

Original Paper

The Problems of Keeping Busy in Schizophrenia

Anon¹

¹ United Kingdom

Received: October 2, 2023 Accepted: October 30, 2023 Online Published: November 21, 2023
doi:10.22158/sshsr.v4n2p175 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/sshsr.v4n2p175>

Keeping busy is meant to be one of the main strategies for coping with schizophrenia but is easier said than done. It is supposed just to be possible to distract you from the symptoms, but this actually requires much support before it can happen. You cannot just do it as many other things have to be right at the same time.

Altogether there are many problems with being motivated which add up to a very challenging list. Yet each item in item in the list may have solutions to deal with this. The help has to run concurrently with each of these strategies. Tackling one at a time will run up against other problems that will prevent motivation differently.

Life with schizophrenia presents problems with activity and inactivity. Doing too much is stressful yet doing nothing is stressful and boring. There are ways of dealing with psychoses that require concentration. Then at other times you can keep busy with enjoyment and leisure. These ways need balancing together so they can help fill the days and weeks with keeping busy.

Problems

The keeping busy is easier when the fear manifest only as anxiety. That should cheer things up in between episodes and keep you functional at these times. So, it is easier to distract yourself then but when the symptoms are particularly severe this will mean living in fear. Life with schizophrenia is depressing especially knowing that the suffering will return.

You need prompting before you will wash and dress which removes a source of motivation. You will feel better after you get cleaned up. Then you will need reminding to eat so you won't keep your strength up when worn out with the paranoia. That will mean you may slum it all day at home which will leave you depressed and unmotivated.

You have to be strong enough for distraction. The fear will sap your strength and critical voices will leave you emotionally exhausted. You will be in pain with both, and they can combine to make things particularly severe. All you will want to do is sleep to get some rest from this. What you are thinking and feeling will make very withdrawn and isolated.

One thing that prevents depression, so you don't stay in bed rather than face the day, is to keep a pleasure diary, with a plan to do something pleasurable each day. This can be difficult if you dare not leave the house as there are limits to the things you can enjoy indoors. The periods of pleasure may be limited as the confines of home will concentrate your mind on the voices more.

You have to concentrate enough to be distracted by things and hearing voices all the time will prevent this. Voices can talk all day long, so distraction is going to be very difficult. It may be possible to concentrate on a Walkman to drown out what you have been hearing. Yet doing anything else like reading may have to wait until the voices wear off.

A similar problem arises with being delusional as you will have to stop thinking about the frightening thoughts before you can focus on something else. The problem is that you cannot get these thoughts out of your head and thinking about two things at once is very difficult. Often the voices can comment on your thoughts compounding the problem.

You need to be rested after nightmares. Schizophrenia can give you more than just bad dreams. These will be recurring so the chance for the sleep to be restorative of the paranoia is going to be very reduced. You will need insight or compassion to deal with these dreams, but these may only be partial. Going for days without sleeping will mean you will be too exhausted to be active.

You also need not to be drugged. You may be getting symptoms during this time and unable to be active to distract yourself from them. It is best to take all your tablets on a night and stay asleep until the sedatives wear off. If you must take an afternoon dose you will be back in bed dosing for a couple of hours. This is often a problem in hospital and patients instead of interacting end up staring into space.

You need to calm down for it. The fear can freeze you, put you into shock, make you snap and give you panic attacks. So, calming down is often easier said than done. You can practice breathing exercises and safe place imagery, but these are not effective during the acute phase. The only answer here is to feel compassionate, but it is easier to give it to other people rather than yourself.

The paranoia stops me doing things I am motivated about like going to archery and the rifle range. Often the choice of activities within the mental health system are limited and finding courses or doing sports will be prevented in case you start acting strangely. It is possible to try something new as at a day centre and I was interested in information technology. Yet this only filled the gap so far.

It is more difficult when you cannot leave the house as there are less things going on and fewer people around you. You end up sleeping all day or drinking just to pass the time. This can get serious as it physically unhealthy and alcohol is a depressant. Then the boredom will make things worse.

You can get too lazy for being active and get into a rut where you cannot help yourself. This may affect basic functioning like washing or doing housework. This adds to the problems of psychosis as that will sap your strength for this and the longer it goes on the more you will get out of practice.

You need to be happy and have emotional support. The loser psychology can damage this as in the song by Maggy Riley goes "living in a world you could never be a part of." This might make the feelings of depression worse, and you could end up with an alcohol problem again which is another depressant.

If you are depressed or frightened, you won't feel like going out. You may not see the point in being active and wouldn't be able to concentrate even if you did. It needs demonstrating how this can help as people may not believe it is going to work with such severe problems.

Sometimes it might have a homeopathic answer and some lavender or rock rose might help the ability to concentrate. Some remedies are mental stimulants which could help further with this. So once that stops the fear sapping your strength you might feel more up to the housework.

Solutions

You need to be happier with life for keeping busy and if that works it distracts you from your symptoms so far. You need to find what motivates you in life and that requires finding something meaningful. This for me led to take up writing which provided a *raison d'être*. This although the main thing in my life still required many other things to keep me motivated.

