my own symptomologies has led me to see schizophrenia in a different way. My personal context of schizophrenia is about self-identifying, which provides me the chance to modify my perceptions to match the outside world, and at the same time allowing my symptoms of schizophrenia to rise and fall without a full-on medical containment. In conclusion, for myself, I believe it is possible to have the illness of schizophrenia and being able to both self-identify and self-control symptoms so that my personal sometimes distorted perceptions can be recognized, contained, and then flipped around in order to be more socially in-tune with the current community culture communication.

How Do I Understand Schizophrenia and How to I Best Manage It?

One example of psychosis that I remember like it was yesterday, happened in March 2014. It was the most terrifying experience of constantly hearing the sentence, “why don’t you just give it up and go to Jerusalem to get shot - it would save you a lot of time and energy.” This phrase repeated 1 night, starting at about 6 PM and continuing until well after 8 PM. It kept repeating and repeating and repeating. The repeating words were like a record player being stuck in the same line and instead of moving forward to the next sequence, it just kept on skipping into the same words over and over again. The constant same flow

was so comforting and at the same time traumatizing for me that I did not know how to acknowledge this sequence. Instead it was like I needed, in some dire urgency to listen to this audio. I listened and listened mostly without knowing I was actually listening. It just felt soothing in a strange way and it had some kind of caringness to the words that seemed to be like the voice of a friend—but there was no one there and no one around. I listened but most of the time I was in an unconscious mode of listening. Like listening to the radio and hearing the voice but not taking it that seriously because initially I was not fully aware of the fact that this was an audio hallucination, in fact I felt like it was part of my existence, like the lights on were part of my reality. For about one and a half hours the voice sequencing played on. Then, I went outside into the darkness and stood at a crossroad intersection with numerous jagged parts of tall buildings surrounding me. Somehow at that moment I become acutely aware of the voice saying, “why don’t you just give it up and go to Jerusalem to get shot - it would save you a lot of time and energy.” This time—perhaps it was because I was surrounded by almost absolute darkness and was alone with this voice—that I could not deny its’ existence. In actual fact it felt like a voice that surrounded not just my ears, but it seemed to effect my whole mind, body, and soul in 1 swoop. It touched my senses in a deep psychosomatic way. It was like I was hypnotized and a spell was put on me and it was like I knew, without a shadow of a doubt, to go to Jerusalem as that was my calling and my destiny. This was a command hallucination.

I do not remember exactly what happened next but I remember bits and pieces. For example, while I was experiencing this, it was like a film camera rolling. It was like the movement of an old film projector was rolling film on small frames of black and white blocks. I am not sure if the hallucination then switched into another mode or if the moving film reel and the command hallucination were linked or separate while this was happening—I was in an automatic pilot mode (dissociation) and could walk into a building, go up the escalators, open my locker door and close it, punch in the time clock and go back downstairs to the section of

the department I was working in, almost completely in a trance alone with zero or minimal interactions. While I was physically standing in the department my mind felt locked into a mental state that I was only partially conscious of. I do not recall the next details, nor the next days much. It crossed my mind to go to the hospital, but at the same time the call to go to Jerusalem seemed powerful and it almost felt like a betrayal to even consider the hospital because that would mean undermining my calling to go to Jerusalem and not taking that calling seriously. Somehow that seemed like the wrong choice and a sin. The residual effects of this command hallucination simmered down over the days and I began to have more and more contact with reality. I seemed petrified to do anything or tell anyone I know about it. On that same note I knew this was a command hallucination as they are part of the treatment-resistant psychosis symptoms sets. I was aware about the dangerousness of the symptom and that it could not be stopped or cured. So, somehow I either consciously or unconsciously weighed the pros and cons of a hospitalization and made the choice not to do it. The effects were that, after the peak of the psychotic break, with the audio hallucination and combined command hallucination plus simultaneously occurring psychosomatic symptoms, dissociation (unconsciously being able to slip into an automatic pilot mode), and the visual hallucination (of the movie reel moving)—I continued to operate semi-functionally—whereby the peak of the break subsided and naturally declined bringing reality closer to my perception. This is how I survived my psychotic break. It took me months to really come to terms with it because the voice seemed so full of conviction it was hard to ignore. Now it is like a strong memory. This experience I found to be unique only to me. No one would be able to understand its nature like I can. The symptom strain seemed to have been hooked to my DNA and somehow it felt like it was some kind of storyboard coming to the surface. I did a self-investigation in order to find out if I was Jewish, as why else would I be instructed to go to Jerusalem? I knew

that I was Roman Catholic from my mother's side, but what about my father? He had to take Roman Catholic lessons to be able to marry my mother. So I wondered if he was Jewish. I wondered if my ancestors were part of the Holocaust. I asked my father and he said "no." But I contacted the Jewish Museum in Amsterdam, the Anne Frank House, and the Amsterdam Archives anyway and then I found out that my father's mother was Dutch Reformed and my grandmother's grandparents, were Fredik de Haan and Clasina Boerdonk and Bartel van der Berg and Anna Takes—all were Dutch Reformed—no mention of any Judaism. My next question, was why then did I have a command hallucination to go to Jerusalem? I then no longer followed the idea of Judaism but instead looked at my father and learnt that he was born in Amsterdam in January 1944 what is known as "The Hunger Winter" where there was German occupation in Amsterdam and whereby thousands of individuals with a Jewish background were taken away, right in the city where my father was born and at the same time. This dawning led me to 2 conclusions and they could be joint or separate—first that it was a miracle that my father was born in the first place because there was virtually zero food in Amsterdam at that time of German occupation and second that somehow I felt the birth of my father and the historic events of that time of his birth in Amsterdam had significance to me and the command hallucination. Somehow I felt the incredible terror, fear, and helplessness my grandparents must have experienced at the time of my father's birth. I believe these feelings were transferred to me through DNA strains perhaps as paranoia which manifested in my command hallucination. I think I managed the psychotic experience by dismantling the hallucination and bringing personal meaning to the content of my psychotic break. It was only through this type of rebuilding that I transformed this symptom (command hallucination) of schizophrenia into a logical explanation, which helped me find meaning for my unique command hallucination.