

## Original Paper

# Combatting Stress and Motivational Problems in Psychoses

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### Abstract

*Schizophrenia is thought to be stress induced and there are many things that can make it worse. Yet the mental health system can help with all of this. These include the added stresses of things that drove me mad in the first place, the onset of pain hallucinations, moving out of sheltered accommodation and others. This article is an account of the coping strategies and the techniques that have been useful in combatting the stresses that cause and perpetuate the illness. Finally it looks at what can help with the negative motivational symptoms of the illness.*

### Keywords

*schizophrenia, stress, motivation*

### Introduction

Schizophrenia is thought to be stress induced and after experiencing a number of the things life can throw at you I began to experience delusional symptoms and auditory hallucinations. It started out with a voice saying you have failed when I had to give up my PhD and you are not useful enough to be kept alive after having caused 9/11. Then I began to experience thoughts and feeling that I was going to be punished for this caused by the stress.

### Methodology

This is a personal account of stress induced psychoses and the motivational problems that arise from the illness of schizophrenia. It details what has helped in terms of coping and then overcoming negative symptoms.

### My story

Having had the news that our family business went bankrupt there seemed little hope life would turn out the way I wanted. My parents ended up living in a caravan and we lost the house I had grown up in and at the same time I ended a relationship in which the pain from that was intense. I ended up trying to hold down my research which was a lot of pressure while living in a freezing cold slum. The

experience was overwhelming.

All in all that was too much and I snapped. In addition to a nervous breakdown I went into shock and never came out. I could scarcely believe it was really happening and was stunned by the experience. Later in the illness the realisation I had caused 9/11 drove me deeper into shock and kept me there. The causes due to the illness were more of a shock than the initial stress factor which triggered it.

To start I made a suicide attempt. After having given up my job and studies there didn't seem like there was anything left. This was the low point and it was then I first started to experience the psychoses> The onset and development the illness was very gradual but as it progressed to a more serious condition my ability to cope with was deteriorating at the same time and the two together made the situation particularly acute.

Having been made homeless I went to the top of the housing list and was found a modern flat in the local town. That helped me cope with life so far but I was on my own in life at this point and managed to survive financially. I saw my mother once or twice a week and having a certain amount of support the stress levels were not as bad as they were going to get later in the progression of the illness.

Although provided for so far that still left a lot of problems in life and was still in shock from it and much stressful emotional pain and it was at this point I started hearing voices. It started out very imperceptibly with a quiet reminder I had failed my PhD and by the growing realisation that I wasn't useful enough to be kept alive for causing 9/11. I was aware of this delusional and at the same time was aware of the voices watching me.

Even having proper material conditions didn't solve my problems as I was becoming socially and emotionally isolated and away from support networks like friends and family and began to feel on my own with the voices. Living away from home meant I only saw my mother once or twice a week and without being able to concentrate on work or afford any leisure activity meant there was no distraction to what was happening.

As time went on the banging noise got more frequent and I began to think more about my thoughts of having caused 9/11 and that was why I thought the neighbours were banging on the walls. The more I thought about 9/11 the more I heard the noise until it was on my mind 24/7 without any let up from which I could rest from the symptoms. It was getting more stressful.

It became a constant state of anxiety which I could not shake instead of coping with the noise. The anxiety could not be got rid of but was not a mild condition as it went on all the time and at the back of my mind I was getting very afraid and physically worn out at the same time. I had to have shelter so there was no escaping the noise.

I was in a state of mind where I had to keep functional with what I was experiencing as if I lost the ability to look after myself things would only get more stressful and painful so I had to find a way to cope with the noise. I had to keep a lid on the fear it was causing and tried not to panic though all the same the noise began to get more stressful as time went by as there was no let up.

The stress perpetuated the symptoms and added to other things in life which were also stressful such as being cut off from work and social contact...I had lost my existing friendships and my job by being too obsessed with the noise to concentrate on anything else and the thought was that the stigma of what I was experiencing cut me off from everyone and my stress levels were increasing.

Over a number of years the punishment never happened but in the mean time I was tortured with other symptoms. Every time I thought of being a responsible for 9/11 I was hearing a banging noise reminding me of what was going to happen. The strange thing was nothing ever did but the banging noise never went and kept being reminded something might happen to me in the way of punishment.

It started to get frightening and eventually I panicked and tried to move back to my home village which was a huge mistake as although I was closer to my parents they didn't have much more time to spend with me. I thought that getting away from the neighbours in my town flat might solve the problem but the banging noise followed me and the house move didn't work.

The new house was another slum and I had the same experience of life that caused me to go over the edge and drove me round the twist. This time I had a repeat of what eventually caused the initial psychoses but with the psychoses added on this time. The two together caused a further deterioration combined with a continuation of the symptoms over time. I gradually began to deteriorate further.

It started to occur to me that the neighbours were reading my thoughts as the banging was in response to me feeling guilty about 9/11 and might be passing information onto other people which might get back to the CIA. I had to stop this outcome before it happened and that meant getting away from them again and moving house one more time wasn't going to work.

Once again I began to panic and run out of the house this time but I could still hear the banging noise outside and seemed to be coming from other places in the village. I had to get away from populated areas but that too didn't work as I could still hear the banging emanated from houses and villages in the distance and there was no escaping it.

I had to be careful what I was thinking as the voices were watching all this and might become more critical if I started feeling culpable for 9/11 and was under constant pressure from this at the same time as hearing the noise and that compelled me to try and escape from it otherwise the problems I was experiencing in having to run away from people would be much worse.

I began to realise the danger I was in wandering around in the night and an imperative to survive took over my mind and I realised I had to get home safely. This provided a overwhelming motive to stay alive in spite of what was happening and got me home without giving in to exhaustion. Once at home I crashed out and got some sleep and the next day I was rested for a while.