It first might need living in sheltered accommodation to be motivated. You will have your friends on a 4/7 basis in there, but you are living with a group. You need to learn the skills for independent living if you would rather have the therapy of being in your own place. Surprisingly this is not always desirable as the isolation can cause depression.

One problem with being confined to the house most of the time is that the paranoia may cut you off from television and radio, as you may think you are being talked about over the networks. Even with getting out that will still leave a lot of time at home. Fortunately for me the writing filled the gap here, but I could only deal with it in this way so far, without any other forms of entertainment.

You will feel better when you get out of the house. Then being distracted is easier in that you are not confined on your own with the voices and without needing access to media. Then doing things socially with your friends means you can focus on that when there is nothing else to do.

At home you have to do the housework in between episodes as you may be too lazy to do it all at once. Again, you can build this up until you can fill a whole afternoon to get your place looking smart. If you spend money on furniture the homely feel will be therapeutic in between episodes.

It can be difficult to concentrate when hearing voices so it might be better to listen to a Walkman while doing the housework. When becoming lazy with it you could try to treat yourself by buying something once it is done. Yet losers here will devalue their material side so this may not work.

So keeping busy around the house may involve doing housework. Yet once you have become lazy or when the fear saps your strength you may not be up to this. It maybe that you do one thing each day but when not doing it altogether for a number of hours you have lost an important period of distraction.

Music is soothing and you can have it on to do the housework with. The paranoia has less of a chance of sapping your strength for this. It may cheer you up and so you will feel a bit livelier. That should stop you feeling so depressed when you don't feel like not doing anything with it.

There are two ways that schizophrenia can prevent you being motivated in that it can cause anxiety and depression. Some activities are less enjoyable than the leisure pursuits available for distraction. This

includes things like housework again though some people still take a pride in it. So, if you stick with it each week the hope is that it will eventually become a source of therapy. It will help fill in some time when confined in the house.

Another solution to the problems of motivation maybe drinking alcohol. This acts in a two-fold on keeping busy as it can help with anxiety and depression. IT will calm you down and cheer you up. Then it can be used when doing housework until you get to enjoy it on its own.

Otherwise, when settling down on an evening with nothing else to do alcohol is a good way of passing the time when you are on your own. This can only be used for this now and again when in addition to using it for housework. Yet it will still help one evening in each week so is very useful.

Once you have got used to the housework that will free up drinking at other times which can add to other sources of therapy. So, you need to think which way will be the most effective combinations. You can only drink once or twice a week and might be more effective if it is done socially.

If you can leave the house, it may make it more of an occasion to have a few drinks somewhere out and about. That will relax you when out around other people when you are paranoid about them. Some compassion therapy to deal with the fear may be needed before this stands a chance.

When on your own some drinks and food are still possible. They may be helped by watching a DVD proving the television doesn't make you paranoid. In that case having your friends round once a week becomes very important to fill the gap here.

Insight can help reduce the delusional fear, but it tends to be partial and to come and go. Doing the housework at these opportune times could help take the psychotic thoughts out of your mind when the insight is partial. At these points the fear will be reduced to anxiety, so the possibilities of distraction are much greater. You are more up to taking on taxing activities when less frightened.

To this end it might be possible to have some cognitive behavioural therapy which can enhance the insight you have so the periods when you have it are longer and more frequent. This can mean there is more time for being distracted and allows some rest in between psychotic episodes.

Then at these times it is more possible to concentrate on more enjoyable things that will motivate you. You can get out of bed in the morning get washed and plan what you are going to do for the day ahead. That allows for some distraction before the fear sets in again so you can nip it in the bud.

At other times if you have insight each day that will allow for essential tasks such as eating which will give you a lift if you have lost your appetite during a daily episode. Then cooking is another activity than can be difficult when here is a lack of motivation. Yet it doesn't take as long as the housework and if tasty is more therapeutic when done.

Staying indoors limits you for things to do. Yet distracting the paranoid thoughts can still be done so far. There is a need to get out and do things, but you might be too paranoid to go out. You will need to fill the time indoors and that is where food, drink and electronic media come back into the equation. There are ways to learn to concentrate on this with being more courageous.

Here the fear will sap your strength for things like housework and self-care. So, courage can help with supported graded exposure. Yet confronting things step by step might not completely solve the problem at the higher levels of fear. Then these levels can put you into shock, give you panic attacks and freeze you. So, you don't live in fear you will need a Valium to stay functional during lengthy periods of this as you cannot use things like housework for distraction.

Family and friends can motivate you but when terrified this will shut down your emotions. So, some Valium might be needed for this too. Where this is not provided support graded exposure will again become very important before the distraction can start. This may take a considerable amount of time and you may go for years without proper emotional support.

One other problem with housework is that if you are if you are hearing voices you will end up listening to them while concentrating on what you are doing. Having someone to talk to could distract you're here. Then if the voices are criticizing your support from your family could soother this to make the housework possible. My mother spent much time training me for this in ways the support workers could not. I had more strength for it then and didn't let it or myself go.

So, having something to eat can help you with the anxiety and depression. You may need prompting for this then once done it will give you a lift. That prompting was very much helped by having my friends and family round so often I felt calmer to get my appetite back. My mother helped with the cooking when I didn't feel up to it. It was also possible to eat at day centres and order take aways which added more variety to my diet which was also very interesting.

