

## **Paranoia Interview**

### **The Nature of the Experience**

Questions:

1. Tell me about your experience of paranoia.
2. What kind of paranoia do you experience?
3. What is the focus of your paranoia? Have you got more than one focus?
4. Do other people have the same ideas as you? Can you explain why or why not?
5. Is the paranoia always persecutory or does it sometimes take other forms? Can you give an example?
6. Are the paranoia thoughts/feelings your own or are they put there by someone else? Are you able to distinguish between your world and other people's reality? Can you give an example?

7. Some people describe a way their paranoia develops. Do you recognize steps in building up your paranoia like a first step comments/events/ associations with the feeling of anxiety/racing thoughts; the second step convictions; the third step conspiracy?
8. Do you hear sounds/voices/visions as well? If yes, we will interview you about these experiences separately.

### **Characteristics of Paranoia**

Characteristics other people have described with their experience. Let us go through the list to see if you recognize one or more of them and how often.

Questions:

1. Do you often feel persecuted?
2. Does your paranoia represent a conspiracy?
3. Do you feel that others control you?
4. Do you ever feel your body has been taken over by someone or something else?

5. Do you often feel you are living in a surreal world? (Living in another world or in two worlds?)
6. Are you able to dismiss your paranoia idea/ideas/feelings?
7. Do you often feel pitied or belittled by others?
8. Does anxiety make your paranoia into a problem?
9. Does your paranoia disrupt your social functioning?
10. Do you identify sometimes with another person?
11. Does your paranoia sometimes give you a feeling of grandeur?
12. Does your paranoia also protect you?

**Focus of Paranoia**

Paranoia is often focused on certain areas of life (Police, religion, authority, drugs, aliens, neighbors).

Questions:

1. What is or are the focuses of your paranoia? Can you tell me a bit more about it?
2. Do you think that the focus is also related to the beginning of the paranoia? Is it symbolic? Can you tell me a bit more?

**History**

Questions:

1. Let us return to the time when you first started to experience paranoia. How old were you when it first started? Can you describe your circumstances? Where were you living, working and who were your friends?
2. During which further periods in your life did you experience paranoia? Can you describe your circumstances for every period?
3. Please list experiences throughout your life that may have contributed to your paranoia. List experiences that left you feeling powerless or out of control and anxious. Think about any times of stressful changes or times of illness and death, about love and sexuality, religion, spirituality and mystic experiences.

## Triggers the Paranoia

Triggers might be defined as ‘whatever provokes the paranoia in daily life’. Which person, circumstances, activities, objects or emotions provoke the paranoia? Please list any people, places, situations, events, activities or emotions that you believe lead to your paranoia.

## Warning Signs

Some people describe certain experiences as an indication that the paranoia might come. These are called early warning signs.

Questions:

1. Have you noticed that certain things might happen before you start to become paranoid?
2. Do you feel that paranoia is a process? Do you recognize steps like a first step comments/events/associations with the feeling of anxiety/ racing thoughts; the second step convictions; the third step conspiracy? How does it work with you?
3. Do you experience: racing thoughts? If yes, please describe them. Seeing things? If yes, please describe them. Increased frequency of the voices or voices becoming negative? If yes, please describe them. Yourself making no time to eat? Altered sleeping pattern? Isolating yourself more? Drinking more alcohol/taking drugs (whether legal or illegal)? Spending more time around others?

**What do you do?**

Following the list of early warning signs you mentioned, could you tell me how you react to them? Are you aware that you have early warning signs and what do you do?

Questions:

1. You do not take any action.
2. Do you take any action? For example: do you take time for a meal? Or: do you take a sleeping pill? If you take any action, how helpful is what you do?
3. Do you reflect? Are the early warning signs a signal that something in your life has changed that is threatening/making you feel out of control or powerless?
4. If you hear voices and the voices become more active. Do you give attention to what the voices say? We have a different section in this interview covering voices.
5. Have you been able to learn from your experience? If so, what have you learned?
6. Have you told others of your early warning signs? If so, who have you told?

How Do You Explain the Origin of Your Paranoia? Where does it come from and/or why do you think it happens?

### **What impact does paranoia have on your life?**

How has the paranoia influenced your life and what affect has it had on other people? This is also an opportunity to discuss how and in what way the paranoia affects behavior, which then becomes more understandable. Paranoia or elements of paranoia might also be felt as positive.

### **The Relationship**

This section examines whether or not the interviewee has influence over the paranoia and whether the relationship is equal. The more equal and open the relationship, the less inconvenient the paranoia is. This section estimates the power of the interviewee in relation to the paranoia. Please list the ways that you feel you have influence over the paranoia and it's effects on your life.

How do you deal with the paranoia and try to retain your own freedom? What are some of your coping strategies?

### **Childhood Experiences**

The purpose here is to find out whether there have been any traumatic experiences or experiences of emotional neglect in the past, especially in early childhood. The order of these problems runs from less to more intrusive.

Questions –

1. Was your childhood pleasant or stressful? Can you tell me about it?

2. Did you feel safe at school, in the streets and at home? If not please explain why?
3. As a child were you ever mistreated? If so, how?
4. As a child did you ever receive strange punishments?
5. Have you ever, as a child or a teenager, been yelled at or belittled? Did you experience the feeling of not being wanted, or did you feel that you were never able to do anything right? Were you free to express your emotions at home?

What healthcare treatments have you received and which ones did you find the most helpful?

Please list the people you are close enough to talk to about your paranoia or what the voices are saying.