It began to strike me what had happened and the danger I was in when out at night. This again came as a shock and I couldn't really believe I had actually done it. At the same I began to worry about a repeat episode as it appeared that if I panicked again there might be a repeat of what had happened and the new danger I was in. Things were getting worse again and there was nothing I could do about it.

Like the trauma I had been through with life I couldn't believe the schizophrenic symptoms were really happening. This kept me in shock but fortunately I never had another breakdown which allowed some resilience for dealing with the psychoses once I started to get help with it. That took some time and there were years of suffering with it before it was diagnosed.

Living in a slum again I found myself in a dangerously similar situation to the stressful environment that caused the illness in the first place and once again as the business continued its slow decline our family home was at risk and we would be made homeless again. I wanted to live at home to cope with the symptoms but that put a lot of pressure on my mother who was now suffering from depression.

This was soon followed by my mother getting divorced and the emotional impact of that added to her depression. I was so caught up by the psychoses at this point that the added stress of this and emotional pain of this didn't really affect me as much as it might but it certainly didn't help. I needed support but my mother had her own problems and wasn't able to rely on as much as she might.

Moving home was a mistake as I wasn't coping with my material surroundings and I began to realise should have stuck at my job but eventually it was too late for this. Moving house is one of the most stressful things you can do and this was combined with a lot of other stress factors and so it was no surprise the situation with the illness was going to get worse. This even when family support might have been more available.

I couldn't look after myself with the worsened symptoms and unlike the flat in town I was less motivated to deal with the illness by keeping the place tidy and that made coping with the illness worse and myself more depressed as the slum I was living in got even worse. I couldn't bear my surroundings and preferred wandering round the country side at night was more stressful but less depressing.

I wasn't bearing up with not having the money to feed myself, pay the bills to keep warm and not sleeping. I ran up huge debts just trying to keep warm and again life was becoming more stressful as I lacked financial safety. My family helped me financially here so this problem had a solution but other factors soon emerged what made things more stressful again.

I was in some emotional pain as I didn't want all this to be happening to me. This in addition to the emotional pain of losing the business and home but fear has a way of shutting down emotions and I was so caught up in the delusional thinking that this thought only occurred to me now and again though in addition the fear was causing some pain on its own.

It wasn't safe being out in the night and all weathers and one night I ended walking through a blizzard with just a jumper. I began to realise I was in danger of being mugged or run over and this in addition to the paranoid ideas and voices which were becoming more pronounced. It gave me an imperative to get home again and once there some feeling of safety returned and I calmed down a bit until the next time I panicked and ran out of the house.

It did occur to me that I thought I was going mad added to this to my fear of being locked up into a lunatic asylum. If other people were aware of what was happening they might think I was mad too and

the stigma especially the labelling began to surface in my mind. I had to hide away from everybody which reduced normal social contact and the possibilities of emotional support.

Another low point then followed as I tried to make another attempt at suicide. I soon found out that the exhaustion meant I wasn't strong to do this but I started to get depressed that things had got so bad. I really couldn't believe the way my life was turning out and just ended up going through the motions with it not aware of all the problems I was facing.

I wasn't often in emotional pain about 9/11 as I was more concerned to survive the experience having been in danger this thought was uppermost in my mind as the consequences of giving in meant giving up any hope of surviving it which would have been worse than the fear I was experiencing so it kept me going. A kind of mental override. My safety needs were shutting down any emotional pain.

When out the fear went over my head and only rarely got the full force of it. It came back to me as a constant state of anxiety which never let up. It could have been worse but was exhausting none the less as it never let up. The walking and not sleeping added to the physical effects of exhaustion and I became pale and gaunt.

Occasionally the psychoses about 9/11 hit me as I realised I had been talked about in the media or was being spied on this brought on other delusional beliefs like people were reporting my whereabouts to the CIA. As things got worse other delusional beliefs began to appear and I got thought connected with the spying neighbours like my whereabouts were being tracked by satellite and being broadcast on television and the internet. I got worse and worse.

During the times of peaks in the terror triggered by harming the people around me with my thoughts I felt a stabbing emotional pain again and was terrified that I was hurting people that might vouch for even when I had caused 9/11. This made the situation seem hopeless but I never gave up hope as you are not supposed to so again things went over my head.

One distressing factor was I had delusions of grandeur like I had invented computers so I might be too useful to be killed and hanging onto this thought at the worst times helped me get through things. Together with the hope I had the strength to get through some of the symptoms but the impact was shattering on my nervous system and it became obvious to other people I wasn't coping.

After that my mother began to recognise my psychotic symptoms as schizophrenia and that realisation superseded any other problems and I began to get some family support and they all began to rally round me but it meant they put pressure on me to see a psychiatrist. That caused me to disguise my illness and before I was eventually sectioned I had to keep quiet about it getting the full force of the symptoms.

After what I had experienced with the illness it seemed like a god send. The illness had turned my whole life upside down and life as I knew had come to an end. I had been living in a world that was entirely delusional where everybody was a CIA informant and was out to get me. Hospital was a refuge from what I was experiencing and from feeling lost in a world full of evented terrors like the banging noise I was taken away from all that.

Hospital was a sanctuary in another way as life as I had known it up until this point had come to an end. I had lost my job and had to give up my research which I never really got over and continued to cause much stress. I had also lost my friends through stigma as well as my family home and business. Nothing was going to repair the damage done and I was living in a slum. With nothing left in life hospital seemed an answer.

During my stay I got to know the nurses very well and even had an individual nurses assigned specifically to me. They were intelligent and had good social skills which meant they were emotionally supportive. There were things to do and though not academic I could still be satisfied by reading the national newspapers. My family came to visit me each day and I began to adapt to the changes in my life and start to write about mental health.