After calming down and cheering up you may feel more like looking after yourself and it is only at this point that having a lifestyle coach can be introduced. This is where the compassion therapy comes in as it may speed the process of soothing so the time living in a slum will be less.

Then the coach will socialise with to motivate you with doing the housework and also give you cooking skills to keep your strength up. Once washed and fed you will feel more motivated to face the day and enjoy other distracting activities. This is where day centres will come into the therapy process.

It is much harder to be motivated when sat around the house all day. Sitting around the house is boring which can be very depressing so there is a need for day centres. The paranoia can stop you getting there so you might be on your own with things. It may need training to get out then you can enjoy life with your friends from the centre as when down the town.

It is too easy to give up on life with schizophrenia and the only thing left is the hope that you can alleviate this through distraction. To remedy this sometime in sheltered accommodation may be needed for more intensive support. Then you can reengage you with life with 24/7 social support and the activities on offer. This can get you up in the morning so you will go to a day centre.

Once you have relearned these skills you can follow them up by going to a day centre where these functional support strategies can be continued. You have to get your interest back in your life and you will feel that keeping busy can still make a difference so far. Yet attending day centres might only be for two days a week which is not long enough to do this.

On the days I could go to the day centres I felt as though I had a look out of the house so didn't mind spending time on my own when back. Afterwards I could settle down to being at home more as I had got out of the confines for a while. This released me with having my mind concentrated on the voices for long periods. I was less stressed from having been distracted when out which kept them quieter when back at home.

The problem was the time I spent at the centre was only a couple of days out of the week and that still left long periods with the voices. I had to get out again and the friends I met at the day centre could fill the gap here. This was more distracting than going places on my own.

To be able to do this meant overcoming the paranoia of the people outside the day centre and the house. That meant I needed a support worker to come with me to help progressively with coexisting and confronting the different levels of fear. Again, this exposure was a challenging distraction and step by step it allowed to get out and be more active with my friends.

After that the door was opened to doing things that were not on offer at the day centre. I found more variety of courses at the local further education colleges. I was lucky here in that I had developed a love of education while at university, so this was very distracting. I had to wait a long time before this was possible, but I could set in as an achievable goal during my wait for it.

The feel of sitting in the class was very therapeutic and reminded me of the time before the illness. That was soothing and relaxing so I could concentrate on what the teacher was saying. This was only possible for one night a week but in combination with other things it did help fill some more time in.

You cannot study all the time and I didn't want to spend the rest of it sitting around the house watching movies every day. There was a need to get out again and with the support confronting the fear I was eventually able to go back to the archery club again which was my first love.

All this study and leisure became very important to my pleasure diary and kept me motivated for the other things in life in order to keep functional. Finding these various distractions allowed me to do something different each day, so I didn't get bored with them and with life. They could support me very well in the long term of coping with the illness.

Exercise comes in very important again at this point as it too helps break the day up. If you can be supported with this so that it is safe to go out of the house it might release endorphins. These are good for the pleasure diary again and can add to the experiences of fresh air, nature as well as the physical benefits of feeling fitter. The whole thing should cheer you up and so you will be glad to get out of the house.

Yet there are problems as when you get older it becomes more difficult to get into shape. If you have trapped inside the house before long that will quickly have the same effect. You have to be motivated to stick with it and getting back to doing this. You need to get out every day when there is little else to do and not to be put off during the bad weather which is a frequent problem.

Your laziness will make the need for exercise very difficult, and the fear can drain your strength for it. Again, this needs some training and someone to go with you as you build it up gradually. Yet this is

assuming of course you are able to leave the house. Then it may be necessary to get an exercise bike if you have room for one indoors

Another difficulty here is that doing it so frequently I stopped enjoying it. I had to do it all the time which was too much. So again, it needed someone to go with me so the conversation could combine with the added physical benefits in the pleasure diary. This in hope all this would pass the time. Yet it turned out that it made no difference and I still found it took too much effort.

As with the pleasure diary there were still important benefits which continued when back in the house. It still helped to have a change of scenery and I was able to breathe more easily when out the house. The hope was still that I might get used to it over the years which kept me sticking with it. Yet I could endure it most the time and I felt less confined when around the house having done it.

When back from the walk and the writing distraction ceases to fill the time in you are going to have to get through the day to avoid being frightened. That again means being stuck around the house so drinking and good food might be the only answer, when watching a DVD.

You can do this every day each week if you can get very interested in electronic media and cookery. Music and DVDS are very varied and takeaway menus have hundreds of choices. So, over the years this should keep you going. That interest meant further variety of trying new recipes in the kitchen.

These are activities that you can do on your own, but you might need some further conversation to distract you more effectively. This is where the internet comes in handy for social isolation. While using the media such as atmospheric background music, you can chat to your friends online.

The writing keeps you busy, but I have a talent for it which doesn't require concentration. My obsession with it makes it difficult to think of anything else and I am so involved that it stops the psychotic thoughts completely. To keep busy you may need to find something to get totally absorbed. While studying and writing I kept moving in and out of this immersion so there was less chance for rest as there might have been.

