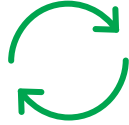


# Everyday 'Unusual' Experiences

We can all have experiences that other people might think are a bit unusual. Have you ever had any of these experiences?

## Déjà vu

Déjà vu is the feeling that you have already lived through the present situation before. Most people (2 out of 3) say that they have experienced déjà vu.



Some people explain déjà vu as 'precognition' or 'prophecy'.

Scientists tend to explain déjà vu as a something that happens when normal memory, attention, or other cognitive processes are interrupted.

 2 out of 3 people have experienced déjà vu.

## Delirium

Delirium is a medical term for sudden confusion. Often caused by infection, illness, or low blood sugar, it is thought to affect 1 out of every 5 people who are admitted to hospital.



People who are delirious might:

- Find it difficult to think or speak clearly.
- Not know where they are.
- See or hear things that are not there.

 1 in 5 people admitted to hospital experience delirium.

## Grieving

Grieving itself is not unusual, but people who have lost someone they love often describe having unusual experiences.



The bereavement charity Cruse says:

*"It is quite normal to see the person, hear their voice, sense their presence, or find yourself talking to them. It can often happen when people least expect it, as if the mind has temporarily 'forgotten' that they have died..."*

 Between 3 and 6 out of 10 people who have been bereaved have hallucinations of the person they lost.

## Hearing voices

About one tenth of the adult population hears voices at some time in their life.



Some people experience critical or abusive voices, but for others the voices are affirming or guiding. Many psychologists have suggested that hearing voices is not necessarily a sign of illness – so many people hear them, and not everyone finds them distressing. Rather, they suggest that some people find hearing voices distressing because of how they interpret these experiences (e.g. thinking "I'm in danger" or "I'm going mad").

 1 in 10 people experience hearing voices.

## Recreational drugs

One of the reasons that people take drugs recreationally can be to have 'unusual' experiences.



Drugs can produce a huge range of effects, many of which can persist for some time afterwards.

One class of drugs, called 'hallucinogens', can strongly alter your sense of reality, and can make you see, hear, and feel things that seem real but do not exist.

## Sleep deprivation

Most people have been sleep-deprived at some point, so you may already be familiar with the powerful effects of not getting enough sleep.



These can include:

- Seeing or hearing things that other people can't see or hear.
- Having trouble remembering.
- Feeling more emotional, or not thinking straight.

An important part of treatment for people who are experiencing any kind of mental illness is often to address problems with their sleep.

## Synesthesia

Synesthesia describes the merging of senses that are not normally connected.



For example, some people with synesthesia may 'see sounds', 'hear colours', or 'taste words'.

Synesthesia is a neurological trait experienced by as many as 4 out of every 100 people, with rates believed to be even higher in neurodiverse populations.

 About 3 out of every 100 people are synesthetes.

## Trauma memories

Normal memories 'fade' with time, but some people, particularly those that have experienced trauma, have especially strong memories.



Trauma memories often have special properties of:

- Making you feel like an event from the past is happening again right now in the present moment.
- Seeing, hearing, or feeling things that happened in the past. This might include hearing the voice of an abuser, or feeling like you are in danger even though you are safe.

 Most people with a diagnosis of PTSD experience powerful intrusive memories of their trauma.