In hospital many of the stresses were relieved compared to the onset of my illness. It didn't just have social contact but also food warmth and shelter which wasn't of top hotel quality I wasn't bothered as I was being still fed. It seemed a world away from the slum I had lived in and my levels one needs were being satisfied on the Maslow Tree. In hospital I began to grow again which was very therapeutic and soothed the stress

I was able to eat and sleep in hospital and this gave the strength to stand up to the symptoms of being afraid. Talking to the nurses I began to realise I had some insight into my condition and began to wonder how I had never been assassinated for 9/11 if everyone was reading my mind about it. That made me feel a bit safer and I progressed up to the emotional tier of the Maslow tree.

That allowed for the rebirth of emotional relations with family and other people and emotions are powerful forces for therapy and again are very good as soothing stress. Feeling loved had a great impact on my mood and this allowed for an interest in life again and I began to participate in the activities available in this hospital. Feeling valued increased my self-esteem despite the voices criticising about 9/11.

The therapeutic hospital environment did however come with a price as being put in a strange institution was stressful at first. One night in hospital I was screaming the place down when I first got there and the stresses had increased a triggered off an episode. They got the doctor out in the middle of the night to administer some emergency medication and the shock passed.

This was made worse by the seeming incarnation and of locked up through being a lunatic. One I calm to my sense which had been disorientated by experience of the illness and taken away under section I began to calm down and take more note of my surroundings. Eventually the idea of mental health began to make sense and this stress calmed down as I realised I was there because I had an illness.

I began to take note that there were no straitjackets and padded cells and the wards were full of normal people. The doctors didn't wear white coats and in contrast to being bedlam the place was quiet and restful. There were no raving lunatics to be seen and people had been admitted voluntary and not taken away by the police because they might have been dangerous. I began to understand the asylum was a

hospital and the people in it were ill

I was able to learn about stigma and had insight into the illness and not to blame myself for having been driven round the bend because I was weak. Schizophrenia is something that can happen to anyone and even members of the Royal family have had. I overcome my fear of the label which is how the stigma eventually came to be manifest and understood that the whole thing was just ignorance and prejudice.

Once I calmed down I began to reflect on my situation and was able to talk about it openly to some very sympathetic people and was able to share my problems instead of having to confront them on my own. I began to realise that if everyone knew I was responsible for 9/11 why hadn't I been found by the CIA. The insight for me only went so far but when manifest provided a break from the symptoms.

In hospital I learned about distraction and confrontation but this was easier said than done. The hospital had activities and entertainment on offer and I began to rediscover an interest in life. Keeping busy and motivated could help the stress I experienced and the lack of functioning and self-care I had experienced when living in the slum I was in prior to my admission began to return.

During my stay in the asylum the doctors experimented with different medications and finally decided on Clozapine which is thought to be the most effective drug though it can be hard to get. My condition stabilised and calmed me down but this was also due to the therapeutic environment of the asylum which although some people find stressful helped me greatly. With less stress the symptoms improved and I was discharged.

Although stabilised things were very difficult and I was wondering how I would cope with all the forms of support available in hospital. The idea of going back to the slum made me worry a lot as on top of the symptoms this would be very depressing and in any case I wouldn't have coped with being on my own again. This however had an answer and although the doctor didn't think it was necessary my social worker found me a place in Sheltered Accommodation.

The move into sheltered accommodation really worked and was a better environment than the hospital as there were a number of key factors that made the two places different. I found a bed sit in a former old people's home which had a shared corridor where we could socialise by keeping our doors open and wandering in and out of each other's rooms. This created a social group atmosphere and allowed me to make new friends in the place of old one.

Over the fifteen years I stayed in the project I got to know the other people very well and as the friendships deepened the community began to grow organically. A similar thing happened at the day centres I attended and could use all this therapy to get out and about with people and do the leisure things other normal people do free of the stigma. This was the early days of community care and I could function outside the hospital.

Yet there was a second string to the bow of being out of the asylum as the local day centre had educational courses organised by the local further education college for which you got certificates.

Being from living at university I took to this straight away and found it very therapeutic and life seemed to take on the character of having some meaning again. Instead of being worn out by life I started to enjoy it again.

Finally some of the original stress factor like poverty and bankruptcy together with my family separation and loss of the home I had grown up in began to heal. I was now better financed, my parents were remarried and I came to regard the project as home though life was still very different than before I could cope with it on these terms in spite of what had been lost.

So I wasn't housebound this time or wandering the roads as I was not paranoid about the people in the project. That eventuality would have meant moving out which would have put me in dire straits and probably back in hospital. I had some luck at this point as in the eventuality of living in close proximity to people who might terrify you would have erased the benefits of community care and worsened the illness.

All the same the illness didn't go away and I was still experiencing lots of anxiety interspersed with occasional bouts of fear. The trauma here triggered off a new symptom which the doctors called a tactile hallucination. That meant I could feel the hallucination physically instead of being auditory or visual and it gave me the feeling of being in pain. The stress of this perpetuated the symptom and I began to feel it more frequently.

The pain wasn't mild and manifest as very acute. In between bouts of its onset I began to live in fear of it and it began to take over my whole life. The only answer was once it started was to take my tablets which had very powerful sedatives so I could get to sleep but if I hadn't been awake very long this was not always possible. I was able to avoid more so on any evening and go to bed a bit earlier.

This time the medication was being looked at again to see if it could help it kept increasing bit by bit until it reached the maximum dose. I began to give up hope of a cure for it and it seemed the only answer was to get through the rest of my life until it either went away or I died. I began to watch the seasons change and noted the amount of life left I would have on average.

The need to avoid it by sleeping had another very disabling effect as getting back home put me off going out and about as the time taken to get back and getting to sleep meant I would be experiencing the hallucination for longer. That stopped all the benefits of community care like education and friends at day centres or going shopping or the cinema for example without the stigma. I was losing touch again.

I began to record the frequency of the pain episodes but was dismayed to find how often they occurred and I began to think this was some kind of punishment for 9/11. Eventually things got so bad that I walked in the police station in the town centre to give myself up even though I might be tortured by the CIA. They didn't believe me about this and didn't stop the hallucination.