In my case the delusions drive me to do something useful to save my life from the CIA. The voices like this so they let me concentrate and this allows for distraction most of the time. So, then the paranoia was still at the back of my mind, and it kept spurring me on to be totally immersed in the activities.

This often meant some underlying anxiety was still there, but it also allowed for some drive to keep me focused. There was an imperative to survive been tortured for 9/11 which forced me do to something about it. That meant the do or die situation allowed me to concentrate.

The danger point was that after the writing I needed to find something equally immersive and that meant getting out of the house again. This was a different set of problems compared to being confined with the voices as I was around people who might make me paranoid. Yet this too had an answer so far.

I could take my mind off these with distraction more if I could enjoy what I was doing. I wasn't so completely immersed with this as with the writing, but other things could grab my attention for a while. It was good to browse for clothes and electronics and this allowed for some retail therapy.

I had the finances to live it up so far but had to make choices in life which meant although content and coping that I wasn't completely happy with this side of things. This affected my pleasure diary. In particular I couldn't afford a car and so didn't have the feeling of freedom it gives. This would have lifted my mood much more than some of the other things I did. Often with schizophrenia you cannot concentrate to drive so this is going to be a frequent problem.

One major problem was I that I was so paranoid I could not get to the things that most interested me for leisure and still needed after having worked on the writing. That reduced my choices for things to do drastically as there wasn't much else, I was interested in.

So, it is necessary to live it up in between episodes. It is possible to go down the town with the group of friends you have made at the day centre. Yet enjoying this has to be measured with what you are missing out on in life in other ways. This can be a depressing thought as you have to make choices like whether to have a car or a holiday and which would take all your money.

It is important for motivating your life to treat yourself. Yet there are limits to this so materialism is only part of the answer. I could cope with life compared to the poverty I had before the illness. It was empowering to the point I could keep busy with things by living it up.

What the problem with being from an affluent background is that you never really get used to living on benefits. I spent a lot of years seeing how this would turn out but over time I never accumulated enough to feel any different. That meant putting the hope for the writing to be more successful.

Without the things you want in life keeping busy may have no point to. These feelings of depression can be so acute you will let yourself go. You may then also be too lazy to do anything about it. It will need cheering up to overcome the laziness and your family can help here.

So, you may get bored with life and feel you are missing out on the material side. This creates alienating and even suicidal thoughts. You may need to find a partner to answer that. Then you will have a source of strength to motivate your whole life. If you meet someone else on benefits the material side of life will have an answer. You will have what you need and the therapy this can create.

Without the things you want in life keeping busy may have no point to it. These feelings of depression can be so acute you will let yourself go. You may then also be too lazy to do anything about it. It will need cheering up to overcome the laziness and your family can help here.

Also, on the emotional side It took a lot of family support to even think of being distracted. One of the best things for my pleasure diary was watching the young people in our family growing up. The problem here was I got paranoid about them, so the diary was often empty. That meant the only point of contact was with my mother. Without seeing my other relatives there was a need for more frequent contact.

Much emotional support is needed from friends and family. This is particularly important if the antidepressants don't work. Yet loss of family contact through stigma will be a serious obstacle for keeping busy and being motivated in life. Then you would really need the antidepressant or to meeting a partner which could help here so far.

In my case getting older life wasn't working and I was losing motivation again. The writing was the only thing that kept me going in the end. It was the only way back to the life I had before the illness when I was happy. Without this in life you have got to hang in there by hoping they will release a new wonder drug like clozapine. On the material side I had enough to cope with but building it up over the years it didn't get to the point that as I happy again as in my affluent youth.

Conclusion

The outcome of all this that I can cope with life on these terms as the distraction allowed things to get back to normal. It takes such a lot of effort and many varied kinds of support, but it can be done. There are different problems with being motivated and each has a different solution.

The path of progressing with distraction will begin with being able to look after yourself and then by going to day centres to meet new people. After that you need to find things to do around the house. The journey is not easy as schizophrenia can present such difficult challenges to be motivated.

So, it is easy to give up on this and there will have to be constant encouragement from the support put in place by the mental health system. Compassion and insight can be used but, in the end, it is up to the individual. As with many things in life there will always be enough hope to keep you distracted.

Yet this is not true for everyone. In some extreme cases distraction won't be enough to stop people committing suicide. In other cases, even with the extremes of psychoses distraction these techniques can be very effective. You can come through things with learning the right motivations. In sum these are important methods for dealing with mental health problems alongside the other forms of help that are available.

Step by Step

Distraction is recommended as a main coping strategy for schizophrenia but initially you won't see the point but will come to believe in it. Here if you are shown a few initial steps you will start to understand what can be done. There are big motivational problems with schizophrenia before distraction can start. So it is also easier said than done. Prompting to keep active may not always be available so you have to learn to do things on your own. This can be a challenging problem for a support worker so they will need to know how to both encourage and help.

Wearing a Walkman while you do the housework will help with being worn out by voices. Yet like watching a television at these times you are hearing two voices at once. So the multitasking might not work. Then you might just try to get on with things and ignore the voice but like with a delusion you will have to think about something else. This is not always possible so you cannot concentrate on anything complicated although simple things like dusting and polishing require less effort.

