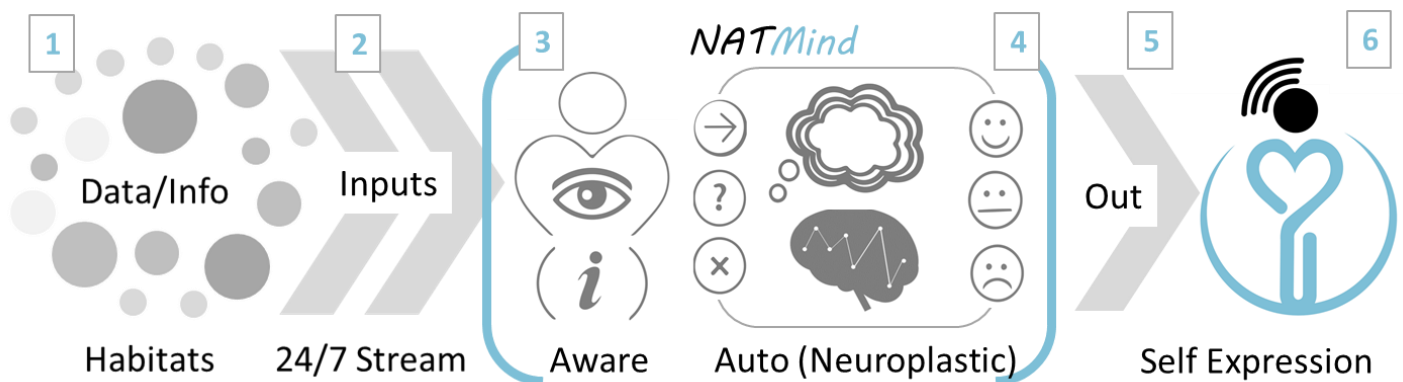


Each of our Incredible Natural Minds is a product of the inputs we seek out, the habitats we live in and co-create. I use the word natural as the functional mind is best understood as both a product of evolution and our tool for shaping our evolution—no other species has the ability to shape and design the habitats we live in. We enjoy them in our aware minds, we make choices all the time many of which we have automated as routine. Survival is a requirement to be in the game. Thriving is our driving force, we thrive together. Using principles of evolution theory we can decipher the functional mind processes we share—I call this *NATMind*.

It seems self evident that we spend most of our time in thrive mode — the pursuit of happiness. When we devote significant time to efforts we may not enjoy at the time, it is mostly an investment in our future. We tolerate a proportion of unhappiness, we may even acclimatize to it—the net balance must be happy else we will make changes. Of course there are some who live in survive mode given their circumstances—that is an unfortunate comment on society, not the mind itself.

The diagram below is a simple description of our Incredible Natural Minds as a benchmark for discussing the ‘hearing voices/anomalous perception experience, which plays out in the MIND. Consciousness, you might say, lol.



[1], [2] Our minds are switched on 24/7—we have a constant flow of data/information streaming from our environment. The habitats we choose and the roles we play in each context shape what we take in.



[3] Our perception is a synthesis of data/information from our environment and from our minds—memory, as well as our hopes, dreams, expectations. How we feel about the situation/context affects the data/information we seek out. Frame of mind—mood, attitude, feelings literally change the data/information set we select and focus on = perceive. Interactions with others co-create joined perceptions.



[4] Our thoughts are a flow of information back and forth, comparing perception to an expected/anticipated outcome. We accept, interrogate, reject data/information in a process of ensuring that we derive the best value for me/us—we adjust and refine perception/outcome until the balance is a happy one, a smiley face or at least a neutral invest/do the right thing situation. This to and fro wires our brain (neuroplasticity) and leads us (predictably) to a happy place from which to enjoy, speak, act and share.



[5] Expressing ourselves is a social thrive process. We choose/adopt/learn guidelines around which we are happy to think, speak, act and share based on principles of success: do the right thing, do it well.



[6] We express our best selves when we are secure in mind and body, the heart feels good and the mind is free to roam. Happiness is when **we** enjoy freedom of mind in a stable state of Body | Mind | World equilibrium (B|M|W). **I** thrive when **we** thrive together.

