



PSYCHEDELIC (KETAMINE) ASSISTED PSYCHOTHERAPY

Like all explorers, we are drawn to discover what's out there without knowing yet if we have the courage to face it. – *Pema Chodron*

Psychedelics are amplifiers of the psyche. Due to this amplification effect, a person experiences intimate contact with the total reality of the moment. As the body relaxes, so does the mind. Normally filtered sensory gates open, and more information begins to enter the perceptual field of awareness. When these filters dissolve, we are able to understand patterns and see connections that were previously unseen. What is normally unconscious begins to flow into the conscious mind. The things we hear, see and feel are actually an experience that we are having within ourselves and psychedelics mediate and facilitate this inner exploration.

Psychedelics facilitate communication between regions of the brain that do not normally communicate. They also dampen the activity in the default mode network which is brain region that helps maintain our separate sense of self. The DMN, when overly active, is associated with depression, ruminations, anxieties and obsessive-compulsive thought patterns. With psychedelics, people report a decreased sense of separate self-identity and an increased feeling of oneness with their surroundings. They report novel insights, an ability to perceive previously unseen connections and increased access to raw emotional states and memories without the normal tendency to analyze them.

Repressed emotions or long-forgotten memories can surface. Grief and sadness or overwhelming love and compassion can arise, sometimes right after one another. Profound insights, visions, and intense somatic expressions can come through. During this inner unfolding, we are able to perceive the symbols, images, visions and archetypes that live in our unconscious. One fascinating characteristic of this process is that different layers of insight can happen simultaneously. We can perceive how our protective strategies have resulted from belief systems and our buried wounds. We can make contact with our shame. We can experience wounds in their purity, understanding their causes and seeing them for what they truly are. We can empathize with what our younger selves endured and the complex strategies that we constructed to survive.

In these expanded states of consciousness, the body and mind are free to follow their deepest impulse: to seek wholeness and flow. The resolution of inner conflicts is possible through accessing a more resourced state than the one in which the conflict or pattern of tension was created. When someone enters an expanded state of consciousness, what is most imbalanced in the overall person is revealed. The psyche, like all things natural and wild, strives for balance, and when attended to and listened to, will intelligently communicate and move towards what it needs to reestablish the highest level of health possible. Though we do not always get what we ask for, we always get what we need.

Our simple awareness, directed by our intention, begins the process of healing. Compassion can arise and the truth can set us free. However, most of us have such a backlog of unprocessed unconscious material that when the gates are opened, a flood of control rushes through—memories, sensory impressions, thoughts and emotions. Some of it is repressed energy that simply needs to be released and flushed out of movement, there is almost always agitation in the center. Feeling stuck can be the absence of fluid movement that once it gets flushed out needs to be psychologically processed by the ego once it returns

to its normal state. Healing that is accessed in expanded states goes swiftly to the core of the issues needing attention. Though we do not always get what we ask for, we always get what we need.

Expanded states of Consciousness teach us about surrender- for regardless of the modality chosen our normal defenses, self-protection and control mechanisms are encouraged to relax. We can fight and resist the experience or we can surrender to it. Surrender is a combination of active receptivity towards and curiosity about whatever shows up and the willingness to engage with it. We let go of expectations and open ourselves to the present moment, whatever it holds. Through practicing surrender we begin to develop faith in the moment and trust in the unknown. We also learn that there is something within us that can endure even the most challenging situations. Even if our life feels stuck, we can know that there is movement and growth, learning and understanding.

Psychedelics can enhance our meditation practice. They can provide an experiential stepping-stone. They may lead to an after-glow of enhanced mindfulness. We can see changes in openness, reactivity, and motivation that render meditation easier to practice.

PSYCHEDELIC PREPARATION AND INTEGRATION

Psychedelics catalyze a process. Light is both a particle and a wave. We have a particular session at a particular time, like a particle. But really the session is part of a wave that is our life as we transform and move through time. We prepare not just to have an experience but to have an experience that we can integrate.

Psychotropic medications work without any participation of consciousness. Psychedelics do not work like that. We may have an 'opening' to understanding the source of our suffering, and assistance in being able to process the suffering via integration, but we have to do the processing. Our mind and body need to shift through our willingness- and almost always our effort- to shift and change.