Trying to keep busy when being so caught up with the delusional thinking means you are less aware of the surroundings. This will put keeping busy on pause until you can step back from the symptoms and be mindful about keeping busy. The illness may also cause emotional pain so the power of a

compassionate or positive self-image may keep you going with things that are distracting. This in addition to living in your safe place could keep you motivated if you start getting anxious.

I think there is a limit to things you can do indoors. This may include eating, housework, exercise, reading or television if you can concentrate. All the same this is a start and once you have mastered doing these activities it might lead on to other things. You cannot sit around the house all day so getting out is needed for being distracted and doing these activities can only go so far. Thinking that the neighbours will be spying on you will make any further distractions difficult as you won't go out.

So, these limits to what you can do indoors will provide a break from things but might not overcome the feeling of confinement and from having to escape being watched. Then for the distraction there will be a need to get out of the house and find something else that might help. The problem is being locked up for long periods will be no good for your mental health even with keeping busy. So for any further distractions you will need training to be around people again. Practicing things at home can lead us in this direction.

You might have to confront things before you can be distracted but confronting things might need some distraction as well. If you start to feel confined with the symptoms at home the distraction could overcome this and give you a rest. This means your strength for things will not be sapped all time, so you stand more chance of confronting things indoors. Then you might be motivated to get up in the morning and you will have something to fill the day in. This might take your mind off things and help prevent a relapse and if most of the time you feel some improvement you will have more strength to tackle the difficult times using distraction.

Simply coexisting with the fear might not give you enough strength for the housework or allow you to concentrate. Yet even around the house there are variants in the fear from continual anxiety to episodes of terror. You can build up to overcoming this through graded exposure, so you become more functional before trying the distractions. Then this is a start to building up to overcome the fear when out which may be more severe as you will be coming into direct contact with the people you are paranoid about.

The housework and cookery can last four hours at a time, so you have to be functional a lot to do this. The fear can put you off eating so you won't have this to look forward to and at the worse the symptoms can freeze you so stopping distractions like housework. You will need to be distracted at home again before you try getting out and about. This may not always be possible.

This puts the emphasis on lifestyle coaching, sheltered accommodation and self-help for keeping motivated. To help with this it is also possible to keep a pleasure diary indoors such as taking a pride in housework and enjoying cookery. However, if you cannot concentrate on a recipe sometimes you can treat yourself with a takeaway. The indoor pleasure diary is important as indoors the mind will be concentrated on the voices.

With more severe symptoms you have to begin by finding something to enjoy rather than something you have got to do. Then if you can distract yourself at the moderate times of fear, you will have to have something to look forward to after the severe episode which can be a relaxing thought. Yet compassion

may be the only answer to being distracted at these times of terror and should be a source of strength for the emotional pain. Then the more distracted we can become the less stress we will have which should take our mind off things which might trigger an episode.

With schizophrenic nightmares you won't rest so you won't feel like getting up in the morning. You have to learn how to pull round after them. Compassion could help you here as might insight. Also having someone to calm you down that to reassure it was just a dream might be an answer. The nightmares are like visual hallucinations and are just as real. In a nightmare it feels like it is really happening just the way a delusional seems to be real. In addition, the dream was about a delusion you won't be able to tell yourself it is just a dream as the two things seem connected.

You have to motivate yourself before you can do things like housework which can turn your house into a slum. So, this can get on top of you if it is too much and you might have to go back into hospital. This will help with the depression that the illness is causing it as in hospital there will be social contact and activities both of which are distracting. Yet afterwards being alone at home without the support could damage your ability to be distracted again. Then going to a day centre for a couple of afternoons might not work as well as the hospital environment.

Being active needs to start gradually with getting out of bed to breakfast and washing. Once this is done it will build your strength up and make you feel a bit better. Yet at this time the illness can seem so overwhelming there is no point in trying to distract yourself and you may get to the point where it stands more chance through confrontation first. Then the easier things like shopping or eating out are more possible. So, once we stop painting the whole world with schizophrenia in black it is easier to enjoy the social contact at a day centre. This allows us to build you up to concentration, and to make the physical effort in exercise and housework. The result is that in continuing to enjoy things means they become self-sustaining.

The initial stages of keeping busy are best answered with living in sheltered accommodation. Hospital helps prepare you for the social contact there as it is a 24/7 environment. Then being in sheltered will eventually get you motivated for day centres and from there to a more normal life again. In there you won't be on your own confronting these problems with the housework and cookery and the support staff will go exercising with you. Eventually once functional you will have to cope with things on your own and live independently.

If hospitals are boring, you won't be motivated by being in there so when getting out of them the distractions won't work. Then getting motivated even in sheltered accommodation might be asking a lot with schizophrenia. You need something to get interested in and here day centres are vital additions to sheltered accommodation because they can provide courses that make your brain work. So, with education combined with social contact you may get an interest in life again and for getting out of the house and doing more things.

A pleasure diary could help here and talking with the support worker about your life might also help make you further realise there are good periods and bad. The trick is to include housework and exercise

into the pleasure so there will be longer and more frequent examples of it. Again, the diary should remind you when starting out with the easier pleasure distractions that you are progressing to more difficult ones will add to the good periods. Eventually you can add day centres and friends to the list, and you will realise how far you have come with the keeping busy. You need something every day for the pleasure diary. Yet if you are drugged on a morning the pleasure diary is not going to work so there will be nothing to shift the depression until you sleep of the sedative.