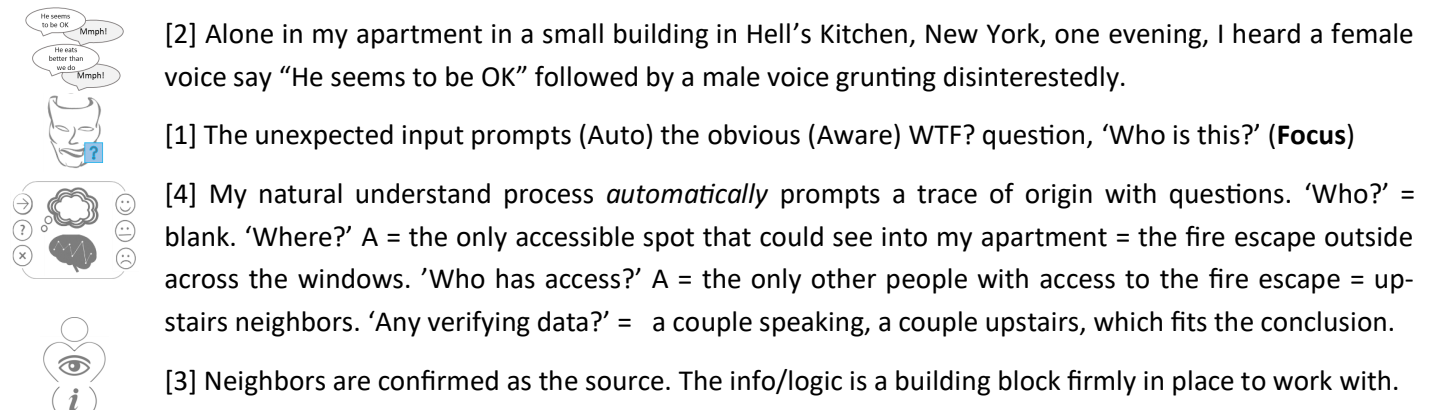
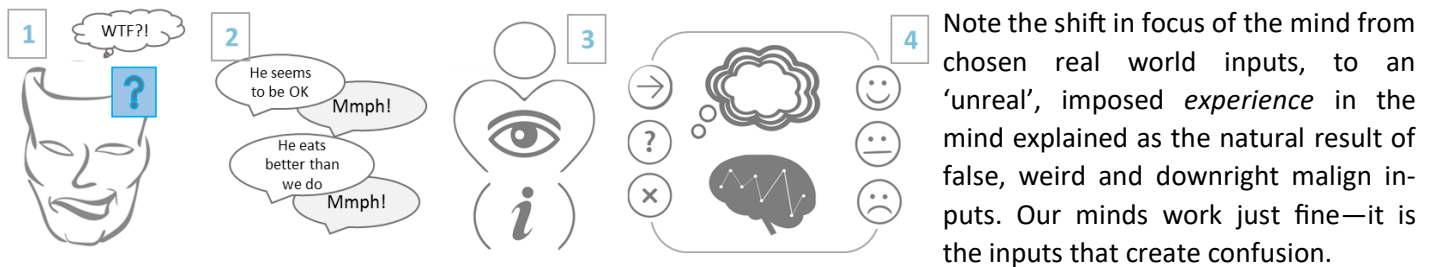
So, the **good news** is that our Incredible Natural Mind works to reliably and predictably engineer (ensure and assure) our happiness, simply by tracking the emotions in our aware mind to 'program/update' the relevant factors into our routines to automate as much of it as makes sense. When the balance is off the auto mind will send signals to our aware mind Happiness Quality Assurance (**HQA**) system indicating a need to explore the programmed routine for opportunity. This may be at the detail level—say nutrition, or the big pic level, who we want to be (inner voice/critique to some). We explore inwardly to choose how to express ourselves outwardly— from the inside outwards.

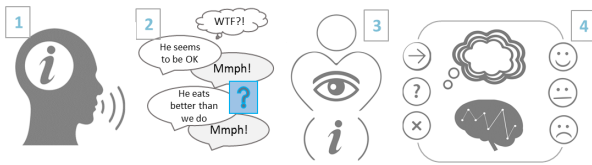
Inputs/feedback/appreciation (we distinguish at the accept/reject gate) come from the contexts and people interactions around us - an outside in perspective. Most often we choose contexts, some/sometimes we cannot. If our total HQA system predicts that less than desirable inputs are a constant feature of the environment, we learn to accept them and we suppress alert signals, convincing ourselves we are happy given the circumstance. Still good news.

