

Psychedelic Experiences

INFORMATION ON RISKS AND SAFETY



**CENTER FOR
PSYKEDELISK
DANNELSE**

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WHY THIS BOOKLET?

Research indicates that psychedelics can have a positive impact on various aspects of a person's life when the experience takes place and is processed within clinical and/or therapeutic settings, or within safe relational and community-based structures. However, many people choose to take them outside professionally structured settings or local social communities, and even in these circumstances, there is much that can be done to ensure the best possible conditions for a positive experience. In this booklet, you will find our recommendations for the most essential safety advice regarding the use of psychedelic substances.

The Danish Center for Psychedelic Literacy (Cepda) does not encourage illegal substance use, but we recognise that it takes place. The ban on these substances has not stopped their use, and we believe that the use of psychedelic substances will become increasingly widespread as more and more researchers, companies and the media take an interest in them.

In this situation, we believe that the best way to minimise the risk of adverse effects is to make information on safety as widely available as possible.

This booklet has undergone a multidisciplinary review by leading experts and professionals in the field.





A COUPLE OF DEFINITIONS

Before we get properly started, here are a few definitions of the key terms in the field of psychedelics. If you're curious to find more brief definitions, you can visit www.cepda.dk/opslagsvaerk.

- A trip: A trip is a psychedelic session or experience.
- The tripper/traveller/journeyer: The person who has taken a psychedelic substance and is now having a psychedelic experience.
- Tripsitter: A person who is not under the influence of any substance and is present whilst another person is under the influence of a psychedelic substance. The tripsitter looks after the journeyer's needs, both physical (helping them to the toilet, fetching water, etc.) and interpersonal (holding their hand, offering reassuring words, and the like) during the trip.
- Integration: The process following the trip. Here, the journeyer attempts to understand the essence of their psychedelic experience and how any newly gained insights can be translated into concrete action and changes in their life.
- Psychedelics/psychedelic drugs/psychedelic substances: The classic psychedelics, which are LSD, psilocybin mushrooms, mescaline and DMT (which is also the psychoactive substance in ayahuasca). However, the advice given here is also well worth considering when using other substances (such as ketamine and MDMA), although when using such substances, further reading on safety, risks, effects and methods of use is necessary.
- Set & Setting: 'Set' refers to the journeyer's state of mind before the trip. What are they expecting? How do they feel about the upcoming journey? What is their current and general mood? 'Setting' refers to the immediate environment of the journey: music, people, objects, art, space, etc. It is absolutely essential to factor Set & Setting into the psychedelic session.



THE FUNDAMENTALS

There are many different ways in which people use psychedelic substances. Some do so because they believe it enhances their creativity. Others do so because they find that attending a festival or a rave is more exciting when they are under the influence. Some do it to explore spiritual and existential aspects of themselves and their relationship with something greater. Others do it in the hope of coming to terms with their traumas and mental health issues.

Here are some very basic recommendations, regardless of how you use them or your intentions:

1. Read this booklet carefully.
2. Think about why you want to use psychedelics. This will help you understand how best to prepare and organise yourself.
3. Find out how best to ensure you achieve your desired outcome.
4. Talk to someone who has tried – and is experienced with – psychedelic substances before you try them yourself.
5. Have someone to talk to about your use. Whether it's your friends, family or a (recovery) therapist isn't necessarily that important, but it is important to have someone to talk to and share your experiences with.
6. Know your substance. Is it pure? How much should you take? What are you taking? What effects can you expect? What are the risks?
7. We strongly advise against using psychedelic substances if you are in a psychologically vulnerable state. If you are nevertheless determined to do so in the hope, for example, of treating your trauma or alleviating your pain, it is vitally important that you try to ensure you are in the most organised and well-prepared circumstances possible. Visit an integration therapist before and after, take part in events within the psychedelic community (such as those we organise at Cepda – see www.forbundet.cepda.dk), and find a professional and experienced psychedelic therapist who can support you in this endeavour.



Preparation and intention



preparation 1

"Fortune favours the prepared"

- Louis Pasteur

Take the time to read up on what you can expect from the substance and dose you plan to take (for example, out-of-body experiences, vivid recollections, distortions of time and space, feelings of oneness with the entire universe).