The illness will drain your strength for doing this too so if you wake up depressed from having dreamt of killing all those people at 9/11. You won't feel up to facing the day. This will add to all the low mood caused by the suffering with fear all the time so you will have to wait until it wears off. Then you can remind yourself of all the positive things in life. If you cheer up a bit instead of feeling depressed you can think about doing something else and then the possibilities of distraction might stand some more chance. It is only at this point you can think about your pleasure diary and what pleasure you have planned for that day. Too much of the depression may make you give up on life as you know these times will keep reoccurring. So being distracted becomes very important for mood.

You may need training to do housework as tackling this with schizophrenia can be difficult. Then like getting out of bed there doesn't seem to be any point. You may need to do something pleasurable to get psyched up for it so this might be essential to trying to keep busy though will also need some help first. If you can distract you from the symptoms while you're learning the housework it might be that doing this might is a steppingstone for something more difficult like exercise which again takes a lot of physical effort.

Overcoming one problem can lead to challenging another but eventually you have got to want to do things as with the housework. So, it is better to start with one thing at a time and take a coffee break in between jobs. You will still have to coerce yourself to do the next task. Yet eventually like exercise once you get into your stride with it you get more used to it. Then you can tell yourself that you are nearly finished and look forward to treating yourself with something at the end. It only needs doing once per week so when it's done its done and having only taken a few hours that will seem to reduce it as a problem that needs tackling.

People with schizophrenia have to be prompted first to cook and clean and even if hungry you have to coerce yourself. It is taxing if you are not used to it, so you need a way of enjoying it. You can try to distract yourself while doing the housework by watching the television or listening to music at the same time. That might be uplifting but might still mean you have to multitask with the paranoid thoughts while you are doing it. This takes double the effort so enjoying some media before you start might get you psyched up.

The pleasure diary becomes very important here as you need things to treat yourself after you have tackled the symptoms with the housework. Your life is not all just making the effort but has rewarding aspects too. So, the diary might include alcohol, sugar rush, takeaway food, a wish list, seeing family members, enjoying media and education. With the food and drink there is plenty of choice and you might

settle down to watching a movie or read a book once the boring housework is done. Some people won't find it boring.

Nightmares can stop you keeping busy. After a nightmare you will have to coexist with the fear on a morning. Then you might take notice of something distracting which could then take your mind off it. Compassion could then soothe the feeling bad about yourself as after having dreams of punishment for causing 9/11. Then having something to eat when worn out will give you an immediate lift. You will need to pull round with something pleasurable like a cup of coffee and having a chat.

Keeping busy before you go to sleep could help stop nightmares and if you cannot keep busy before you go to sleep a few drinks might be needed. The worry here is that they might stop the tablets working making things even worse during the night so some Valium might be needed. Then if the dreams are recurring you are really going to need your pleasure diary and in addition you will need your safe place imagery and breathing on a morning a lot more.

The problem with waking up after a nightmare is you might be too drugged to get up and do anything to take you mind off the dream which could cause a relapse. So you will be getting less rest and with the nightmares themselves they will sap your energy for keeping busy. Then at these times you might wake up depressed after the dream and not to want to get up. There is an answer here with the distraction. This will help you take your mind off things to have a rest. This thought is that this will help you get out of bed and do something else enjoyable to start the day when the symptoms are not present.

So, you have got to be motivated to get out of bed which can be difficult with all the things causing the depression. It is too easy just to let yourself go so you won't feel like making the effort for being distracted even if it calms you down. Family support is vital here before motivation and distraction can start. Then the most distracting place is a day centre. Again, you won't feel like making the effort but if you force to go it might rub off on you socially, but this is not true for everyone.

if you are paranoid about the other residents in sheltered accommodation this will make you isolated and withdrawn. So again, there will be less ways of being distracted. Alternatively, if you live independently, you will have mood problems with being motivated to look after yourself as the paranoia might also stop you going to day centres. If you shut down completely you might end up back in hospital. Yet keeping busy can be practised in there. This activity will need explaining by a social worker so you can heal your life together with the use of an antidepressant.

With severe symptoms there is a need to get out once per day. This may be prevented by the schizophrenia as it may be worse than the episodes experienced at home. Yet they can be tackled in the same way. When out you will be coming into contact with people you are paranoid about and so will be difficult at first. It is best to start by going to a day centre and having a chat over a cup of coffee as the people there won't mind you looking odd. This will be a relaxing first step.

The trick for keeping busy is to rebuild your life so you may have to go back to the time before the illness and find the goals that were motivating you. There is often a need to pick up where you left off and bear this in mind as something to work towards when you start with techniques for distraction. It is important

not to give up hope and as you learn to overcome the illness by taking your mind off things so you will find the ability to concentrate which should help with achieving these distracting goals.

It was important for coping in the house that I could get to my family's home overnight and spend some time there. That provided another break from the confines once a week which kept me going with keeping busy when living on my own. This was a lifeline until I could get out more and provided a much-needed rest from the symptoms. It felt safe to go back to somewhere I had lived before the illness, and this kindled an interest in life. So, it was useful in taking my mind off things and not to paint everything was black.

