

Original Paper

Therapies for Catching Schizophrenia during the Onset and Later Stages of the Illness

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It is now thought it best to try to catch schizophrenia during the prodromal times, but this cannot all be down to medication and a variety of other strategies should be put in place before things get completely out of hand. The point is to stop the symptoms before they get too serious and reduce the need for hospitalisation which can just make things worse through confinement. This account will draw on a personal experience of doing this.

Before I developed schizophrenia, I had a few things life can throw at you including a bankruptcy, loss of family home, a broken relationship, pressures of research and living in a slum. The whole thing out me into shock as I wasn't prepared for anything like this. I was emotionally drained and felt powerless to do anything about it. If I had known about compassion at this point, I might have avoided the depression and the ensuing schizophrenia.

That was then the schizophrenia hit. I started hearing voices and thinking I was responsible for 9/11. This was even worse than what put me into shock in the first place and with the combined weight of both problems until I eventually snapped. Having had all my strength drained by the stressful life events there was nothing left to stop the consequent schizophrenia. So, with both I couldn't overcome the fear and pain this was causing. That drove me deeper into shock.

With the gradual onset of the schizophrenia if the supported graded exposure which was put in place by the psychiatric system this could have helped overcome the initial anxieties and prevented things getting worse. The illness could have been nipped in the bud and the fear calmed down by a benzo-diazepam. During these stages the initial symptoms were more like anxiety than fear but what hit me more so was the stigma which was also terrifying.

The first inclination I had of something being wrong was that there was a thought at the back of my mind that after I was responsible for something. Initially I tried to shrug this off and was just thinking my mind was playing tricks on me. All the same the thought didn't go away and in between having a busy life it

kept reoccurring to me. Initially it was just a vague feeling I was getting but then I noticed it was connected to world events like 9/11.

I didn't know why I was thinking this as it couldn't possibly be true and so I could ignore the problem as it still wasn't uppermost in my mind. Then it began to dawn on me perhaps I was wrong about this and maybe there was something to it. That made it more difficult to simply brush off. I started to get worried that it might be real though most of the time I could question it. I started to move in and out of phases wondering whether to believe it or not and I was beginning to get a bit anxious.

I needed away of calming down to avoid the anxiety and stop thinking about it so much. Some natural remedies like rock rose, lavender and valerian could have helped at this point but they came too late as the illness began to deteriorate more quickly. I still had good times and delusional phases so I could watch myself gradually losing my mind as the delusions began to take over it. Again, this was another frightening experience and contributed to things getting worse.

At this point the episodes of paranoia and fear were getting more frequent and prolonged with the added stresses. I could see that sometimes I was normal and other times was paranoid. I knew I was moving in and out of being delusional though overall I was gradually losing touch with reality. Some cognitive therapy could have been applied at this point based on the contrasting times of being normal and psychotic. It might have avoided the need for hospitalisation later on.

At this point I started to hear voices talking about it and criticising me for causing it. This made it more difficult to ignore the problem and my levels of anxiety were increasing all the time. Then with the added stress the delusions about 9/11 were getting more intense and frightening. Other strategies like safe place imagery and breathing exercises could have been used but under more severe conditions it might have been too late for this as well.

I couldn't rely on family support for help as a result of the stigma, so I was on my own having to be strong with this. I need emotional support with thinking I had killed all those people but could not ask for it in case they thought I was delusional. I could see how what was happening to me from the viewpoint of other people which scared me even more and I felt under threat of violence from them. I was on my own with this but eventually had no choice but to try and get emotional support from them.

That brought a new factor into play as I thought the voices, I was hearing was from some kind of telepathy, so I asked my family for an explanation. My mother asked me do you realise how that sounds and promptly whisked me off to see a doctor. That dropped another bombshell as the general practitioner said it might be schizophrenia. I was now more aware that I might be taken off to an asylum and locked up with disturbed and unstable lunatics. The stress made the descent into schizophrenia worse.

A proper explanation of the stigma could have helped at this point and once again would have required some input from a social worker. As noted by the character doctor Silverman in the movie Terminator 3 there was an image created common to a lot of people that the insane mind is a threat as it might retaliate with violence against people who are thought to be persecuting them. There was some

truth all the same in what I was thinking inside the schizophrenic mind as MIND points out there is some danger though rare.

Turning to drink was one answer here but with the new poverty the only way I could do it was by not eating so one way it eased the fear and on another sapped my strength to cope with it. In the end it turned out to be more of a depressant than anything else even though it calmed me down. That meant drinking for long periods, and I was depressed enough thinking I had killed all those people. Living in slum also reinforced my low mood.

Another problem was not being able to sleep at night and I think some sedative would have come in useful both for getting to sleep and to have knocked me out before I started to have escape the neighbours by wandering the roads. This was a bit like out the frying pan and into the fire as going to sleep was giving nightmares so like wandering the roads sleep wasn't safe. So whether wandering the roads or having nightmares either way I woke up exhausted.

Coming out of the delusional phases which were not present all the still time meant there was some occasional chance to rest and bear up to things. But the initial problems of what was causing the illness had not gone so although not as severe the stresses were still there. I tried doing something about these prior stresses, but they were going to take a while to solve because there was so much in terms of happened to me. This kept bringing the delusions on again until they were more frequent than the times in between.