How I got through the pain episodes I didn't really know as they were so acute I couldn't really just endure them and I wasn't hanging in there until they wore off. Somehow they just came and went while



I was subject to them and eventually they just went away. During this time I was experiencing voices and paranoia and when this happened all three together were plunging my fear levels into crisis, when I couldn't always get to sleep.

My stress levels by now had gone through the roof and believing the pain was punishment for 9/11 I began to get more frightened by the voices reminding me something terrible was going to happen. They were getting worse too and not going out which created a need to deal with things at home concentrated my mind on what I was hearing. The situation seemed hopeless.

Yet there were still some positives as I wasn't living alone through all this and still had the shared corridor in the mental health project and stop me sliding into depression even with the constant fear. There was always a human face there and media in the home to provide some distraction. The problem was after five years of suffering it seemed like the symptom was never going to go away.

Pain relief strategies were being used including head ache tablets (the pain was experienced occipitally) and even an MRI scan and an EEG. None of it worked including the increased doses of the anti-psychotics and eventually I was referred to an acupuncture clinic and this after a time took it away even when conventional medicine had failed. This part of my story had a happy ending.

With the pain gone the other stressful symptoms began to reduce and faded into the background so much that I had now experienced a virtual recovery. This came as a bit of a shock as things were going so well for a few years that I would have to find a job and leave the mental health project. I began to prepare by doing information technology courses at my local day centre and became quite highly qualified.

This time in my life was the happiest I had been even before the illness and started to get out once again but this time without the constant anxiety. That meant I could enjoy things more and do what I wanted on my own without the need for someone to come with me as back up. There were no longer places to avoid because of harmful memories and was able to do things I hadn't done in years like foreign travel.

As I said many of the initial stress factors that had caused the illness in the first place had gone to some extent and although life wasn't as good as it was before I began to feel that I had been given a second chance and things were returning to normal. I had to put the past behind me and try to look ahead. I guess I thought I had to make the most of this opportunity and that further happiness would return.

These deliberations were not to last though as something triggered a relapse though how this happened I never fully understood. It was triggered by an encounter with a professor who set in all off again as I guess I always still had the delusion at the back of my mind so I was never sure it had gone away completely and the relapse triggered a very stressful.

The old thought about people spying on me about 9/11 began to return and didn't dare leave the project. I locked in a room for two years during which time the stress levels peaked again. Now I was frozen in fear and thought the same would happen if I went outside. I had to make a life inside the project which

was very restrictive and again stopped going to the day centre, shopping, travel, getting exercise and fresh air.

This isolation and confinement concentrated my mind on the voices and I became frozen in fear which again was stressful and perpetuated the same problem but as I began to realise something could be done about it I began to calm down. Trying to live in a project without outside contact was very difficult but with the help of my friends I thought I could live like this the times of being frozen should this wasn't true.

The CPN thought the avoidance strategies weren't working and it was better to try and confront it with graded exposure by going out. It took a lot of pressure to do this as I didn't think it would work but I began to realise if I didn't do anything about it nothing would ever change and it was no life staying in a room all day being terrified. I had to face the fear and not run from it which of course was easier said than done.

Initially it was even the thought of going out that came to cause the stress but that became that I could rationalise it. The next problem was taking that initial step to get over the door step and this required some coercion as when suddenly confronted by it I nearly bolted. That push was terrifying but once out I realised things were calming down a bit so I got use to this too and after that another step was needed in being around people again.

Support was put in place and having someone with me meant I could run back home and try another day if things got too much. I was allowed to take things at my own pace and we figured out a plan of activities based on starting with going places in which I was less paranoid about, as the memories of being ill there were not so severe and were less likely to trigger a relapse.

Having been ill in such places brought associations of the illness back to me and the experience was quite stressful and acted as a trigger for the illness. After that being at home I would remember the episodes this would trigger and bring on the illness indoors and make me less likely to go out again. Eventually after the exposure to such places the bad memories replaced the good one and things improved.

The good memories and reductions in the fear were helped by the support worker who taught me coping strategies like coexisting with the fear instead of running from it and this made things less stressful as I could then remember things weren't so bad again. After a while of coexisting with the problem things started to improve again and I found that it would eventually were off.

The support worker had very good social skills and kept talking to me through the paranoia which acted as a distraction and further calmed me down. I began to enjoy the conversation and from there enjoy the outings which allowed me to go place again. This replaced the fear with much enjoyment which was soothing and I began to rediscover life and again all this was less stressful.

Finally although not a cognitive therapist the nurses were able to build upon the insight I had learned in therapy that if people were passing on information about me why had the CIA not caught me yet? This

prevented me going out and as you can imagine was very frightening. But when finally pushed to go out I could be around other people as being sat in a café with them and observe they weren't watching me and talking about something else.

The exposure only worked so far as if I got paranoid about someone I felt I was still experiencing negative vibes like they knew I was there but again this had an answer as I was staring at them and watching them with my peripheral vision. It was hard to distinguish the hostile reactions from the paranoia and I felt I was being noticed again and that my mind was being read about being responsible for 9/11.

That only happened some of the time and I had to learn not to stare at people and keep focused on something else which was helped by having the support worker there to make eye contact with. Though as paranoid thoughts began to creep back into my mind this was not always possible and tended to happen with me realising which made it difficult to correct. A trigger like that could have resulted in full blown psychoses again.

Eventually the time came to practice this on my own and I began to be introduced somewhere with the support worker who would leave me on my own for a while then come back and meet me. This again caused some anxiety but having taken a number of steps so far and together with the new coping strategies it came to be just another step. A few deep breathes and some safe place imagery were also helpful here.

This final step was very important as it meant I could go places on my own like my local mental health day centre and meet up with some old friends as well as being calmed down enough to participate in some educational courses. That was the best therapy ever as education was my thing and lifted my mood tremendously. I began to find this soothing of the stresses I had experienced and things began to improve.