If you can get out with friends and family the possibilities of distraction are much greater. Yet you can build on these experiences for when you have been back at home. Then being frightened at home forces you to deal with the fear as there is nowhere left to run. So, you have no choice but to tackle even the severe episodes. That also means as you start to go out you learn not to panic with the paranoia and do not need to escape the situation. You can stay in the dangerous place when out until the fear wears off and then you can start to think about something distracting.

Just like having to force yourself to do the housework learning to be distracted comes into its own and you can multitask with the voices when looking around the shops. The interest in cookery comes in useful as you think about going to restaurants or coffee shops while learning the exercise means you can go for a walk around the river which will get you breathing properly when out. All this makes for a varied plan for getting out and you can do many different things, so you won't get bored or sick of them.

The pleasure diary will continue to be built on here as getting out allows for many more pleasures like shopping and eating out. Then the friendship at day centres will be better than what is offered on the internet at home. In particular you have the sense of freedom from getting out which will result in not feeling confined indoors, so you can live in your house more normally. Just being able to walk around a supermarket is a breath of fresh air compared to having to shop on the internet.

Things that don't take too much effort like shopping are the easiest distractions and might motivate you a bit more. One thing leads to another. You still need prompting to get cleaned up before you go but having something to look forward to might help you get out of bed and get ready. Once you have got cleaned up and have had some breakfast you will feel better for this. You will get pulled round and more ready to face the day. Then you will be glad to get out the house and when out you could have lunch somewhere and go for a walk by the river. It is also nice to buy yourself to something for retail therapy, as well as to do some food shopping for when you get back. The problem is that being afraid could still spoil all this, so it is best done during more moderate phases of anxiety when it is easier to be distracted by it. Yet that still leaves the more severe episodes to get through.

After enjoying getting out things that require more staying power can be tackled like doing an education course as with the housework and cookery. Yet you have to force yourself to stick with things and concentrate just like trying to watch the television when at home. Again, there is plenty of choice of activities here. Then like having a Walkman you can listen to the voice of the teacher instead of the voice.

You can also meet new friends with same interests combining both distractions. That should further distract you from the delusion which the voice is talking about.

You can learn to do a sport which is not possible indoors so the home exercise can be built on by making this more sociable. With the prior practice at this the motivation for gearing up to something sporting will be a lot easier. Then you don't give in to stopping the strenuous exercise as it is easier if you have to don't have to do it on your own, making this less boring. In my case I was able to join a local archery club which was something I was interested in before the illness and had to drop because of staying indoors. The nearest thing to this indoors was playing computer games.

Being distracted to the point you can concentrate opens up some socially meaningful activities like voluntary work. That will make you feel a part of things again and not so socially excluded. It might also rekindle a sense of purpose in life which you may have lost with the schizophrenia. After getting some experience this purposefulness can be built upon and I have none some people with mental health problems find part time jobs. People like John Nash are inspirational here. This kind of work is more important than housework which only occurs being indoors.

Having made new friends means you can invite them round instead of just talking to people on the internet. This will help with the feelings of loneliness and the emotional force of the isolation caused the paranoia and stigma when staying indoors. This again may require some insight but could result in a source of strength and emotional support to keep you motivated. This is assuming your friends are well enough to provide emotional support, or that you can cope with the worry about them when they are ill. Day centre staff cannot replace a friendship.

Assuming you can meet someone to help get out and about that should open the door to a lot of distracting possibilities. These are in stark contrast to doing things at home on your own. Having someone to talk to is more interactive than watching the television and stops you staring blankly at it when ill. With practice you can get engrossed with these, which will occupy your mind much better. To do this you begin by getting involved with people and find friends to rekindle your interest in life.

Then you can use your cookery skills for inviting your friends round to make some food for them which is better than just enjoying things on your own. Else you can pursue your interest in this and with this incentive to go to a restaurant and enjoy being with someone else cooking over a few drinks. This again is better than sitting at drinking on your own and will make the more social situation go with a bang. The cookery might be better than what you can do at home and there is plenty such choice on the menu. You can easily do this once a week and is something to look forward to.

Instead of watching your DVDs on your own you can go to the cinema and see the latest films on the big screen. Again, you won't have to be on your own. You can go to other places instead like a theatre and again it is better to have someone with you. Watching a comedy or a play might be something different again which can help you cheer up or satisfy a cultural interest. Instead of listening to music at home you could go to a concert and have it played live.

You can share a love of things academic by doing courses instead of just reading books at home by yourself. Here the local further education courses also have mental health support. It is important to exercise the mind when at home instead of vegetating. Yet as with the physical exercise you can be too rusty to get back to it. You might have to start with something fairly basic and build it back up beginning with a few hours each week. Study at day centres can be a lot of pressure so you will also have to build up to coping with it very gradually.

Having learned not to run from paranoia when at home also opens the door to going further afield where being able to run back to the house, the car or day centre might not be possible. That led in my case to doing some foreign travel as I knew if I got paranoid about the people on plane or in the resort, I could act normal so wasn't frightened by the stigma. Then if I needed a rest from this all I had to do was hang in there and then go to hide into the resort apartment. Travel was one of the most effective distraction techniques I could find.