As my strategies for coping with stress in ordinary life had gone, I could not use these against the delusions I was having. The two problems together started to become very difficult, and things began to unfold once more. I felt the neighbours were spying on me and passing the information back to the CIA. Then to avoid them I either had to hide away or run off to avoid being tortured by them. Yet this cause further problems. This wasn't normal living and again that thought was frightening.

Then walking the roads to avoid the neighbours added more stress and things continued to get worse. It was like being homeless out in the night which again was traumatic. Then as the delusions worsened I began to feel like a social outcast and that the world was out to get me for causing 9/11. This made me feel I was on my own coping with everything which made me feel overwhelmed by it all. At this point help from a social worker who was prepared to fight my case about 9/11 would have been very helpful. That feeling of exclusion caused a lot of emotional pain but was soon superseded by the danger I thought I was in. Believing I had caused 9/11 I thought I might be punished while anything else could happen to you during the night, liked being mugged. It wasn't safe which on top of the physical exertion which made me more vulnerable to the symptoms. As well as being attacked because of the stigma there were now other dangers from the delusion and not just from the physical exhaustion.

As the paranoia worsened the feelings of being in danger out there began to grow in my mind. The neighbours were spying on me and passing information back to the CIA. That thought led me to think my movements were being tracked by satellite and the pictures were being broadcast on the television

network. Like hiding in the house people were going to know where I was and then they could track me down and attack me.

That thought kept me on the move and I had to get away from towns and villages to throw them off my scent. At one point I walked off into the hills so I could get away from people completely and there was no one there to spy on me. The problem became there was no shelter from the elements and this was more immediately frightening than the paranoia. So, either way I could have died so I had to get back home. My survival instinct took over at this point and I got home safe.

More than this I was out in the night all night and physically exhausted with the walking. This again sapped my strength for coping with the paranoia and when I got home in the morning, I crashed out asleep. That meant getting nightmares which further disturbed my sleep patterns but after this I was so shattered, I did fall asleep again. Once awake there was no opportunity to rest so the delusions and critical voices began to get worse.

As the summer nights turned to winter going out in the night became more dangerous and stressful. Once I was caught in a blizzard wearing just a jumper but by this time, I was so caught up with my delusions I didn't know where I was or what I was doing. Eventually I came to my senses and realised what I was doing. The threat here was with not realising the danger I was in if it happened again the next time I could have frozen to death.

At this time all of this could have been avoided by learning to coexist with the fear, so I didn't have to run off at night when there was no one about to pass on intelligence about me. That meant having someone to come with me and get used to being around people again. Some support was put in place so I wasn't on my own this and the help could remind me of any insight I had left, reassuring me that it was safe to go out on my own.

Once calmed own with the new arrangements and the fear was not so overwhelming it was at this point distraction became possible to overcome the anxiety I was experiencing in between episodes of the terror. That help me build the strength up needed to cope with them so there was no need to go back into hospital which in turn reduced my anxieties further. Calming down meant the keeping busy wasn't such a struggle and became more distracting.

I started to get more motivated which helped with the depression and was keen to look after myself. I became increasingly aware there was a cure for the self-neglect which had worsened mood even more. Instead of a slum I began to enjoy my homely interior and found it very therapeutic. This meant I could keep busy better and enjoy times in between more. I didn't have the shadow that hung over me about going back to the slum again once having enjoyed been out.

Having my Maslow level one basic need sorted out I could begin thinking seriously about confronting the fear. This was the nest step but could only proceed after my basic needs were met first. Having been properly fed, warmed and slept well I felt a bit more resilient to the anxieties with life under normal phases. Then I could start to think about the next steps in confronting the anxieties of the schizophrenia.

It was recommended that I started to get out and confront the fears head on, that people were spying on me about 9/11 and passing the information back to the CIA. Initially this started as an anxiety at the back of my mind but eventually ended up paralysing me with the fear. The sooner the graded exposure approach could be used it would stop things getting worse and worse until the paranoia became so severe it would be self-perpetuating.

Coexisting with the fear allowed me to get out of the house and be around people I was paranoid about without having to run. I didn't panic about this anymore. There was less fear drive, and I could control the fight flight response. Here I wasn't so worn out with the fear and not wandering the roads meant there was less exhaustion from the exertion and weather conditions. I could use this to build up my strength again and prevent the delusions from getting any worse.

One thing that prevented me from going out when things got worse was that I had started to associate places I had walked to with the symptoms. I was having the flash backs and that could trigger off the psychoses. Instead of letting these memories fade it was possible to break the associations by keeping calm in these places, so it didn't all come back to me. This took support at first but eventually I could do it on my own, so I wasn't confined at home with the voices.

Having moved back home from support from my family the problem was they were too busy to spend much time with me and home was the only place I felt safe. Yet safe places are taught as a coping strategy for schizophrenia and that meant establishing a new one. Finding a new place to live where there were neighbours about was necessary and I tried to do this in my home village where there were memories from before the illness.

To begin I could use the supported help to come with me back to the village and spend some time there to try to break these associations in the same way it had been done in other places. That would have been a very therapeutic feeling compared to sheltered accommodation as I would have felt I belonged there in my home area. I tried to do this when I moved out of hospital but although the fear had gone the paranoia had not.