All the same the graded exposure and coping strategies like coexistence and insight began to have some effect and ended the confinement of being in a room which concentrated my mind on my problems. Getting back home after an outing meant I was refreshed and found the home environment more therapeutic again and the feelings of being frozen in fear began to stop and so my stress were greatly reduced.

All the same the illness did not go away and although I wasn't frozen in fear things could still get difficult to deal with. A number of new strategies began to come into play to try to deal with these problems though again they only worked so far. This did take the edge off things so far and I was a lot more functional than I had ever been in my life so far with the illness.

At this time most of the illness was system overload and got buried in the subconscious yet it came back to me in the form of a continual state of anxiety together with terrifying revelations about being tortured to death by the CIA for causing 9/11. I needed a coping strategy to try and calm down further as this was causing panic attacks. Although most of the time it was reduced to anxiety this too can be

difficult to live with all the time.

The writing pleased the voices and reduced stress but eventually they began to criticise it and other times it helped keep the voices at bay. I had to give it a rest eventually as it made me worry about how good it was academically. This thought pleased the voice as I was back to thinking if I do something useful with my life I would be let off for 9/11 and the voices were in some agreement about this. All the same I was still very anxious.

I began to seek help from the mental health system in finding ways to calm down and further reduce the symptoms. There were relaxation classes at my local day centre where I learned about breathing exercises and safe place imagery. They would guide through some calming visual images like floating on a cloud and this was meant to calm you down. The problem was I couldn't switch off from the paranoia when doing this so it didn't work.

Another thought I had was to try and keep busy and issues about being distracted began to resurface again here. I found I could multitask with the observing voices by watching a movie or doing housework. It helped getting out and about doing things and I joined a local archery club which I had always loved and found the therapy of this quite soothing again. Although I could coexist with it the anxiety never really went.

In between I was so caught up thinking about my writing and how to interrupt the delusional thought process I was completely distracted and much less stressed though the delusion was still at the back of my mind. Memories and flash backs caused the pain hallucinations again and the overload caused nightmares but even so these were not as bad as they could be but again made me remember the illness once awake...

Another solution was needed and I thought drinking alcohol was one eventuality that might distress me but it can stop the tablets working so I was never sure about doing this. If the drink had calmed me down sufficiently it might have some impact of reducing the stress causing the illness. The theory with drinking and the symptoms at this point was that it would calm me down and cheer me up which were the two main results of the paranoia.

If I could calm down enough with the fear I could progress to the emotional level of the Maslow tree where the cheery effects of the drink could stop the emotional pain and damaged self-esteem caused by being responsible for 9/11. It might have allowed some personal growth and overcome the ways schizophrenia can thwart your sense of wellbeing. All in all it seemed worth a try.

The results were interesting in that as the anxiety was there all the time I couldn't drinking all the time and had to limit it to a couple of hours per day but this did allow some rest from the symptoms so I could recharge my batteries. This in addition to being more active out and about had a combined effect of my nerves and something began to improve during the time I could spend trying this.

But it came with a price as the drink may have stopped the tablets working and the episodes of terror began to increase. The question was can you use the times you are more relaxed to have the strength to

deal with the terror? This did help as a coping strategy but drinking at the worst times had no effect on the intense symptoms and eventually things got so bad during these episodes I gave the drink up. Fortunately I wasn't addicted to it.

At this point there was another twist in the story as all the residents in the project were told that if we were not moved on in a couple of years the place would lose its funding. This news came as a huge shock and some people were in tears. The prospect of being moved on was terrifying as how would everyone manage without the support which would have been stressful enough but that was not the end of the story.

I began to remember the time during which I had tried to live independently before the project and hospital and what had happened. Suddenly the prospect of having different neighbour around began to seem frightening. I was still paranoid to some extent about the people outside when out and about and to be suddenly confronted by living with new neighbours all the time was terrifying.

The problems of paranoia began to get worse again and as I said at another point in my story on top of the added paranoia moving house was one of the most stressful things you can do. That brought the voices back again and things began to get much more difficult. The medication was increased but had no impact on the symptoms and I moved deeper into shock once more.

It was decided to move me to another project where I could have stayed for another seven years but when I saw the new area I was moving to I began to have doubts as to whether it would work. It was in a declining village where all the shops and many houses were boarded up. That put me off but it was also miles away from friends and family and too far from the local town and day centre. I didn't think it was going to work.

What was to be done? I nearly freaked out when I saw the new living environment and thought about living in the area of the town that I had come to regard as home instead. That was worth a try compared to moving away but it was certainly not guaranteed to work. It was the only choice left and in the end I had no choice. I had visions of going through another trauma and ending back in hospital.

Then the day came to move out and there was a lot of emotional support from my friends and family as well as the from the project I had lived in so that we weren't just being dumped. It helped a lot this time that I had money to spend on the place so it didn't become a slum which had triggered off the psychoses at other periods in my story. These factors made all the difference as with living in a home area it all made a house into a home this time.

The biggest help was that I had a front door which led out directly onto a main road so I didn't have to bump into the neighbours living around me on the same estate. I put window blinds up and never opened and after six years in the new house had never seen them once. That meant being out of sight and out of mind and I could ignore the fact they were living close by. The banging noise never returned. I saw my mother three times a week and had my friends round to share some take aways food and music together and gradually I began to enjoy life again as the even the reduced social support

compared to living at the project where it was available 24/7 didn't matter as surprisingly there was still enough of it and began to have happy memories of living there. Those memories were replaced the difficult ones which meant less triggers for the illness.

As with life at the project that still didn't make the illness completely go away but it did remove the intense paranoia I had experienced with the house move. The usual symptoms of continual anxiety and periodic flashes of terror began to become the experience of life again and continued during the six years I had experienced of living independently. Something still had to be done to tackle this.