You can get too lazy for keeping busy and when living in the mental health system this can be a difficult habit to break. This includes housework and exercise, and some coaching is necessary. If you can eventually see it as a challenge to overcome this might motivate you to measure up. The key here is positive thinking as you cannot even be bothered to get out of bed. So, what needs connecting here is way of getting an interest in life so you will be motivated for strength.

Then you have to get psyched up for the exercise every day and doing the housework once a week. You realise you really don't want to do this but there is no choice, so you have got to get to the point where you feel like it more. Like the housework and cooking this might take some training and as with other things in schizophrenia you may need prompting before you will exercise. Given that the antipsychotics put on weight exercising this is going to be very important. Yet it is probable that this is the activity which is going to be tackled last.

Exercise is a form of distraction that is particularly strenuous especially if you get out of practice with it even for six months. It is hard enough to do under normal conditions when out of shape but with schizophrenia this will sap your strength with fear. It may be necessary to have someone go with you to distract you from the fear with it. Alone you can try to coexist with the fear when doing this so it doesn't sap your strength again. In addition, supported graded exposure can help calm you down for getting out which could be the first step for this.

You can take a Walkman if the voices start happening enroute. Then some insight for passing the people when out there who might make you paranoid could also help here. You can also get too lazy to make the effort. Yet after a while there is some motivation here as it will help clear your head and make you breathe more easily. Then you can get into exercise which will get you increasingly more motivated you for it. Like the housework it only needs doing for an hour a day which will make it less of a challenge. The problem remains with both activities is that it still leaves a lot of time to fill in when keeping busy. This makes getting out very important.

Yet if you are out and about as with the exercise and get episodes doing this, you will associate the place with the illness which could cause a relapse. After a few of these reactions the associations of place the memories are going to be very strong and might prevent from going back. So, you may have to wait months before you forget. That means starting again with it and so the need to keep busy round the house more becomes important once more. This might be difficult as this concentrates your mind on things like voices and delusions. There is more of a need to confront the fear again which might be sapping your strength for being active so some insight at home might also be increasingly necessary.

Once you start to cheer up with keeping busy when out and about it will cheer up the time at home. So, you will be more motivated with life in there. You will settle down to watching media. This will now be more engaging as it will reflect your rekindled interest in life. You can then be on your own for long periods which is what the initial problem was when staying indoors and that should fill the rest of the day in. Then the new activities will also take you mind off things, so you won't be so prone to getting nightmares.

Overall, the new activities will take your in off things which should reduce the stress that is perpetuating the schizophrenia. Then with fewer psychotic episodes you will feel less depressed. So, once you start to enjoy life doing all these things there will be more of a reason to get out of bed. At this point being able to exercise means being around nature which could also be soothing and make you more capable of dealing with the fear an route.

Overtime your emotional relationships are going to deepen as you meet partners and friends for life which you cannot do with the isolation of being at home. Learning distraction techniques will get you out of the house and can lead you in the direction of this opportunity. Then being supported to confronting the anxiety at home might overcome your nerves so the emotional level of the Maslow tree becomes a viable possibility. This can be initiated by becoming part of an organic growing community at a day centre. Emotions are some of the most motivating things in your life.

Sharing things with friends is one thing but sharing them with a partner is something else and belonging is part of being in a relationship. It is more fulfilling than trying to find work and the emotional support runs much deeper. You will be a source of strength for each other which may make life with the illness much more workable. Then as with the suffering you can rely on each other to soothe the illness. You will eventually come to rely on this instead of the distractions and coping strategies so in the end they are much less important.

Yet further down the line there are going to be problems. Instead, of being motivated some people will commit suicide so they need distraction very much. The point is to intervene to take your mind off things before things deteriorate to this point. After years of struggle this might still be difficult so these keeping busy approaches have their limits though. You can also get sick with things using these strategies after a much shorter time as well. If you have lost family support through stigma distraction techniques are going to seem a bit empty.

The problem with recurring symptoms and using distraction is that over the years you will have to weigh up the bad and good in life with schizophrenia. Then you have to find ways of making the suffering worth it. The struggle with the symptoms can go on for a long time so you need to hang in there and not give up. You may reach a point where even using the distractions mean you cannot fully cope with the illness. So, you will have to decide if they are effective enough to still have some quality of life. In the end you may get sick of things so you will have to find other ways of coming to terms with it all such as reminding yourself there are people around you who care about you. That thought may help you keep trying with things that lessen the impact of the symptoms by generating some self-compassion that could soothe them. Again, you will be in a more positive frame of mind for keeping busy and at this point the distractions could once more help with this along the same lines of progress suggested above.

Conclusion

Keeping busy requires an overall effort with the symptoms and how they affect the different sides to your life. These can all be tackled by using distraction and the hope is you might learn to enjoy life as things get back to normal for you. Sadly, the struggle with the illness can take many years before things can come right with trying to take your mind off the illness. Yet there is a definite path to follow so you might come through it all and in my case, I have been on this path for twenty years. Giving the right levels of support with taking your mind off things life with schizophrenia the illness can be liveable and rewarding despite the fear and pain and in my case, it has been my family that has helped me keep busy the most.