

**Themes involving sex & sexuality, gender fluidity and romance are common in psychosis.**

Manifestations of sex and sexuality in psychosis can take a variety of different forms. For example, voices might comment on what is happening during (real life) sex, question the

Others report feeling like they have been sexually possessed or penetrated,

These experiences can be positive or negative, but often impact relationships with partners and family members.

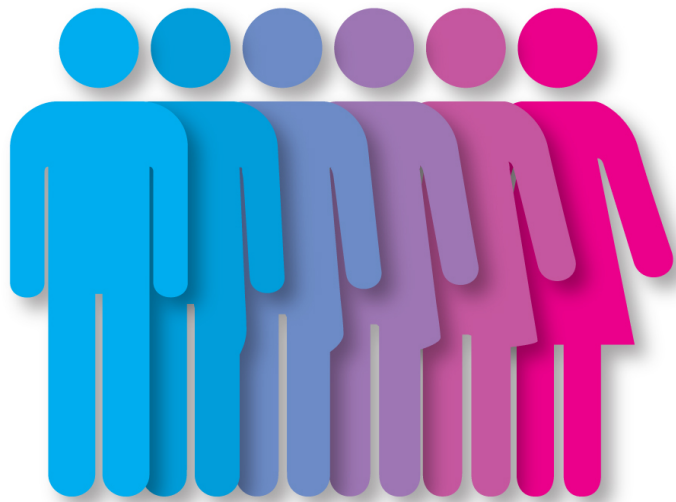
*"Nobody ever talked to me about sex. Ever. I didn't know if it was just me, or if this sort of stuff is really common. The voices say dirty things that I've never felt comfortable talking to a therapist about. It fills me with a lot of shame."*



### *Voices, Visions & Other Unusual or Extreme Experiences*

## Why are sexual themes so common?

- **Existing research on the intersections between sex/sexuality and psychosis paints a complicated picture.** Sexual abuse is one of the strongest predictors of voices, across populations, and some sexual content may be directly connected to these early experiences (or later experiences of sexual violence or assault). Bullying is also a major risk factor for psychosis and many peers report experiences of bullying that are directly related to their sexuality or assumptions about their sexuality—e.g. being bullied for “acting gay” or “queer” or appearing not to conform to rigid gender norms.
- **In addition to trauma and bullying, psychosis has been linked to fluctuations in estrogen levels** (particularly in women); estrogen has in turn been linked to gender-related psychotic experiences including post-partum psychosis, premenstrual psychosis (or symptom exacerbations) and psychosis induced by hormone therapy.
- **In some cultures, sexual behavior is itself seen as a primary cause of psychosis.** For instance, in some regions of India, inappropriate sexual behavior is viewed as a potential cause of psychosis or voices; examples include having sexual thoughts about an in-law (or someone of the same sex), masturbation or touching someone else (inappropriately).



## The Hearing Voices Movement offers hope, support and alternative ways of working with voices, visions & beliefs.

The **Bay Area Hearing Voices Network** is a regional hearing voices movement group that includes voice hearers, peers, family members and professional allies in the community. Together, we work to change assumptions made about voices and unusual experiences, and to create learning and healing opportunities for people across the Bay Area. At the heart of our approach is the conviction that voices and other experiences are often deeply meaningful and that opportunities to explore meaning are fundamental to healing.

### What we offer:

- Peer and family ‘Voices, Visions & Beliefs’ support groups
- Trainings, workshops & presentations on group facilitation, the hearing voices movement & alternative approaches
- Events and community gatherings
- A venue for organizing, consciousness raising and cultural change

**Find out more:**

**Visit** [www.bayareahearingvoices.org](http://www.bayareahearingvoices.org)  
**Email:** [bayhearingvoices@gmail.com](mailto:bayhearingvoices@gmail.com)