My mental health had improved greatly with the soothing of the stress helped by the different parts of the mental health system, my new friends and family, the graded exposure and coexistence with the fear, keeping busy, doing courses at day centres, enjoying the media and days out, exercise and many other things but I was still getting symptoms. This is when I discovered something else not widely known about called compassion therapy.

This was aimed at reducing stress and lightening the load caused by schizophrenia through soothing the fear and emotional pain by being more compassionate though it emphasized other things like safe place imagery could help the process and it is here the help from the mental health system and other coping strategies outlined in this article helped the process of soothing with compassion along.

The therapy a number of key exercises and built on breathing techniques and imaging you are in a safe place which never worked on me and it was explained this was not effective for everyone. The answer was if you cannot imagine a safe place just trying to do so was just as effective but it involved strategies which were much more powerful and effective.

To be compassionate we had to imagine a compassionate self-image and looking at this would bring the emotion of compassion out in the person doing the imagining. To get to feeling compassionate we had to learn to be sensitive to suffering and then we would be motivated to doing something about it. That receptivity proved difficult as it was easier to give it to others than to ourselves.

The self-image allowed us to react by being compassionate but before it could take effect we had to learn to be more self-compassionate and the therapy had a way of teaching this. By making eye contact with other people in the group we could say to them "I wish you free from suffering" and then they would respond by saying the same thing to me. That made me feel I was deserving of compassion and allowed me to feel the emotion of it.

It was explained that other techniques were also needed in addition to the compassion and that meant developing a wise threat system. With schizophrenia once you are paranoid you start perceiving the world under the aspect of threat and expecting and aware that other threat may occur in life. Other things might become threatening and this adding to our psychotic problems so it was necessary to be wise about this and question what was happening.

Less threat meant you could reopen the frontal lobes that had been shut down through the experience of threat and this was helped by another strategy of using all your sense including sense of taste to focus

on and object. That stopped you being wide eyed with fear and it was explained this would stop the amygdala shutting down the frontal lobes and prevent the fight flight response where the reptile brain was becoming active instead.

The therapy looked very promising and could help many people in reducing the threat system and soothing the fear and pain caused by psychoses so this story of the mental health system will have a happy ending for most people though in my case there was a problem. Being a loser meant my intellect was based on a psychology antithetical to compassion and would have meant losing my intellectual abilities.

The Beatles explained this well in a song containing the lyrics “there is nothing you know that is not known, there is nothing to you can shown which isn’t shown but you can learn how to be you in time.” This didn’t feel safe in the context of my delusions as needed to be good and useful intellectually to avoid being punished for 9/11 so in the end the therapy didn’t work.

Schizophrenia can be stress induced and during stressful phases of my life the experience of schizophrenia has worsened at various points. Along the way there have many things that have helped culminating in the discovery of compassion focused therapy. This has been important in sustaining my life with the suffering and enjoying living in the mental health system. This article details what has happened and the various ways and strategies that have led to this outcome. It is important to understand and illustrate all this so life with schizophrenia can be as bearable as possible.

### **Motivation and the Negative Symptoms of Schizophrenia**

The basic problem is that you have got to have something to get up in the morning for. I would rather just stay in bed. This for example too means sleeping all the time means to the point there lack of exercise is a health risk and as your weight increases and you get more and more out of shape this can be a worry. Moreso I often need a drink before I start the day which is dangerous if you get reliant on it for motivating you for everything else that has to be done and again this requires some will power to force yourself to stay off it. This article details many such problems and what can be done about them.

You cannot get up to face the day with this illness and want to stay asleep, This can be done with large measure with the sedatives and the more sleep you get the more you need and I ended up sleeping fourteen hours per day. Even then you might as well stay in bed but you can only be prone for so long so eventually you have to face the day.

You have to force yourself to get out of bed and get washed. Some people need prompting to do this and you have to remind yourself that things will get easier once you have done this but often this does not work and some self-coercion may still be necessary.

Some aromatherapy oils like citalopram might feel you can wake up better or some scented shower gel and some breakfast can help you prepare for the day. Try enjoying a cup of coffee at this point and have

some tasty fruit. Try some positive thinking can help here like reminding yourself good things lie ahead in you day after this some coercion is still necessary but not as much...

Once awake there is nothing going on and you will be caught up by thinking of the illness and listening to the voices. We may learn that keeping busy can help with being distracted and from there we can feel more motivated as we are not so drained emotionally and physically by the symptoms. You will feel withdrawn and preoccupied with the symptoms and something distraction is needed. Eventually this will help with being up in the morning.

You have to cheer up to get washed but no one is on hand here and people with schizophrenia might need prompting to do this. We have to coerce ourselves to do this but this is not so easy as we cannot be bothered to get out of bed. Once showered we may feel a bit more motivated but we still need to face the day. Feeling clean is good for you and a shower can be quite invigorating. The rest needs to be handled step by step.

Having a cup of coffee may help with the feeling of being drugged and then we must get dressed. This is a bit easier once showered. After that listening to the radio or the television can capture our attention and liven things up a bit. Looking smart is a good feeling and once having got up taking a look in the mirror can help cheer things up a bit if we see ourselves looking more alive and spruced up.

After that we need to get psyched up to get out the house. This can take a while until we can face up to the challenge as getting out can bring on the symptoms as we know we have to be around other people which make us paranoid. This is important because we can be more stimulated by day centres or exercise compared to staying at home and we will feel better for it. Any insight through cognitive behavioural therapy can help with this.

Hiding away inside the house can be very bad for our state of mind and can focus us on our symptoms so we begin to associate being at home with being in prison or at worst with being in a torture chamber which we will wake up every morning being inside it. You are much less likely to look after your home and yourself feeling like this. These associations can be changed by getting out and about and we will know being at home is only part of our life.

