

# Hearing voices not always negative

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Researchers at Britain's Manchester University have said hearing voices is not necessarily a sign of mental illness.

Many people who report hearing voices in their heads believe them to be a comforting or inspiring influence in their lives and it may be normal, researchers said.

"We know that many members of the general population hear voices but have never felt the need to access mental health services," Manchester University researcher Aylish Campbell told the BBC. "Some experts even claim that more people hear voices and don't seek psychiatric help than those who do. It doesn't seem to be hearing voices in itself that causes the problem. What seems to be more important is how people go on to interpret the voices.

"If a person is struggling to overcome a trauma or views themselves as worthless or vulnerable, or other people as aggressive, they may be more likely to interpret their voices as harmful, hostile or powerful," Campbell said.

"Conversely, a person who has had more positive life experiences and formed more healthy beliefs about themselves and other people might develop a more positive view of their voices."

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