The **bad news**—we risk accepting circumstances when we can act to improve them, individually and collectively. When we accept limitations of circumstance and environment individually, we compromise our happiness and/or B|M|W optimum equilibrium as evidenced in the high incidence of 'stress illnesses' that we accept as normal. When we do so en masse, we compromise the evolution of our species as evidenced in several studies showing how enduring social trauma passes from one generation to the next⁽¹⁾.

Now, **the ugly**. Heard voices and other forms of "anomalous perception" are best understood as **anomalous inputs** that destabilize B|M|W equilibrium. "Anomalous Perception" asserts/assumes that the problem is in synthesis of the perception. In fact, our perception synthesis process works well. Our Auto natural mind rates unusual inputs as significant and presents them to the aware mind for analysis. Their intrusive nature IS significant to the hearer and we accept the input as valid because we cannot choose it/avoid it as we ordinarily would. (Fortunately, we can retrain our seldom used reject meme to interrupt and discard these inputs—the subject of further articles).

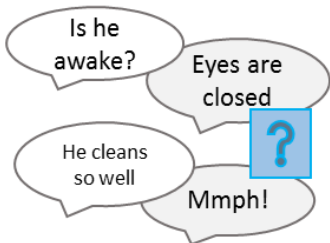
A series of diagrams help explain, using the beginning of my own experience of 'hearing voices' (other anomalous input types came later). This will be familiar to many other voice hearers.



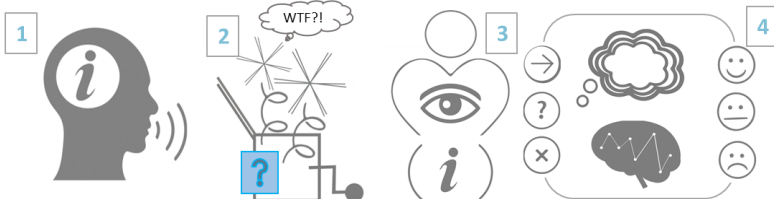


My paradigm now looks like the pic at left. I have a reasonable answer to 'Who?' = neighbors which replaces the mask with an identity [1]. My data set for [1] still 'makes no sense', i.e. a gap in expected data auto prompts the question 'Why?' and I look to the content, the only immediately available evidence. Focus is [2]

[2] I interrogate the context/sequence and a quick to and fro confirms the content/context to be reasonable. I remember [4] that I had hurt myself in the bathroom a couple of hours earlier and made loud, painful noises for a couple of minutes. People care, [3] (a prevalent cognitive bias), neighbors might check in on me and [2] checks out, confirming [1] as reasonable. One or two more seemingly mundane comments (e.g. 'he eats better than we do') reinforce the 'Who?' = neighbor idea and I replace the mask and question mark with 'confirmed' info in my data set. I ran upstairs and knocked on the neighbor's door to let them know I am OK but there is no response. I remove the question mark from [2]. My need to understand meme is satisfied.



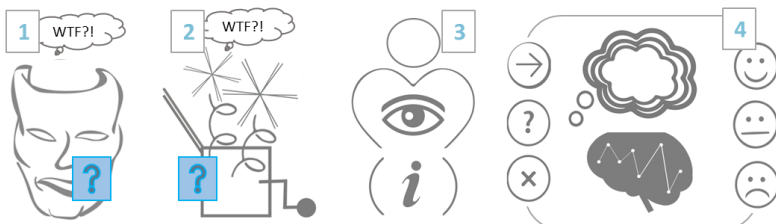
Except that the voices continue the next day with comments about my health, my work, how well I clean... my focus is on the content of [2] and within a day or two my neighbors have gone from caring, to nosy, to ridiculous to spying on me to harassing me in my home—the place we seek security, comfort and relaxation. Their intent (something we naturally associate with people and part of my natural data set) is now malign, without a doubt. Their methods are likely to be suspect and devious.



My paradigm now looks like this. I hear the voices only at home, where I now feel insecure and my frame of mind [3] is hyper vigilant. My focus [2], is now a jack in the box full of surprises and questions— How? WTF?

