

## *Helping a Youth Who Sees or Hears Things that are not Real*

**Listen.** You may reassure her that her perceptions are not real, but **do not argue.** Attend to her *feelings* about the hallucinations. Help her manage these.

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### Consider:

- Each person's experience is unique. Find what is helpful to your child.
- Whether or not your child recognizes that what he is experiencing isn't real.
- Whether or not the experiences are positive (comforting, kind, interesting) or distressing (critical, threatening, scary).
- Whether or not your child wants to talk about his hallucinations.
- Hallucinations, like other symptoms, are made worse by stress.
- Substance use/abuse can increase hallucinations.
- Medications can help and may need to be increased during times of stress.

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### Strategies:

- Establish and maintain **predictable, low stress routines** with reduced expectations.
- See if it helps to **relax**, take deep breaths, find quiet. Have her try closing her eyes.
- OR **get busy**, exercise, listen to loud music, or engage in a game or task.
- See if blocking her ears or **wearing headphones** helps.
- How about **doing something social** with friends or family? A game, a movie, or talking.
- See if telling the voices to **"Stop" or "Go Away"** helps.
- Teach her to **self-talk**: "Take it Easy" or "I can handle it" "I don't have to listen"
- Make a **list of different strategies** to try. Have him pick a couple to start with.
- **Accept.** Let the hallucinations come and go. Continue with other parts of life: school, work, play, being with friends or family, day-to-day tasks.
- **Spend time with pets.** They can be calming or distracting.
- **Encourage her to pray.** Ask for help from a higher power.
- **Help** him consider the evidence that something is real or not.
- **Be careful to praise and respond positively to coping** not merely the presence of symptoms. Work with your child but be careful not to reward being symptomatic.

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**RESOURCES:** See website for suggestions of books and other resources.