Turning my house and local area back into a safe place would have required some insight and would have needed the support of a cognitive behavioural therapist. Then I could live in the place with stronger associations of safety than simply imaging such a place. The therapist and I looked closely at the safe memories acquired from having grown up there, but I still felt paranoid. In the end there was only so much insight it is possible to have.

Having a safe place is an important base for practicing going out as if you start to feel anxious you can go back to it until you are ready to try again. To do this in the place you will need to live and spend most of your time indoors. This is very important to calming down with schizophrenia but like insight it only goes so far. Then you can be calmer went out around the neighbours, but the delusions are still there which makes you avoid them.

The point is not to look at them as if you start feeling guilty about 9/11 the eyes will let you down. you have to look the other way and avoid eye contact altogether. This can be difficult as feeling in danger from

them you can catch out of the corner of your eye so people will be wondering what is going on. Your behaviour will seem strange and as you have to live around your neighbours, they will be watching you more closely. It only takes a glance for this to happen.

The only possibility is to keep thinking you are schizophrenic at these times but if anyone finds out the stigma of this is just as frightening as the paranoia as the violent implications could be serious again. Once more it may stop the feeling of feeling safe at home so the therapy will be lost, and the symptoms made worse. It means the whole exposure to the fear approach will have to start again. In my case it meant moving out of my home village.

When not forced out in the night with the paranoia I still believed the neighbours were spying on me so instead of running it made more sense to hide away indoors. Yet this created another problem in that although the slum which was stressful it was in addition to move house away from home which again was one of the most stressful things you can do. It would have been better to live in my family's home and having family contact would have been distracting.

I didn't regard the slum as home and had not put down any roots. I was living in my home area but feeling that everyone living there was out to get me it spoiled the feel of the place. The village like my home began to feel confining and the only lifeline was my family. All the same I might have been in danger especially as my unusual behaviour will have been noticed and talked about in the close-knit community. I felt it a good idea to live more anonymously and I found a place in sheltered accommodation in our local town. There no one knew me, and I began to feel a bit safer though I still had to avoid the spying neighbours and the television. Having been distracted by 9/11 and not on my own all the time meant there was less information collected by the informants and my behaviour became more normal. There was nothing unusual about me and I felt I was in less danger.

Living in sheltered accommodation would have been the answer here as with proper conditions and people around me it began to feel like home. Living in the slum I began to associate the house with the terror of the experiences I was having with the schizophrenia, and it was concentrating my mind on the voices. So in contrast to the slum instead of running out of the place I found I could stay in the project as I was more distracted by the people there both from the neighbours and the voices.

At the early stages of the illness proper social contact at day centres and have supported living could have made a big difference which might have eased some of the initial stresses that caused the illness in the first place. Instead of wandering the roads to escape the neighbours there would have been somewhere to go out of the village for a rest so that when I was back, I had a dose of normality and calm which would have eased the worsening symptoms.

Then as with moving in and out of the delusional phases in the start of the illness meant these stresses were still there during the normal times and getting the right help then could have made a big difference. This is the way we have outlined so that my village would have begun to feel like home again as would the house I was living. These feelings of home would have been very therapeutic for me as I could establish my roots and would have altered the memories of confinement.

The problem was the symptoms did not go away and that still meant trying to avoid people. In a little village like that there was a need to go to the local shop and post office. If I got caught out looking paranoid at people that would have been noticed and in a place where everybody knows everybody else the consequences could have been serious. I had to uproot again and find a place somewhere else with a looser knit community. Sheltered accommodation was the answer here.

Sheltered accommodation would have meant somewhere safe to sleep so I wasn't trying to escape from people by wandering the roads. I got to know the other residents and the more I got to know them the more I felt I could trust them, so the paranoia was less of a problem. I never lost my fears of the spying neighbours outside the project but living with people I trusted acted as source of insight and distraction. Then I never felt the need to run.

When I had to leave the mental health project it was into the local area and the advantages of anonymity began to make things less stressful. I keep the blinds drawn and got my food off the internet. I can come and go by the back door and in seven years have not bumped into my neighbours once. If I had lived in such a place during the onset of my illness I think it would have stopped the deterioration and wouldn't have to hide or run off into the night to get away from people.

Another factor here was I was able to go for walks and get out of the house which was still concentrating my mind on the voices. People were not looking at each other and there was less chance of bumping into someone I knew. That would have meant avoiding questions like what you are doing as you cannot say you are schizophrenic. All I had to do when out was find some distraction to take my mind off the people going passed me like looking at my phone or listening to a Walkman.

During the early phases of my illness when I was delusional some of the time the need for distraction could be very much more effective as things were often less frightening and intense. The paranoid thoughts were not so pronounced in my mind and thinking and doing other things was a bit more possible. Eventually they made me isolated and withdrawn but before this I was able to get out with new friends and enjoy socialising and going out together which took some of the pressure off.

Again, I got out of the house with this and was able to go to the city centre. There I felt just to be in a crowd of people who were not looking at each other. This seemed the most anonymous place I could be and instead of stressful I found the experience enjoyable and relaxing. I could treat myself to something from the shops and eat in a lovely restaurant which would keep my strength up. I could take a definite break from the symptoms though you cannot do this all the time.