Much depends on enjoying life being at home so these associations do not creep back in and having a plan for your morning and evenings can cause much distraction and enjoyment which should turn your house into a home. From here we may begin to like the place and take a pride in looking after it which can again keep us motivated for some the challenges presented by schizophrenia.

Being at a day centre can be important as there is someone there to prepare a meal for us. This can be difficult with a mental illness as we need prompting before we can feed ourselves so being fed properly can be healthier and therapeutic. The social side can be distracting and therapeutic so we can get our appetite back and once fed that gives us an immediate lift and getting some food in you helps prepare for the need to exercise.



More than this it is very important to look after our physical health with a mental health problem and there is advice at day centres on the right and the wrong things to eat and again this can help with motivation. They can combine this with taking you out to exercise and having support for going out when this can make you paranoid is another step you can take within the mental health system to feeling better with life with a mental illness.

Being at a day centre is better than watching the television on a morning as it is more personalised and interactive and we can talk about things you have in common and is often facilitated by doing a course which is of common interest to a group of people. I find meeting new people and becoming part of an organically grown community is better than sitting at home alone watching the television.

This is often something that can happen when being on a hospital ward where people are just left to watch the television and might be as well be staring into space. What is needed is some social contact to get the patients motivated to talk to each other. I have also seen this lack of motivation at day centres when people are not well enough to talk so going there may not be a motivational in sharing experiences though the staff is still there. Being left at home with a television is not enough.

We need face to face caring contact and start to share our experiences of the illness so that it can be soothed with some compassion which creates a connectedness with other people. We will feel the warmth and glow of friendship and hopefully partnership which can be very profound and while we start out not being able to look after ourselves we will find strength in each other and should motivate us to leading a normal life again.

Enjoying the social contact at day centres can be motivating and we develop a desire for more of it creating a virtuous circle which gives us something in life to enjoy and we realise our life is not just continuous suffering. That realisation is very important as with the onset and early development of the illness the world seems to be full of doom and gloom and realising that this can be changed even when the medication doesn't change things can motivate us more.

Up until this point we are more at risk of committing suicide and will feel on our own in a schizophrenic world and we are beyond all help. Sadly this can be true of schizophrenia so it is necessary to intervene as early as we can and inspire some hope that things can with some effort start with all the things that can motivate us once. This must start when we end up in hospital and we can use this to show things will get even better on discharge.

Having a chat and sharing our problems can help soothe them and we may look forward to going to the day centre again. This will make us more inclined to get out of bed and get dressed. From here we will find that looking after the housework and feeding yourself is not so challenging and we do this once we get back from the day centre and eventually before going out.

Yet there are problems as life with schizophrenia is very tough and being motivated to these ends may not always happen and not being able to look after yourself might mean ending up back in hospital. This can

help with getting fed properly and will allow for more social contact than spending some time at a day centre and we will find our motivation and interest in life will slowly return.

That should help next with the motivation to eat and do the housework and allow for some strength for concentrating on courses and exercise. We need to exercise our body as well as our brains so some exercise as well as day centre course are both necessary. Going for a walk is provided by day centres too and having social contact with the exercise can help with cheering up and the difficult miles fly by quicker.

Learning to exercise is particularly difficult as it is physically very tiring and needs to be handled gradually to build our strength up. Eventually it will cause pleasure by releasing endorphins but you have to stick with it to get to this point. The illness can make you feel emotionally drained but exercise can help with this and the nature and fresh air should help get you out of the confines of the house.

The physical activity should help clear our minds so we are not so focused on the paranoia and this can provide a rest and psychologically will be less draining as we try to measure up to the arduous exercise. Getting back to the house will then leave us refreshed so we can enjoy the activities more that we plan for the evening and after this can leave us more interested in television including watching movies and listening to music which may bring back happy memories of before the illness.

As we get used to the tiring exertion we don't have to coerce ourself to being physically active. This can take a while depending on age and how long we have been neglecting the exercise and it is possible to get out of shape very quickly. The process can take a lot of staying power and it is very easy to give up on it and again much self-coercion is needed but eventually as we practice it will be something to get out of bed for as it will overcome the feelings of being drugged and lethargic.

If we are too paranoid to go out we may need to exercise inside the house and that may mean buying an exercise bike or rowing machine. This will also help with the bad weather when it too adverse to go out like the winter. But there are problems here in that if we regard our home as a prison or torture chamber we will not feel motivated to do this and it also means missing out on the nature and fresh air. Again anything else distracting when being at home is less likely too.

Help with day centres might train ourselves to look after yourself and involves advice on diet and helpful psychology techniques like climbing the malsow tree and developing self-confidence and perhaps most importantly learning to relax. All of this is pleasurable and calming and should help cope with the symptoms and how they may affect our motivation to cope with life having a mental illness.

Eating properly can help build your strength up and help with the exercise but you have to be psyched up and motivated for this. You have to reward yourself after doing the exercise and this can help with the necessary motivation required. That just means doing something you like which in my case has meant going to an archery club and talking to people with a similar interest. The club is on three night a week which is very useful for filling the time in.

Another thing that can help break the day up apart from exercise and day centres is going out and doing some retail therapy which combined with treating yourself to something and maybe eating out can be very enjoyable and should cheer things up a bit. It is always possible to buy something smart to wear to a night club or a DVD to watch at home and this should help break the day up again.

Once the evening arrives again and you have been out and about you can settle down to being at home. You could prepare some food you have been to the supermarket for or maybe enjoy some take away food. That should round the day off with something pleasurable and could be combined with watching a movie perhaps with a few drinks. Once in a while you can have a night out with some friends or have a get together at home. Again some food and drinks will make this go with a bang.

What happens with the process of being motivated is that life begins to return to normal and the usual good and bad points with life begin to apply. We need to be there for our friends and partners which can cause problems and be a source of strength and like coping with a stressful job we need to cope with the illness and do some kind of educational work. Though finding a job can be very difficult doing voluntary work can fill in the gap here and again is very rewarding.

