

CONTACT US

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OPENING HOURS

Monday to Thursday

9.00am to 1.00pm

2.00pm to 6.30pm

Last appointment ends at 5.30pm

Friday

9.00am to 1.00pm

2.00pm to 6.00pm

Last appointment ends at 5.00pm

Closed during lunch (1.00pm to 2.00pm)

Closed on weekends and public holidays

*Services are by appointment only

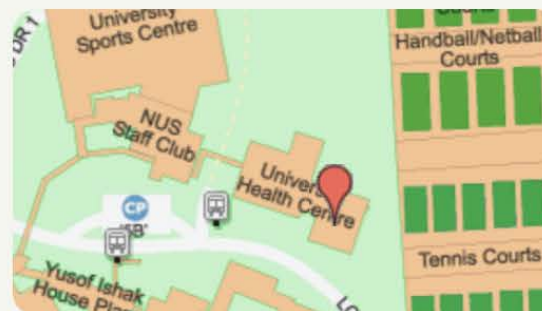
LOCATION

University Health Centre (Basement)

National University of Singapore

20 Lower Kent Ridge Road

Singapore 119080



Learning about Unusual Experiences

About CHPC

The Clinical and Health Psychology Centre (CHPC) is affiliated with the Department of Psychology at the National University of Singapore. The CHPC is staffed by postgraduate clinical psychology interns who work under the close supervision of experienced master/doctorate level clinical psychologists. We adhere to the highest standards of ethics and professionalism and your confidentiality is protected.

What are Unusual Experiences?

Unusual experiences are perceptual or cognitive phenomena people might have. These might take several different forms such as sounds, voices, visions, smells, or odd ideas. The way people think about these experiences can vary. Some people might think they are interesting while others might be frightened by them. People might also find them difficult to explain and feel confused by them. It is completely normal to feel this way and it takes time to make of these experiences.

Examples of Unusual Experiences

You may have experiences of hearing voices or other sounds. These voices may be calling your name, talking to you or talking amongst themselves. They can be friendly or nasty and you may find them helpful or frightening.



Hearing sounds, noises, or voices



Unusual visual experiences

You may see things that other people do not. These can be lights, shadows, silhouettes, or patterns that are difficult to make sense of. Sometimes, you may see objects moving or changing in colours and shapes.

You may have a belief or an idea that other people or organisations are observing, following, or planning to harm you. You may also become suspicious of people around you (e.g., family), which would be distressing.



Suspicious thoughts and ideas



Having thoughts of relevance

You may have a belief or an idea that other people can hear your thoughts or read your mind. You may sometimes think that your emotions and behaviours might be controlled by someone else.



Ideas of having a special purpose or mission

You may have a belief or an idea that what you see or hear online, on TV, on the radio, or in songs is personally directed to you. You may think that these sources are sending you a special message or talking to you.



Ideas of thought broadcast or being controlled

You may have a belief or an idea that you have been chosen to fulfil a special purpose or mission. You may think that you have supernatural powers to carry out the mission.

You may feel disconnected from yourself, not feeling like yourself or you do not feel like you are in your body. You may also feel that your body is changing in a way that is difficult to explain.



Feeling detached from own identity



Experiencing unusual smells, tastes, or physical sensations

You may have experiences of smells or tastes that are strange or do not match the food you are having. You may also have other physical sensations such as vibration, numbness, or itch for no apparent reason.

Common Concerns

Does this mean that I have schizophrenia or psychosis?

No, having these experiences does not necessarily mean that you have schizophrenia or psychosis. It is normal to feel worried or confused about these experiences. There are many possible reasons for such experiences, for instance prolonged stress, lack of sleep, effects of substances (e.g., drugs, alcohol), difficult life experiences (e.g., major personal loss, trauma, abuse), or intense emotional states and confusion. These might be common cognitive and emotional responses to highly stressful events.

How common are unusual experiences?

Research suggests that up to 40% of individuals in the general population have unusual experiences. Among children, more than 50% of them have also reported one or more of these experiences.

What can I do when I feel distressed by these experiences?

It is common to feel nervous about talking to someone about your unusual experiences. However, it is helpful to get support from your therapist as early as you can to receive some clarification, further information, or an intervention, if necessary. You may find it helpful to prepare a list of questions or concerns to ask your therapist during your visit.

Treatment Options

Depending on the outcome of your conversation with your therapist, we may be able to help you with these experiences at our clinic. However, if we think that you require more specialised help, we will provide you with information about specific services or make a referral for you.