What would you like to do during the trip? What music might you like to listen to?

NB. Although preparation is important, it is also beneficial to keep an open mind, recognise that you cannot have complete control, and practicing finding peace in this.

Do you have an intention for your journey? If you have an idea of what you'd like to get out of the psychedelic experience, it can be beneficial to prepare your mind accordingly. For example, you can establish an intention by taking the time to meditate on and perhaps write about some of the current themes in your life. Intentions might, for example, relate to behaviour, values, goals, learning, relationships and spirituality (however, having an intention is never a guarantee that you will actually experience or gain insight into what you were hoping for – but sometimes you might gain insight into something else, perhaps more important!).

Examples of an intention:

- i. I wish to explore new aspects of myself, life and my spirituality
- ii. I wish to understand the root causes of my addictions
- iii. I wish to gain insight into how I can be more caring towards myself and those around me
- iiii. I wish to experience a deeper connection with nature



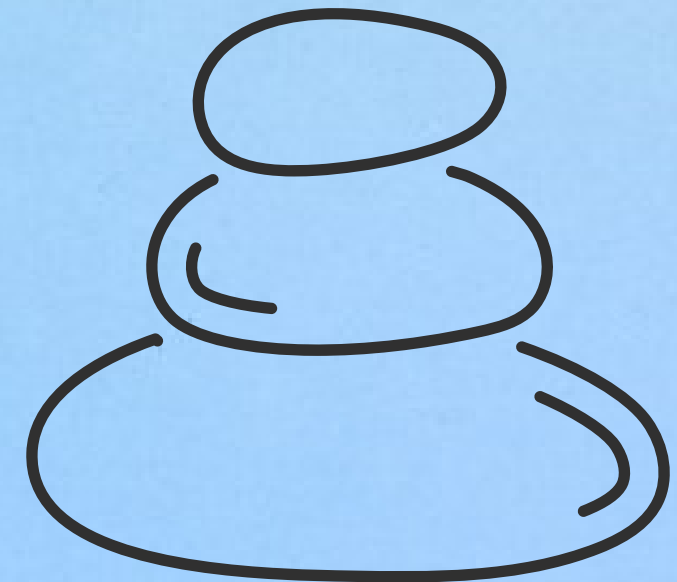
Time and peace of mind to enjoy your experience

preparation
2

Set aside some time to create a sense of calm around your experience.

Ideally, you should keep both the day before and the day after your session free from stressful factors, such as difficult conversations with family, work deadlines or notifications from various apps on your mobile.

This creates the best possible conditions for ensuring that minor annoyances or everyday problems do not disproportionately affect your experience.



Consider a tripsitter

preparation
3

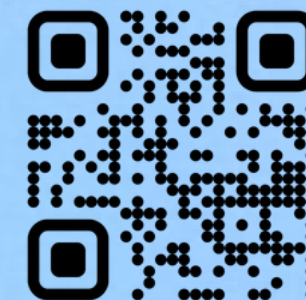


Having a sober person by your side who can support you if things get tough can enhance both your safety and your sense of security during the experience. Make sure it's someone you feel comfortable with and who you know will be there to listen to your experience afterwards. A tripsitter doesn't need to say much, but should be there to ensure a safe space and, if necessary, lend a hand or offer a few reassuring words. Often, a good trip sitter is a friend with whom you can be open and honest, and who knows how to listen actively.

A sitter is particularly important with high doses, where anxiety and confusion during the acute experience is quite common. Read more about being a tripsitter at the end of this booklet.

Take care when choosing a tripsitter, guide or facilitator. You can prepare by reading the “Chacruna Institute’s guide on awareness of sexual abuse in the Ayahuasca community” at www.cepda.dk/blog or by scanning the QR code on this page.

If you're at a festival or similar event, it's a good idea to be with a trusted friend who isn't under the influence and to know in advance where you can go if you start to feel unwell.