Yet there are problems and the need to keep busy can be very difficult very much like a hospital ward with nothing to do except for activities and again there no reason to get out of bed. Without work partners and isolated there may be little in the way of doing this and spending a couple of days at a day centre may not be enough social contact to change this. So there may still be problems with motivating to do things like eat, clean the house, doing exercise and engaging with activities and socialising.

It is too easy to give into the symptoms and this will prevent much self-help and some support maybe needed before self-help can begin. The best place to start this is in hospital as once discharged there will be no one around to motivate us and the new activities in hospital might achieve this. We will need training to be discharged and live independently as we may be institutionalised by having everything done for us.

Being active like in hospital might work more of the time and there might be more opportunity for social contact with the staff and the other patients but at home you are on your own more of the time so the opportunities for active conversation are lessened. At the same time though this might not be true of hospital too and have also seen people at day centres be very quiet and on their own and the social side is being neglected with no one interacting.

Eventually letting yourself go and otherwise not interacting not keeping busy can make you lazy to the point you cannot help yourself and then you feel much less like doing the housework as your home can turn into a slum. It may need support for doing the housework: makes doing it more social and maybe a few drinks will help. Might be necessary to get a cleaner in and do this back to front until you are able to do this yourself through learning to be more motivated.

There are other problems with staying motivated as being drugged on medication can stop being active and socialising but too this wears off eventually. It is better to take it all on a night so you can sleep off the

sedative. If this is not possible then being motivated with life is going to be a lot more difficult and our mental health may suffer as instead of being active we need go back to bed on an afternoon.

The more natural the more motivated we will be for other leisure activities and things we enjoy, including hobbies, friendship, nature etc. The problem here is that if we are frightened or hearing voices all the time we are going to be isolated and withdrawn so the possibility of being motivated is going to be a lot more difficult. We may be paranoid about our friends and not able to concentrate on the activities and the motivation can quickly go.

Often the illness causes nightmares and when we first wake up it will be the first thing on our minds. The fear can paralyse us so we cannot move let alone start the day and being at the fore front of our mind doesn't allow for any chance for being distracted. Disturbed sleep and can impair day to day functioning and it takes a lot of strength to overcome this particularly as we still need to will power to struggle to get out of bed when the illness is the first thing on your mind. Eventually when first awake the memories of the nightmare will subside and you will feel less fearful as you return to normal.

One possibility for keeping motivated in living in sheltered accommodation can help here as there more opportunity for social contact than at a day centre and so will have a homely feel and again the emotional support for cheering up and offloading the stress. Again this environment can help with being motivated for self-care and doing the housework and there is more possibility for exercise as the staff is there for you during a full working week.

As the illness can sap your strength for all this so some strength might be needed for all this and some graded exposure to the fear and again might feel us more motivated. Getting help with confronting the fear should be put in place early as though doing this first leads on to the other therapeutic activities can be concentrated on and motivated for and with courage we can get some self-esteem for not letting the illness rule our life.

Benzo-diazapines can be very useful as when we calm down we are motivated for longer and can reduce the overall suffering which impairs our ability to look after ourselves and affects our mood. Again this can help with concentrating on day centres courses and we do not feel so physically drained with the fear and where not prescribed there are other possibilities like lavender and rock rose. We can get sick of life feeling afraid all the time and give up on it.

Where the schizophrenia begins to cause depression here we will need much cheering up to feel motivated and many things here may give some energy. Anti-depressant may be needed here. The depressed thoughts may need tackling and some positive reinforcement about feeling good about ourselves may be necessary. We have to remember there are good things in life as when things return to normal in between episodes.

The problem here is that if the depression predominates it may take a while to get to the point with concentrating and socialising so tackling both at the same time this needs to address alongside the schizophrenia. The depression may often take a back seat and may not often come to the fore but it too

can seriously impair our ability to be motivated and look after ourselves especially when the schizophrenic symptoms have worn off.

In between the experiences of getting back to normal and feeling ill we may go up and down a lot with the illness. We may be more resilient to the depression symptoms once we have had a rest in between psychotic episodes and we won't be so miserable as we know things will cheer up once the symptoms pass. The therapy for the depressive phases means we have more chance to do things like housework before the fear kicks in again.

So with the depression it is important to keep on top of looking after yourself to start with the motivation to look after yourself by looking after the home environment first. The state of your house reflects your state of mind and you will be better by starting with the place you spend most of your time in. Once we get back from the day centre help and the day has been broken up the feel more like doing housework when doing it in the early evening.

You can start with doing one thing a day until by the end of the week you will have got through everything. Like the exercise this can be difficult so we must develop the staying power to stick in with it all so that we do not give in and go back over with our mental health. Eventually we can build up the work involved so once we get into the swing of it and like the exercise the first ten or fifteen minutes are the worse and the rest gets a bit easier.

Even then it relies on getting on with the task as does doing some exercise everyday which can be hard to stick to as it is physically tiring but overtime you will be able to build it up. Your physical health like living in a well-kept room should make you feel better with life and you will begin to notice things with the illness are not so overwhelming. As things get cleaner in your house you may like the effects of the work involved and this can motivate you once you get on with it.

## **Conclusion**

In sum many things can be motivational when living with schizophrenia and through being more motivated with life we look after ourselves much better, become more energised and enjoy life. Key factors here included exercise, socialising and being able to wash feed ourselves and do the housework. Addressing the negative symptoms are as important to coping with the illness and as with getting rid of the positive symptoms they are of essential therapeutic value to avoiding self-harm and keeping out of hospital. They should also help with mood and avoid being depressed as well as not being overwhelmed by the schizophrenia to the point we cannot look after ourselves. As we have outlined this involves a number of steps which must be followed sequentially and some help from day centres and sheltered accommodation can help with the process and we become more capable of independent living.