So when the illness first starts you will be a lot more functional, and it may be possible to get out of the house a lot more. That should stop the confines of being in the house with these voices and thoughts though you cannot put them out of your mind completely. You need to plan your activities each day and have things going on since if you have time on your hand you will have these thoughts creeping back into your mind. Then they may trigger off the voices talking about them.

Fortunately, there are many ways of keeping busy even around the house such as doing housework and cookery, but it is first important to try to get out as much as you can. The best ways of doing this is to

join a mental health day centre and find new friends and partners. They can take you out for exercise so you can breathe a lot more easily and once calmed down enjoy the natural surroundings. You can take some lunch with you and add to the experience by having something nice to eat.

Day centres would mean making new friends despite stigma. This would have meant more emotional support and provided the opportunity to be part of a community. It would get you out of the house and the associations of living with the illness in there would lessen. It also would have helped a lot with the low mood of being an outcast. It helps to have insight here as being paranoid about them would cut you off from a vital source of therapy necessary to staying out of hospital.

Also, at day centres there are lots of distracting activities on offer that might have taken your mind off things. At these places there is less the feel of confinement compared to being alone at home listening to the voices and there are new and interesting people to meet which should help take your mind off things. After that you can do courses in both the much-needed reason for relaxation and from there to anything more academic. This should stimulate an interest in life.

To this extent day centres which start as a way of first trying to regain an interest in life and end up to allow us living more or less normally. Having made new friends you can use this to doing what everyone else in life to live it including going shopping, eating out or travelling with them or doing things outside the mental health system such as in my case joining a local archery club. You can start to enjoy life again despite the initial triggers of everything going wrong and should reduce the same stress triggering off episodes again.

A couple of hours a week at a day centre may be enough during the early stages of schizophrenic decline but when things start getting more serious there is a need for more intensive support as in sheltered accommodation. This is more therapeutic than being confined in hospital and should be used first. The project I was living in had a crisis room which meant that you do didn't automatically need hospital and could be used with a community treatment order.

Not eating and sleeping properly could also be remedied when learning the sources of strength that could cope with the illness. Here emotional support is helpful from the family, by making new friends and support from social workers. This would mean keeping your strength up by eating properly which would make you more resilient to the fear. You will be more motivated to reengage with life if you feel loved and that should open the door to further emotional feelings like belonging.

With family emotional support you can overcome the critical voices which in my case were criticising about 9/11 and will make you more resilient to them. This will help restore your self-esteem and ease the terrible emotional responsibility for having killed all those people. This will reduce the risk of suicide and self-harm and once again might keep you out of hospital. These approaches can usefully be supplemented by an anti-depressant.

When the illness starts the social worker should do their utmost to explain to families what schizophrenia is and that it is not dangerous. Many people with schizophrenia are dumped by their families so it is important to get across the idea that it is just caused by a chemical imbalance. In my case this explanation

was understood, and my family was able to offer much emotional support and they were a source of strength for me during the worst times.

The problem here was that if I was to tell my family about thinking I was responsible for 9/11 and that the CIA were after me they might have thought I was insane. At this point it may have been helpful to see a doctor first and let them use their professional and medical authority to explain things to your family. Then emotional support could be accessed as soon as possible before things got completely out of hand. This of course assumes they are going to understand it as an illness which fortunately mine did.

It also needs to be explained that hospital need not always be a bad experience, but a lot of people find it confining which might just make things worse. It can be a source of new social contact and there are interesting activities on offer. You are not confined to the ward but can visit day or town centres. You will still be allowed home during an admission and friends and family can come visiting. A short stay can be very congenial albeit somewhat restrictive.

So, getting social worker help needs to be handled carefully as this can be threatening. It needs to be made clear they are not going to lock you up. Then they can help with accessing services like a day centre or cognitive therapy etc. After that you feel you can trust in them instead of having mask the symptoms when they become more serious. They will do everything they can to keep you out of hospital. Again, if things are deteriorating sheltered accommodation might still be a better alternative.

Finally, medications can be administered outside of hospital and are best done at an outpatient's clinic rather than on a ward. It may avoid the need to be sectioned which can be a traumatic experience as can staying on a hospital ward. If this is done early enough before things get too bad it might be possible to stay out of hospital. Anything after that the psychiatrist might want you in for observation though now community treatment orders are being used for some.

Eventually you would realise that the whole world was not painted black, and life could get back to normal after what had been lost. The shock of this should pass eventually and you can gradually come through an emotional breakdown. The problem is that with the onset of schizophrenia you could have a second breakdown with the responsibility of and punishment for 9/11 so getting back to normal would be difficult. This has to be prevented by catching the illness in the early and different stages of the two breakdowns.

The illness seems like the end of the world but explaining the process properly we can gradually learn life could begin again. This would have been better done during the early stages which will once more will remove the stress during the normal phases. Then it will inspire hope during the more severe time. That impression will be reinforced by practicing the techniques outlined here and make them more effective. The point with schizophrenia is catch it before things get too bad for the sufferer.

People have strength to come through schizophrenia themselves, but this also needs help from the mental health system. Despite the emphasis on hospitalisation more work needs to be one about catching before it develops into a full-blown psychosis. Often these techniques are put in place after a hospital admission,

but they can be usefully applied before this with very great effectiveness. This will stop things going downhill so that we do not hospitalisation except in an emergency.