James Fadiman in 'The Psychedelic Explorer's Guide' wrote, "For most people the predominant feeling during a session is not of discovering something new, alien or foreign, but of recalling and reuniting with an unassailable clarity that had been latent in one's own mind." Factors that hold the potential to shape a psychedelic experience and journey are:

- 1.Substance and dose
- 2.Mindset: what is on our mind days leading up to and during the experience, including what is present but not completely conscious.
- 3.Setting: In a safe, secure and contained environment, which includes the physical space and the interpersonal space of the therapeutic relationship, our psyche will go as far we can manage.
- 4.Intention: the conscious (or perhaps unconscious) goal we are bringing to an experience. This is an important exercise in self-discovery. Why am I undertaking this journey and why now? What are my expectations, hopes and desires? What is the narrative in my head about this experience? Having an intention is akin to having a compass aboard our sailboat. When we enter the vast ocean of expanded consciousness, there can be waves and storms, placid waters, gentle breezes, or intense winds. Having our sail raised high and our compass in hand gives us a point of reference to return to, and a direction to pursue. For some intentions can be the same as outcomes we hope for afterwards. For others, it can be a way of being and engaging with ourselves, e.g. let go, surrender, experience freedom from pain, be at peace...
- 5.Our Inner healing intelligence: what experience(s) our mind/body/spirit consider us ready to have in the ongoing unfolding of your self-discovery and healing.

As we begin the preparation process, we begin by bringing mindfulness to our inner experiences. What

thoughts, ideas, anxieties, fears, or concerns are occupying our thinking and feeling body? What personal material, memories, or emotions are we conscious of right now? What are we feeling on a raw emotional level? What are the habits, tendencies, or patterns that keep us at a distance from our raw experience? And especially as we approach an expanded state of consciousness experience, what are we feeling? We might feel fearful or excited as we leave for a vision quest. What is in or out of balance for us? What is asking for more nurture?

For most people, the thought of going inward to explore unknown territories of the mind will trigger palpable apprehension. As we open into an expanded state, we sometimes find ourselves gripped by a complex configuration of fear that is directly related to our biographical material, regardless of how well we know it. This fear often reflects unresolved memories and emotions from our past that have become calcified inside us. Facing the unknown with some apprehension is a natural response. We can consider it a healthy respect.

It is best to minimize stressors. It is suggested that before going into a journey we avoid disturbing media consumption, intense interpersonal conflict and be mindful of what we engage with. Spending extra time in nature can have a harmonizing effect on our mind as well as our body. When we are in nature, the organic coherence around us is soothing. Meditation practice, journaling and taking time for ourselves can help us consciously create and be in an unhurried, calm mindset.

As for the unconscious, we cannot completely prepare it because, by definition, it is unconscious. Often, though, when we make a commitment and begin to prepare for a journey into an expanded state, the deeper levels of the psyche begin to open on their own. We may feel stronger emotions, have memories surface, experience vivid dreams, or sense a more acute awareness than usual.

FLIGHT INSTRUCTIONS FOR YOUR PSYCHEDELIC JOURNEY

Preparation and planning helps create and support the setting for a safe, meaningful and enriched psychedelic experience, but please remember this: During the experience, it is time to LET GO... Simply go with the experience and be open to whatever is revealed. Every journey has a beginning, a middle and an end. Remember that you will come back.

Approach the journey with “beginners’ mind” and curiosity. Approach the journey like an anthropologist and an archeologist. Relax your critical mind so that you are not analyzing what you are experiencing nor wondering why something is or is not coming up in the journey. Trust that whatever comes up needs to come up even if you do not fully understand it. Trust that your inner healing intelligence would not bring up more than you can effectively handle or eventually integrate. When something beautiful or magical emerges, move towards it, connect with it, allow yourself to melt into it; when something is challenging, scary, confusing or disturbing, in a similar way, move towards it with curiosity and inquiry. When approaching challenging experiences (or appearances, forms, beings or phenomena) ask what they are there to teach you and/or to show you, and if you can thank them for whatever is shared. Keep moving (let the music guide you and merge with you) and exploring and entering different spaces or terrains so that if you see doors, open them. If you see staircases go up them. If you see planets, explore them. If you see bodies of water, go into them. If you see windows, jump through. Imagine the music is holding your hand, lean into the music. Seeing is not believing in the journey space but seeing is becoming and believing is through becoming. Learn to use the breath to explore, inquire and go deeper into experiences. If journeying with psychedelics is like venturing out into the ocean, we can think of your practiced awareness as a surfboard or even a life preserver. We can come back to our breath no matter what happens. Ask for help whenever you need it in whatever form feels appropriate. Physical support, grounding, anchoring and encouragement are available.

Adapted from Consciousness Medicine by Françoise Bourzat and The Psychedelics Integration Handbook by Ryan Westrum PhD

Client Printed Name: _____

Clients Representative Printed Name: _____

If client is a minor / has guardian:

Parent / Guardian Printed Name: _____

The CLIENT MUST sign the consent if they are able to do so. The only exceptions are if the client is a minor, or has a legal document giving permission for someone else to sign on their behalf.

Client / Clients LEGAL Representative / Parent or
Guardian Signature

Date