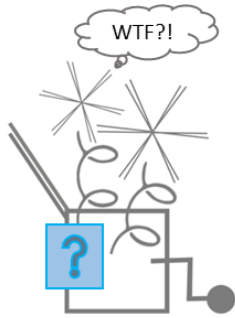


The jack in the box, [2] is now the enemy. I take extra precautions to manage the risks. When voices commented on which websites I was visiting, I was convinced my PC had been hacked. With my suspicions focused on electronic means I needed evidence to confront them and I look for it. My neighbors could enter my apartment from the fire escape (just geography) - though they would just deny it right? Some ridiculous activity ensued (not funny, though the story is). One evening I realized that if they could see my screen, I could write them a note. I opened notepad and wrote in firm language two paragraphs summarized simply as: "to whomever, not cool, show respect, get lost". My voices went quiet. Until morning—when they were back with a vengeance, at least six voices pounced, yelling and issuing commands and continued non stop. And I mean non stop!



My paradigm is now headlined 'all bets are off!' [1] and [2] are questions with no answers to who, why or how? In my case, this is only week two. The voices are now relentless in their attack. It is overwhelming my mind and I cannot think straight.

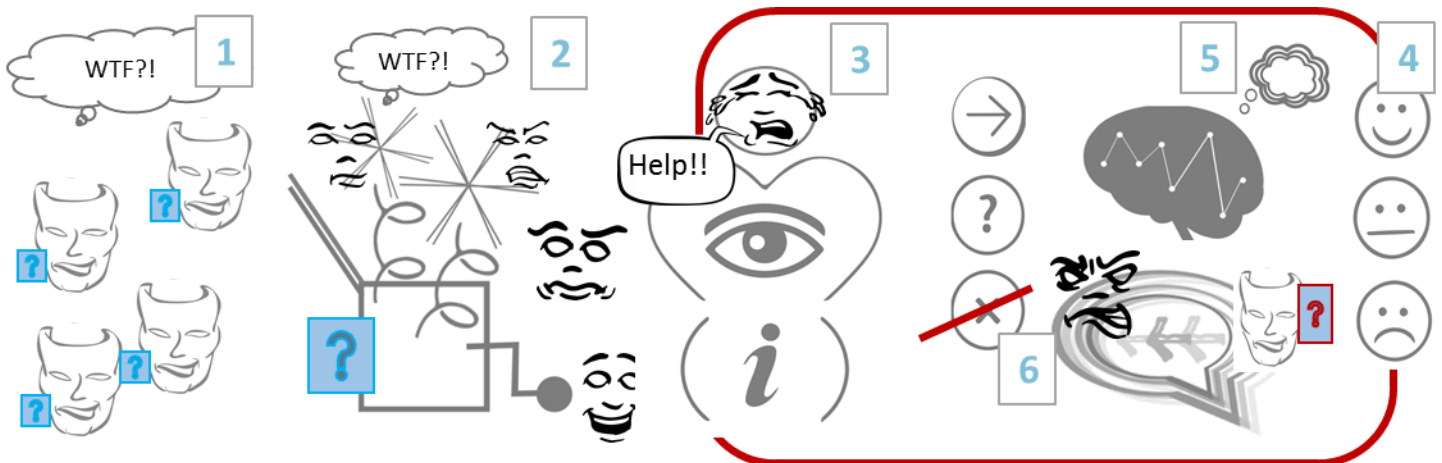
I ask a friend to come over as well as my landlady. Trying to help, they challenge my conclusions but don't have the evidence that I do in my mind, which I cannot reproduce for them. I decide to move out. Relationships change from the day you have these conversations, although I am fortunate to have strong relationships that are not damaged.



This beast rapidly gets worse, bringing more special effects and drama to the party. The reach of voices slowly extends beyond my apartment, until within a few days voices are following me everywhere, interjecting, interfering, claiming to be involved and have influence on everything in my life. All content is commanding, threatening. We're following you, tracking you, we can see everything. They work hard at making more noise (distraction), yelling louder, more threateningly at key moments (creating confusion) in an attempt to deceive you about what they can/cannot do. In the meantime, I have reformatted my hard drive, taken out memory cards, scanned the apartment for cameras and arrived at a friend's in a panic.

I move out (about week four). The voices very soon start in the new apartment and I go and see my doctor (week 5 or 6). 'Auditory hallucinations' he says and prescribes anti-psychotics for a week. I had never heard of such a thing. This simple label turned out to be useful—I did not feel mentally ill, my acute and aware mind has always been a strength, so I dismissed the voices as irrelevant. They declared war and their determination to take over my mind.