The Later Stages of Schizophrenia and the Role of Insight

All the same with schizophrenia there is going to be a need for ongoing treatment beyond the prodromal stage. Insight can help you navigate the mental health system and has a key role to play in your journey through it. This article draws together a number of my experiences with insight assembled into one account so we can begin to see it fundamental important to that journey.

During the onset of my schizophrenia, I felt the neighbours were banging on the walls, trying to play on my nerves, each time I had thoughts about causing 9/11. That prompted me to run out of the house in all weathers to escape, which then had me wandering the roads.

Yet everywhere I went the banging noise followed me and couldn't eat or sleep from the fear it caused me. This was dangerous as I was out in the night when anything could have happened to me. What saved me was I kept having phases where this didn't seem real so the insight got me through it. I had the strength to get back home and eat and sleep.

At these times when slowly descending into the psychoses this can also be helped with insight, in that if you catch it early enough. Then if it can be treated during the onset stages you can prevent the full blow psychoses developing which should stop the need for hospital.

All the same the insight was only partial and although it allowed some strength to deal with what was happening, it wasn't enough to stop the symptoms. In the end the insight wasn't enough to hide what was happening and I was sectioned and taken to hospital.

If you have insight and could cope with things better they might give you a community treatment order where you can stay at home. This avoids being paranoid about the other patients in hospital. In my case with wandering the roads so this was thought to be too risky.

Insight is first needed on being sectioned to make the process less traumatic. You can see you are losing touch with reality and that this might be an illness. On first diagnosis reclaiming the word mental might then mean they can explain why you are going to be treated as a patient in hospital.

Once in hospital when you are paranoid the other patients' insight might be a way of allowing them to engage in friendly conversation with them. This calms you down enough to open up your emotions, which will be very important during an acute phase in there. This in particular when you need love from your family the most and insight could stop you feeling paranoid about them.

The confines of the hospital can just make the illness worse as you start to see it as being locked up and somewhere you have associated with being ill. Insight can break these associations with this social contact and when less stressed it should help with a more speedy recovery.

The insight should calm you down enough to concentrate on the activities on offer which should take the pressure off a long hospital stay. If you are not going to escape from hospital with the paranoia and as in my case returning to wander the roads, you may also be allowed out on leave.

The psychiatrists were more concerned to trial me a number of different drugs during my six month incarceration and it wasn't suggested I try Cognitive behavioural therapy instead. That came much later but if applied earlier the stay in hospital would have much more congenial.

Being paranoid about the people in the hospital and thinking my thoughts were being broadcast on the television, which was always on, meant I had to stay in my bedroom. You cannot live like that in such a place as it was imperative not to be on your own with the acute symptoms.

All the same even during the worst phases the insight was still partially there so that with support I could be around the other patients. That needed building on with support from the nurses to assure me my thoughts were not real. Then I could access the day room and activities on offer.

Insight can next help ease the transition from hospital back into the community, as you may not be so paranoid about the neighbours. You will feel safe in your home, so you don't have to hide or run off to get away from everybody. You might still think they are spying but the insight takes the edge off the fear so all you have to do is stay away from them.

You may end up in sheltered accommodation after hospital but that might mean living with a group of people and with staff members who you will need to make the support work. There may again be a problem with accessing the social support opportunities offered here if you are paranoid about everyone. After hospital you need insight to help you get out and about but there are other challenges here. In my case I spent ten years locked in a room and only had enough insight to go out if someone came with me. I was always in two minds whether it was safe to do this, so it needed much reassurance.

On discharge after hospital I lived in sheltered accommodation but didn't dare go out which concentrated my mind on the symptoms. There not enough distractions at home so this concentrated my mind on the voices. This then needed graded supported exposure to going out. Then insight helped me get out of my room and question the delusion which had generated the voice.

Life with schizophrenia is dangerous and destructive. The insight was needed to open up my frontal lobes which the fear had shut down completely. I had to have insight before the paranoia and voices destroyed my brains completely. That allowed for some distracting study.

If the insight is not there for long enough then trying a new academic subject as at a day centre will not be effective. Yet there is the possibility of learning on line so you don't have to be confined to certain times and dates in a class when ill. You can do it at home during the phases where the insight comes back.

Doing a course also keeps the voices quiet as I am doing something that might be socially useful. Yet you have to have the insightful courage to keep a lid on things so you can concentrate. So, the insight in turn also helped with the delusional voices.

The writing about mental health also keeps the voices quiet in another way. The role of insight here helps pass the time and gives you a break from the recurring episodes. So it stops you worrying about any relapse. Yet at the back of my mind there is still something wrong which comes back to me as constant anxiety. It was more possible to think insightfully when only anxious to cure this.

Insight can help concentrate and so allows both meeting new friends when going to college. Again, things can go wrong depending on how much insight there is. The problem is when it is only partial and the unusual thoughts are stigmatised you might be limited to a day centre for doing all this.

Even with insight you have to force yourself to go out, as to the shopping mall, despite the dangers. It is too easy to give in and not go when the insight is only partial. So, this will need some encouragement. This can also help with acting normally which keeps the voices quiet as well.

When the insight is only partial you need a backup plan to escape the paranoia. Sometimes it will turn out you can cope with the fear and other times you will need to escape it. The insight does not work all the time but with practice it can be built upon.

