

MODULE II: EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISES

Exercise 1: Auditory Hallucinations

To the instructor

Objective

The purpose of this first exercises is to sensitize the ombudsman to the experience of an auditory hallucination. There are several ways to do this. Three options are presented. Mary Ellen Copeland – see references - also has cassettes available for purchase that simulate the experience.

Method

To begin, the instructor asks if anyone can describe what hallucinations are. Hallucinations, the instructor should explain, are a symptom of psychosis in which a person hears (auditory), sees (visual), smells (olfactory), tastes (gustatory) or feels (tactile) something that isn't there. The instructor then asks trainees to pair up. One person stands behind the other who should be sitting. The person standing is instructed to lean over and continually whisper something in the person's ear (such as a nonsense rhyme) and to interject it with comments about the person to whom they are speaking. For example, "*Mary had a little lamb, little lamb little lamb the lamb is white you're wearing a (color) shirt. I don't like your shoes. He followed her to school one day he's following you*") While the partner is talking to the seated person, the instructor also tries to get the attention of the seated person to go on with the class. The instructor may ask the seated members questions, read something or try to elaborate about some point from the just concluded lecture. This is an attempt to simulate auditory hallucinations. This should last just about two minutes or so. . An alternative method is to divide the group into groups of three. One person, who will be "the voice" stands behind the listener and reads something to them. This can be a nonsensical script as above or something more organized. A sample script is provided on the last page. The third person, acting as an ombudsman sits in front of the listener and converses as s/he might with a person s/he is meeting for the first time in an adult home: for example, 'hello my name is_____. I'm with the New York State Ombudsman program, etc.'

A third approach is to have the listener sit and listen to a walkman (a radio or cassette player with a headset would also work) while the person in the ombudsman role tries to engage with them.

Allow ombudsmen a few minutes to discuss their reactions before moving on to the second exercise.

Exercise 2: Paranoia

Objective

The purpose of this exercise is to sensitize the ombudsman to the experience of paranoia.

Method

Ombudsmen are asked to close their eyes and recall the most frightening movie they have ever seen. To help stimulate their memories, the instructor may wish to offer the most frightening movie s/h has ever seen as an example.

The instructor should then “walk” the ombudsman through the experience with the following script:

Remember how you felt going to the movie. You probably had certain expectations; that is, that you would be frightened. You may have heard from someone else that it was scary or you may have guessed it from the title or from knowing about the director’s reputation. Recall how you felt in the early part of the movie, knowing that something bad was bound to happen. Recall how you started picking up little clues from what was said or the way someone was acting or from the music. Recall how as the clues mounted, the tension also mounted and the music began building to a crescendo. You were likely tense, on the edge of your seat, waiting for something to happen. Then it did and the tension was released, only to begin again in the next scene.

Now, keeping your eyes closed, try to remember the feeling just before something happened. This will give you a little idea of what the paranoid person feels all the time: on constant alert, looking for clues, waiting for something bad to happen, knowing the worst *will* happen but not when or from where or perpetrated by whom. Since much of the paranoia is delusional, nothing ever really happens and the tension doesn’t get discharged. There is only enduring apprehension.

Now open your eyes and let’s discuss your experience.

The instructor will want to read this script in a low, but audible voice, preferably walking around the room to add to the experience of not knowing where the sound is coming from. Frequently remind the participants to keep their eyes closed. If any participant looks unduly frightened, add a reassuring remark that you’re not going to touch anyone or sneak up on them, you’re just going to walk around the room.

Sample script for “the voice” during the hallucinations exercise.

“Don’t trust him/her. Don’t trust anyone here. (let your voice fade to a whisper). People will hurt you. Yes, they will. Your family is in on it. They’re plotting against you (then say the person’s name a few times in a soft voice). This is a bad place. (make some low sounds: humming or clicking noises and then be silent for 3 or 4 seconds). This is a very bad place (be silent again for a second or two). You are so stupid. Why are you letting them keep you here? You’re a bad person. That’s why you have to stay in a bad place. (Silence). You’re not a bad person. You’re a good person. You don’t need to be here. Go home, home, home. Home is where the hearth is. What is the matter with you? Why do you keep shitting there? S/he is full of shit. S/he doesn’t know you. S/he he doesn’t like you. We like you. Run, run, run. See Jack run. (Silence) Go, go, go.