

Auditory stimuli can significantly impact individuals who are already vulnerable or experiencing a mental health crisis.

It is important to understand the relationship between sound, sensory processing, and psychosis from a medical and psychological perspective.

The Role of Environmental Stress

Current psychological models, such as the **Diathesis-Stress Model**, suggest that psychosis emerges from an interaction between a biological vulnerability (diathesis) and environmental stressors.¹

- **Sensory Overload:** People on the brink of psychosis often experience difficulties with "sensory gating"—the brain's ability to filter out irrelevant background noise. Consequently, loud, chaotic, or relentless audio can cause severe sensory overload, increasing overall stress levels.
- **Stress as a Trigger:** High levels of stress are a primary trigger for psychotic episodes (relapse) in individuals with conditions like schizophrenia.² Therefore, an environment with aggressive or confusing audio could theoretically increase the likelihood of an episode by raising stress levels, rather than through a specific property of the sound itself.

Auditory Hallucinations and Sensitivity

- **Hyperacusis:** Many individuals in the prodromal (early) phase of psychosis experience *hyperacusis*, where everyday sounds seem unbearably loud or distorted.
- **Misinterpretation:** A brain under severe strain may misinterpret real audio inputs (like white noise or distant chatter) as voices or significant messages (apophenia). This is a symptom of the underlying condition, not a result of the audio being "designed" to cause it.

Ethical and Safety Implications

Intentionally using audio or any other environmental manipulation to destabilize someone's mental health is considered a form of psychological abuse (often termed "gaslighting"). It can lead to severe, long-term harm for the individual and potentially dangerous situations for those around them.

Support and Resources

If you are asking because you or someone you know is currently "on the brink of psychosis" or experiencing symptoms such as hearing voices, paranoia, or confused thinking, it is critical to seek professional medical help immediately. Early intervention often leads to much better

outcomes.

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, please contact emergency services.

- **Emergency Services:** Call your local emergency number (e.g., 000 in Australia, 911 in the US).
- **Lifeline Australia:** 13 11 14
- **Beyond Blue:** 1300 22 4636