If I could distract my thoughts from other people and the voices could not discern them then the voices had no reason to punish me for 9/11. With insight you can get absorbed with whatever is keeping you active and also be engrossed in good conversation. This is therapeutic until the paranoia comes back again but gives you time in between to rest.

Insight is useful in other ways as it allows you to get out and enjoy life more. Then you can keep a pleasure diary of all this to remind you not everything is suffering. Knowing all positives in life will mean again things aren't so bad so insight can help with much low mood.

Before trying to go out you need to recollect the feelings of danger in places where you have had symptoms. Then you imagine you being in your insightful safe place there instead. Then you will realise going back will not trigger an episode which will help with getting out and about everywhere.

Although the insight is only partial there are ways it can be used to stop you looking at people which is what gives the game away about 9/11. You can blend into a crowd instead of feeling visible as well as putting them to the back of your mind when making eye to eye contact with people.

It is the eyes that give the game away especially on a one-to-one basis so you have to be careful when these thoughts surface. Again, the insight is only partial so stopping these is not always effective and the experience could cause some nervous damage.

Practicing insight then can be a difficult process as it can put you in much perceived danger. In my case I had to ask myself which was worse hiding at home or get out to confront things. Before the insight could be effective I had to have supported gradual exposure to keep trying with it.

People can read your mind when out and you need a way of controlling your thoughts. Insight can do this so getting out is less of a problem. Yet what was happening was that I thought the people reading my thoughts were passing information back to the CIA. So, I had to get rid of the thought.

One answer to this was to watch a video about 9/11 and try not to react to it, without getting paranoid. If I could keep a lid on it and coexist with the thought that would stop the guilty looks when confronted with other people. That then gave the insight some more chance.

You can distract yourself from the thoughts, but it doesn't stop you thinking them. This is what the danger is when out again as other people may be reading your mind. I found that the distractions possible with insight meant these ideas weren't so visible to other people.

If I could look normal around other people and being in place that didn't trigger the psychoses this kept the voices quiet. It was the other people that were triggering off the voices so if I remained unnoticeable, I could perceive myself to be just a part of the crowd. This feeling silenced the voice.

Paranoia has the reptile brain racing all the time but again this can calm down with insight. My amygdala was not clicking back all the time and I began to notice things that were forming pleasure circuits in the frontal lobes. This was in addition to the compassion which helped with the same.

Still there was a problem. I needed my frontal lobes reopened using the pleasure circuits to answer the voices. The reason for this was that they told me if I was intelligent and socially useful enough to do something scientifically I could atone for 9/11. Then there would be no punishment. Yet at other times they also told me that given the scale of the atrocity there would be no mercy.

This also created problems when out and about as I also felt that people were invading my mind trying to destroy it at the same time. When I started thinking about 9/11 they were punishing me for this so that without my brains there would be no hope in stopping the punishment by being able to atone. This was absolutely terrifying.

All the same I had the same problems at home and had to keep busy, so these thoughts didn't drift into mind. I needed to keep busy which with the insight passed most of the time safely. Yet I had realisations about 9/11 when the voices would start to attack my brains again.

In fear of the voices, I had to live a normal life as possible and avoid feeling guilty about 9/11. Once answer was that I had to get out and about for the social and material side of things despite these risks. Crucially with insight this appearance of living normally was a lot easier.

To stop the voices and other people doing this to my mind the insight became essential. It helped distract me from the people and the voices from doing this and it was only when the thoughts of 9/11 came back that I felt vulnerable. Often there was no way of stopping this at these times which was a constant worry. Even with insight I felt this damage was occasionally being done when getting out and about so overall there was no way of avoiding it. The process was very gradual as I kept having insight with this some of the time. Yet eventually the problem could get very serious. The need for more insight meant the whole thing became terrifying.

Also, in the same way I felt people were attacking my mind I began to experience pain hallucinations. The voices told me the head thing was punishment for 9/11 but eventually the pains stopped, and nothing happened to me. This was one instance that generated some insight.

So the voices would see how the people negatively reacted to me and I had to destroy the paranoid thought. In these cases the people and the voices were destroying my mind and the baby went out with the bath water. It was slowly destroying my other intellectual functioning.

This was serious because being useful was the only answer the voices would accept for not being held responsible for 9/11. These destructive experiences stopped my progress when returning to education. I had to learn new stuff in place of the intellectual damage and the periods of insight gave this a chance.

When out the insight could put these thoughts out of my head and unlike being distracted, they could not be discerned. At this point I was able to achieve anonymity and stopped staring at everybody or watching them out of the corner of my eye. I began to calm down further at this point.

The trick here with insight is that you could put these thoughts to the back of your mind, so they were much less visible to other people. Then you can focus on something else like food or conversation without attracting attention to yourself. Anonymity was safety.

Another problem that the insight could help with was when you felt my guilty thoughts were being referred to in music. Again, with insight you could calm down with this, so you came to regard it as just background music. That meant you could enjoy the atmosphere of the place you were in when trying to get out.

Instead of feeling constant anxiety when out and about it was possible to have periods of relaxation which was a tremendous help in lifting my mood. There was no danger then and so I could enjoy the activities which were a much-needed break from the paranoia.