Choosing a tripsitter: Red flags

preparation
4



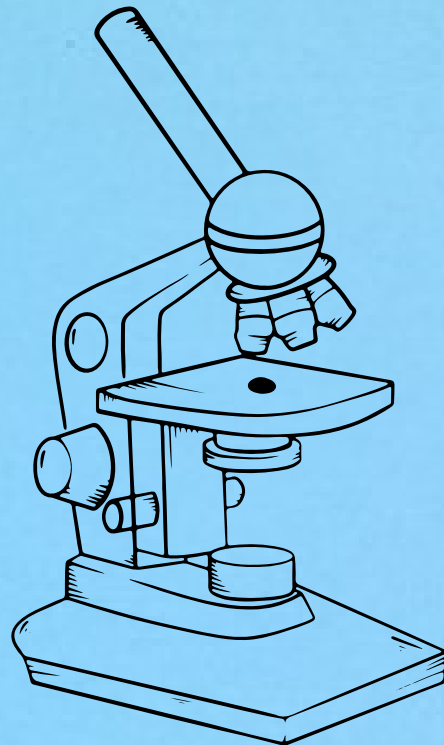
The following signs of an unethical tripsitter have been identified by the renowned psychologist and professor Janis Phelps, who has been a leading figure in this field:

- That the person presents themselves as special or chosen and possessing special abilities and powers
- That the person often mentions having connections to well-known people
- That the person refers to themselves as a 'healer'
- The person comes across as inauthentic
- The person dismisses and ignores questions from colleagues about their behaviour
- The person does not recognise their own need to undergo therapy, receive supervision and generally won't work on their own shortcomings
- The person does not radiate warmth or compassion
- The person does not remain within the boundaries of their professional role



Know your substance

Which substance are you going to take? What's the right dose for you? Do you have a precise scale to measure the dose with? What are the possible effects? How long will the trip last? Is the substance pure? You might want to buy a test kit to check it or visit a local drug checking service. Bear in mind that home brought test kits may not be able to detect impurities.



preparation
5 & 6



Grounding and centering

Prepare techniques and objects that can help you feel grounded or 'centered' if you start to find it difficult.

For example, mantras such as "everything will be back to normal in a moment", "I am loved" or "relax, let go, flow downstream". It could also be breathing techniques or an object that has special meaning to you, such as a necklace, ring, teddy bear, stone, a photo or something else. If you feel overwhelmed by thoughts, you can turn your attention to the sensations in your body and simply observe them. You can also recall moments in your life when you have experienced love.



Carefully choose your surroundings

preparation
7



Have a plan if you're outdoors. Is there somewhere you can go to be safe and secure? Is there anyone you can call? Make sure you've got enough clothes with you so you can sit down without getting cold.

Psychedelics can, in rare cases, cause diarrhea, which may require you to use the toilet during the onset or come-up phase of the trip (for example, whilst out in the woods). Plan ahead. Some people fast before taking psychedelics to minimise nausea and diarrhea (in which case you should pay particular attention to your salt and fluid balance, and consider drinking electrolytes). Others bring toilet paper, a bin bag or a spade, as well as antiseptics and water.

Make sure you only take psychedelics with people you trust and feel comfortable with.

As with other aspects of life, feelings such as anxiety and fear are more likely to arise when you are in a place where you do not feel safe or with people who you do not trust. Under the influence of psychedelics, this effect can be amplified.



Heart problems?

preparation
8 & 9

Avoid using psychedelics, or stick to low doses, if you have previously had a heart attack or blood clots, or if you have high blood pressure. The psychedelic experience can be very intense.

It is particularly important not to take MDMA in non-clinical settings if you have heart problems.

In general, it is advisable to consult your GP before using psychedelics if you have any physical health conditions.

Psychedelics and psychoses

There is currently no research to suggest that a single psychedelic experience can trigger psychosis. Nevertheless, it is recommended that you avoid psychedelics if you, or anyone in your family, have a history of schizophrenia or psychosis. There is very little knowledge in this area, but modern research excludes people who have close family members with a history of psychosis, due to concerns that psychedelics may trigger psychosis. Similarly, it is recommended that you avoid psychedelics if, within the last six months, you have had pronounced thoughts of harming yourself or others. Should you nevertheless choose to experiment with psychedelics, it is strongly recommended that you have a trip sitter, stick to lower doses and prepare thoroughly.



