



# *Work Smart Live Smart*

## **De-Mystifying Delusions and Hallucinations**

**By**  
**Beverly Beuermann-King,**  
**CSP, Stress and Wellness Specialist**

Repeatedly, when we hear someone refer to hallucinations or delusions, our mind conjures up images of a person who is crazy and who is a threat to our safety. Often we think of someone with Schizophrenia. However, these two symptoms can be a part of a variety of illnesses.

Delusions and hallucinations are the psychotic symptoms that someone may experience when the brain is not functioning properly. They can be a part of the illness of Schizophrenia, but can also occur in someone who is experiencing deep Depression or Bipolar Disorder. Hallucinations and delusions are not the same thing, but can play on each other.

Delusions are 'false beliefs' that distort the person's view of reality. The delusions may be around identity or situations surrounding the person. Someone experiencing a delusion may believe that they are the Son of God or the Queen of England. They may believe that they are being followed, watched, or the victim of an evil plot.

A person holding this false belief cannot be 'convinced' by sheer evidence that their belief is not true. It is also quite possible for people to hold two completely opposite ideas in their belief system. Only after years of experience with their illness, may some people develop insight into their delusions as being untrue.

Hallucinations are 'false senses' that affect their sense of sight, sound, taste, touch, or smell. Hallucinations may involve the experience of seeing spiders crawling over the room, tasting poison in their food, feeling a hand on their shoulder, smelling gas being pumped into their apartment, or hearing a voice out of nowhere.

Hallucinations may influence the form of someone's delusions. A person, who experiences the hallucination that their food tastes funny may also conclude that someone is poisoning them.

The most common hallucinations may be around the experiencing of voices. These voices are not like the internal voice of ours that reminds us to pick up things from the grocery store or helps us to work out problems. It is an 'external' type voice that the person hears. It is sometimes a recognizable voice from the past and yet for others it may be an unrecognizable voice. Some hear the voices throughout the day and night, while others may only hear them when they feel highly stressed.

Generally, the voices are negative and target the person at a self-esteem level. The voice may tell them how awful, incompetent, or unworthy they are. They may tell the person that their

family would be better off without them and that they should commit suicide. In fact, 10% of all people with Schizophrenia may commit suicide because they are so tormented by their voices or because their voices have told them to do so.

Occasionally, the voices are funny and you may notice a person laughing and conversing back with the voice that they hear. In other cases you may notice that the person is talking over their voice, talking faster - trying to get their thoughts out before being interrupted by their voice, or they may not be able to carry on a conversation at all because of the disruption that their voice causes to their thinking and speaking processes.

These delusions and hallucinations make it very difficult for the person to cope in our society and trying to find coping strategies can be a never-ending process. Stress plays a major factor in bringing the delusions and hallucinations about or making them worse. Medications can ease these symptoms, but utilizing effective stress management techniques can also assist. Relaxation, music, deep breathing, quiet space, exercise and hobbies can relax the person or distract them from their experience.

Experiencing hallucinations and delusions does not mean that the person is dangerous or 'crazy'. They do show that the brain chemistry is not working appropriately and when identified can point the way to effective treatment.

Stress and wellness specialist, **Beverly Beuermann-King** translates current research and best practices information into a realistic, accessible and practical approach through her dynamic stress and wellness workshops, on-line articles, e-newsletters and media interviews and through a collaboration called *Awakening The Workplace*. Visit [www.WorkSmartLiveSmart.com](http://www.WorkSmartLiveSmart.com) for more on Beverly and her wellness work.

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