With insight you may still be frightened but you know the feeling will wear off. This allows you to hang in there and coexist with the fear. You can tell yourself that you will be strong enough with the insight so that you can come through it. All you have to do is keep a grip on reality.

Controlling the danger with compassion therapy wasn't enough as I still thought people were still passing information about me back to the CIA. Yet the compassion gave the insight more of a chance as I was calmed down enough to think logically and to analyse I was in no danger.

The voices watch you all the time in the way the neighbours do. Yet unlike the people outside the house there in no hiding from the voice. They even monitor you in your sleep and so putting your dreams on the television, for the whole world to watch. Insight can help with this.

I needed insight into the delusions to stop worrying about the voices and to silence them. If I wasn't being delusional about 9/11 there was no way for the voices criticising me for it. When in two minds and unsure what I was thinking I could still question the criticisms that the voices were alleging.

This constancy meant I spent much time trying to find ways of simply getting through the day and this has involved many ways of doing it. Even with insight you know the paranoia could return so you need to keep busy until these worries wear off. This became easier as the insight increased.

It maybe thought you need insight to calm you down but the opposite is also true. It is one thing talking about it in the clinic it is another when you are out in the field. Then calming down is much more difficult than one to one with a therapist and you will need help with this.

You need a way of stopping thinking about it and with insight when it is only partial you may not be able to get these thoughts out of your head. All the same getting out and about can provide much distraction and you may be able to put these thoughts at the back of your mind.

The danger is that the paranoid thoughts could intrude into you conscious thinking as you remember them or else they can cause terrifying flashbacks. If this happens you may be noticeable so the insight can only get you through going out and about so far. You need to be prepared for this.

If you get too many bad experiences the memories of going out will create a psychological barrier that needs to be overcome to get over the doorstep. Remembering insight with the delusion can overcome this problem until the fear it is causing wears off. Then you can try to get out of the house again.

This is where insight comes in again as you can question and remember the times when you coped with it. It allows you to question the paranoia when safely at home. Once calmed down in this way instead of being once bitten twice shy you will be more willing to give it another go.

Once in the clinic you can build on the partial insight by talking it over with the therapist. This can then help a bit when you are practicing in the field. There when calmed down the partial insight can be developed by remembering the strategies identified in session.

The therapist talked through the experience of being around the other people who I thought were reading my mind. He reassured me this was not possible which made some sense. Yet there seemed to be evidence for it in that I thought people and the voices were attacking my mind because of this.

The other question that made some sense was if people were reading my thoughts about 9/11 why I had never been assassinated. The CIA would know where I was if there were informants putting me under surveillance. So, the seemingly endless spying and collection of more and more information about me could again be questioned.

The problem then became more visible when considering what the observing voices and spying neighbours were trying to do, in watching my thinking about 9/11. With insight I could take my mind off this so there was nothing to observe. Then even when delusional I knew the thoughts would wear off and I would be safe again. That insight helped me get through time when I thought I might be held responsible and stopped some of the underlying anxiety.

Another strategy was to ask if the neighbours themselves if they were spying on you. There were problems with this. I thought they were doing it in secret and would lie about what they were doing. Also asking that question might make them think I was mad so it could be very dangerous.

One good thing with the medication was that at least the sedatives make you sleep. This unless you have nightmares. These can seriously affect your mental health as you are not getting enough rest. Insight into the danger and painful responsibility for 9/11 could stop your bad dreams.

So, when you have insight you are not too tired out to take advantage of it and enjoy life. Though there are other problems with this. Being drugged on medication is one with these phases but this does eventually wear leaving you more motivated with life.

Another issue with sleeping is that I felt my dreams were still being broadcast to the world, as people were making movies out of them. Yet with insight this stopped the nightmares so once again it seemed safe to get to sleep. So again the dreaming didn't exhaust you though lack of sleep.

Eventually with progressively building insight the opportunity is that you can go out on your own and to places further afield. The change of scenery was very therapeutic. That meant being away somewhere where there was no immediate help or support to rely on in the case of an emergency. That allowed for

going on holiday and eventually abroad. This once I was confident enough with things to have enough insight to do it.

What the problem was with going out on your own was that with the partial insight the paranoia never completely went away. The psychoses could relapse in a serious manner. It could cause panic attacks, going into shock or freeze you with fear. The only answer to this was to take some Valium with you. Again, the insight had to be supplemented by something else.

Insight needs mindfulness and this can be built upon by going out and having someone to go with you. Then you can focus on the support instead of the paranoia and the mind does not try to run. Mindfulness can then be used to look at your paranoid thoughts with insight and question them.

Once exposed to a video about 9/11 my mind didn't run with the fight-flight response. Here the distraction helped me be mindful enough to develop insight which calmed me down much further. After that things got to be a bit more manageable with the fear and I could then also be distracted from looking guilty at the other people. It was the fear that made me look at them.

Insight is more possible as you move in and out of delusional phases. Then it becomes apparent what you have been thinking. So, when the symptoms return you can contrast what you have been thinking in between. It is also helpful to remember the time before the illness and the descent into it but eventually those memories will fade.

The normal phases are good for generating safe associations of place so going back there means they won't trigger off the illness. Then if you feel safe the insight stands more of a chance and you can also bring safe place imagery and breathing into the situation. It will reduce the stress of going back there and you counterpose the paranoid memories with happy ones.