Somewhere in those confusing two or three weeks, we had moved from one way commentary/tell mode to two way 'communication'. In one sense it was empowering, I could fight back and I did, dismissing everything voices claimed as nonsense. In another, it was (still is) the most intrusive experience imaginable. These 'voices' arrived, barged in, asserted power, violently imposed themselves on me in the most disrespectful and malign way—they are creatively evil. They have made themselves at home in my aware mind, uninvited. A constant presence. They have asserted an abusive relationship over me policing, disrupting, redirecting every thought, overwhelming my usual day to day inputs. This goes on for years... it is the most vile, intrusive, intimate abusive relationship that is simply imposed on you and you cannot walk away. It is torture. My paradigm now looks like this:



Inputs [1] and 'unusual beliefs' [2] derived from them are an output of my understand meme, generating hypotheses, testing the logic, discarding and starting anew. With interference from voices at full throttle, this generates ideas and emotions voices use to manipulate and terrify. Frame of mind [3] is a terrifying roller coaster and my focus, the data I select are all over the place. I CANNOT ignore the voices, I am forced to accept the inputs and my mind is

is occupied trying to make sense of it all [4] and very busy. I am either concentrating on voices or trying to make these inputs fit into my usual day. Neither provides answers. Inadvertently (the deceit), I am connecting the voice experience to my life, wiring the voice bullshit and emotions into my brain.

I am being wired for fear—which limits everything I do or even think about. My usual thought train [5] has been pushed aside. The overwhelming majority of my inputs now come from [2] embellished by [1]. Instead of my thoughts flowing logically, I now have [6] with voices as personalities replete with malign intent, contexts full of uncertainty and another world with unknown rules interjecting at every thought. I read a statistic recently that said the average person has about 50000 thoughts a day. This experience increases that number dramatically, with opposing interference at every step. Imagine living with over 100 thousand negative comments targeted at undermining your mind, at the level of every thought, every day to get an idea of what a severe case or episode is like. The diagram below adds a layer of detail of the voice:hearer interaction.

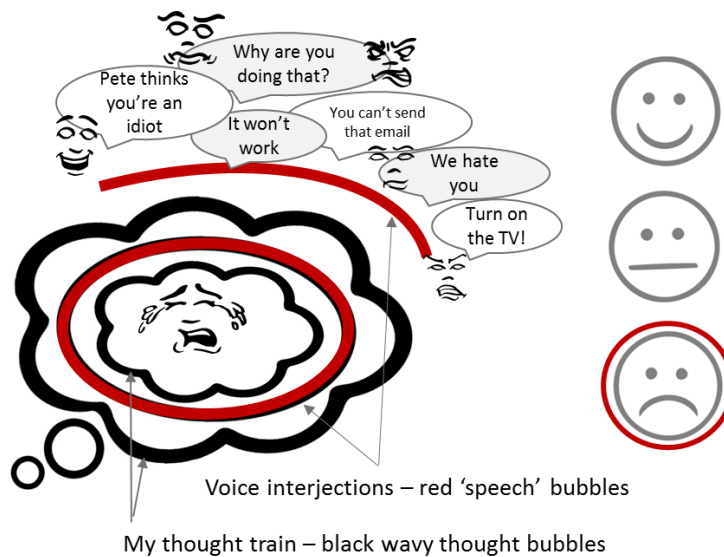
Icon #6



The voice:hearer interaction is in the thought train and voices seek to influence it in many ways, e.g.

- Conditioning for negativity
 - Being more active at times of high significance to me
 - Suggestion, commands, comment
- Content is accompanied by a mix of 'special effects', timing, tempo, emotion and spatial qualities that is complex, confusing and experienced as a drag on or barrier to what we are trying to do. When voice interjections connect to everyday events we often see it as voices having power. This, combined with rapidly changing assertions by voices is what leads to us giving them meaning – it is based on confusion!

Detail of what the experience of the interaction is like



[6]:My voices have worked hardest at undermining me whilst I have been working at making progress, especially this work which is important to me.

That is how they seek to make themselves relevant—by interfering when in is important to me—whether it be a worry or an opportunity or an important activity.

To sustain relevance there are themes they push, deceitfully, usually alternating between en-

couraging, discouraging, widening the cast of characters involved to friends and other people so that they can use stories, heroes and villains, connected to us in some way. Without a connection to our real world, we would dismiss them more easily.

Breakthrough comes when we learn to break the hold voices assert over us, when we are able to strengthen our real world relationships with constructive understanding and communication, when we learn to use our incredible natural minds to take control and displace voices with healthy everyday inputs.

Services include MADConsulting, research, seminars, talks and training workshops.

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