

14th World Hearing Voices Congress

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Paris, France



Breaking the Spell of Consensus Reality

Welcoming Every Human Experience

Consensus reality is brought into existence through social institutions that tend to obfuscate reality. Reality is what we discover through talking to each other, sharing our stories, supporting each other into finding the courage to face our past and explore and own our experiences. Consensus reality is a psychiatric diagnosis. Reality is widespread abuse and trauma. Consensus reality is what unites family members and professionals' deaf ears against patients screaming in psychiatric wards. Consensus reality backs the arm and needle forcing psychiatric meds into grudging buttocks. Reality is what I can relate to that allows me to relate to someone else. What use do we actually have of consensus reality? Were we not raised into it, would we feel the urge to recreate it? For most people, *maybe*, consensus reality is kind of comforting, validating – when in doubt – that one is “normal”. But where does it leave everybody else? Fear against fear. Does one have to fear losing one's mind because one is facing reality while others are afraid to lose a consensus reality not aligned with facts? The spell of consensus reality is about holding on to something that seems strong because everybody else – well, not everybody, but most people – are also holding on to it. And it's about accusing those not holding on to it to be actually weakening it by not holding on to it. But what if those not holding on to it have actually had the experience of the profound and intrinsic weakness of it? Its evasive and vaporous – illusory – nature. What if those not holding on to it have actually had the direct experience of the hard and cold reality behind it? Whatever your experiences, tell us about when and how you were able to let go of consensus reality and what happened then? Tell us about your discoveries, the lessons learned and the questions triggered. Create opportunities for people to actually try and meet around reality and experience what happens then. Let interrogations spark and be shared!

Suggested themes include (but are not limited to): finding comfort beyond fear; supporting each other looking through violence; meeting others deeper than social identities; questioning several layers of assumptions about meds; imagining ephemeral shared spaces in one's life; fruitful conflicts.

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