You might get to the point if you are paranoid about the person supporting you it could be that they are putting you in harm's way when out. You need insight here with them that they will not endanger you and once you trust them you can rely on them for support.

That leads to another possibility in that you might believe their reassurances that other people are not going to report you to the CIA when out and about. You will see what they say is true and you should be able to calm down a lot when paranoid around strangers.

If you can be totally immersed in something while you are out that might calm you down too, but you may forget about the insight here. Then instead of running away when you become less absorbed you may remember to use insight first to keep you distracted.

Some of the delusions may even come in useful for all this as in my case not all the thoughts you are causing things with are bad. I felt I had done something useful like inventing computers and again this might have stopped people reporting to the CIA. This because people might think I might be capable of doing something else.

Insight also works by calming you down which has a knock-on effect with the schizophrenia. So, as the illness is stress induced then there are more chances of distraction. The worst stresses happen when you

are out confronting the people who have you under surveillance for 9/11. Insight in dealing with that is reassuring and could prevent a stress induced relapse.

Insight will also stop the fear sapping your strength which will keep you functional with essential things like cooking or housework. This should cheer you up at the same time as well as keep you out of hospital. Once furnished and tidied up you can have your friends round and order food together.

The phases in between episodes will then get longer and more frequent allowing you to live with it all easier. When the symptoms wear off and then get lessened with insight when they return that should help you know you will have the strength to come through them. Overall, your low mood should improve as you get more rested and more active.

As you slowly move out of the delusional phases and gradually back into the psychoses there should still be some immediate sense of reality. That can be built on with the insight before things get completely out of hand again. It makes the delusions easier to question and should be used in therapy.

One major thing with the insight is that you won't be suffering as much with the fear and emotional pain of, as in my case, thinking about 9/11. Then you won't be so depressed so the insight could help you rekindle some interest in life. In my case I was able to pick up where I felt off before the illness.

If you are paranoid about everybody this will cut you off socially. Yet with insight you may be able to go to a day centre and meet new friends and partners. That should then allow some growth on the Maslow tree and allows you to de-stress by talking to friends, sharing your problems.

This will also help low mood. You can get out and do many things with your friends once you stop feeling paranoid about them. Insight can lead to social inclusion and feeling apart of things is another therapeutic feeling compared to being on your own and excluded.

After this we may be able to concentrate enough to do a job and the training at day centres will mean we can acquire the relevant skills. Then we may not feel so alienated by capitalism and we will get our strength back for this goal of work. In so doing, we also can overcome the stigma of being labelled weak with the schizophrenia.

Insight will also help with living independently as eventually it won't matter if you are left on your own for long periods with the voices. This could help with moving out of sheltered accommodation and finding your own place. You can concentrate on things to do around the house like watching movies, listening to music, using the internet and playing computer games.

Once you stop being paranoid about other people you can have your friends and family around your new home, which will give a housewarming feeling. That should have an emotional and therapeutic effect on your life and create a sense of belonging where you live.

Also, if you can question whether the neighbours are spying on you and passing information back to the CIA you should feel a bit safer at home. If you can live in your safe place instead of just imagining one and you will have somewhere to run to during an acute phase of paranoia when out.

Then you can concentrate on doing courses which will further take your mind off thing. Yet insight is not just useful for education as it can open the door to many difficult leisure activities. In my case I joined a local archery club which requires a lot of insightful concentration to get good at it.

Once calmed down with some partial insight or when being compassionate with the schizophrenia you may still not regard it as safe when going out. Yet staying in the house all the time for long periods can be boring and the confines will affect your mood. So, with insight you may be able to get out more and solves this problem.

Finally as the years go by with schizophrenia and the endless suffering begins to take its toll you may get to the point of questioning whether life with schizophrenia is worth it. Having enough insight might allow for enough rest and healing so you do not to get sick of things in the long term.

I have had these problems for 20 years and the delusion did not go away completely. Yet I could say I could cope with life instead of just suffering all the time. Eventually I had to weigh up the good periods of insight with bad times of paranoia and although not completely happy I could say I was more than just content.

The insight helped me develop a more philosophical attitude that I had got an illness and just had to get on with it. These things can happen in life, and you just have to accept them. Yet to get to this outlook it was important that the illness was helped in this insightful way as otherwise life with it might have been too much.

Insight and compassion can both make you functional so you might have the concentration and strength to get where you want to be. If life with the illness has not held you back, then it won't have seemed such a waste. Figures like John Nash who developed insight are inspirational for me here.

In particularly the insight allowed me to concentrate on my writing which made life have some more meaning. In the end it was a *raison d'être*. I had a goal that seemed more achievable and developed a strong sense of purpose. The insight turned out to be very important indeed.

Conclusion

There are so many ways of using insight for changing your life with schizophrenia and tackling them altogether should make us realise the magnitude of the help it can provide. This even in the lives of people with more serious mental health problems. Using these techniques in combination should help prevent the worst of schizophrenia as well as chronic low mood. That should fundamentally benefit all our mental health.

Insight with Cognitive Behavioural therapy isn't just about questioning delusions but can help in a much more holistic sense on you journey through the mental health system. Ultimately even if the insight is only partial and some symptoms remain it can help with getting life almost back to normal. This is the goal for service users in the mental health system.