Psychedelics and SSRIs

preparation
10

In general, combining classic psychedelics with SSRIs is not recommended. However, this is mainly due to a lack of knowledge about their interaction, and research has not yet indicated that it is actually dangerous to combine psilocybin mushrooms, MDMA or LSD with SSRI preparations. Nevertheless, it must once again be advised against taking psychedelics outside of a controlled, clinical setting if one is in a vulnerable life situation. Some research also suggests that SSRIs significantly dampen the acute psychedelic experience (and the likelihood of a mystical experience).

Mixing SSRIs and MAO inhibitors can be life-threatening. MAO inhibitors are found, amongst other things, in ayahuasca and changa (both substances are mixtures of DMT and MAO inhibitors).

Remember that you should always consult your doctor, psychiatrist or psychologist if you are considering tapering off psychiatric medication.

If you are interested in more knowledge about drug interactions, ICEERS runs a free service, where you can ask your questions here.

<https://www.iceers.org/en/information-questions-about-drug-interactions/>

You can also scan the QR code:



(just before and) during the psychedelic journey – 3 quickies

during the
trip 1

- Avoid interruptions and distractions

Try to ensure that you are not interrupted during your journey by, for example, neighbours, acquaintances, family, phone calls or mobile notifications.

- Start low and go slow

It's a good idea to start with low doses and build up gradually from one journey to the next. Use the low doses to get comfortable with the experience, figure out how best to settle in, what music resonates with you, and how best to centre and ground yourself. Avoid increasing the dose during the same trip if you're not experienced in this. Otherwise, the experience can quickly become overwhelming.

- Make it a pleasant experience for yourself. You deserve it!

Have duvets, blankets, pillows and suitable clothing within easy reach. It's a good idea to wear several layers, as your perception of temperature may change. Prepare a good playlist, something tasty to eat afterwards, and surround yourself with beautiful and meaningful things. Always have water by hand. If you're indoors, it might also be a good idea to have a bucket in case you need to vomit.



Physical pain and fatigue



**during the
trip 2**

It's very common to feel nauseous or to feel the need to 'purge', so to speak, during a psychedelic trip. With mushrooms, you can try to prevent nausea by brewing tea from them and adding lemon and ginger. However, this can also lead to a more intense trip, so it's not recommended if you're inexperienced.

If you experience other types of pain, it can help to follow the pain through your body and observe it with curiosity. That alone can make it disappear. Alternatively, you can try visualising the pain whilst imagining that you are letting go of it as you breathe out and welcoming light, energy and healing as you breathe in.

You may experience stomach pain during and after a psychedelic experience. This usually subsides within 24 hours. Furthermore, psychedelics can affect your sleep patterns in the days following ingestion. It is important that you allow yourself plenty of time to rest in the days that follow.

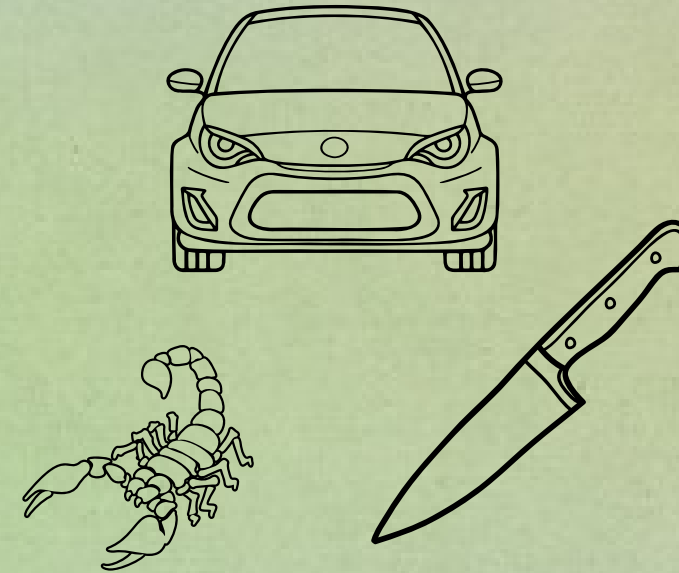
Classic psychedelics are not toxic. So you have not been poisoned. However, if the pain persists and intensifies to the point where you and your sitter become concerned, it is important to call the emergency services.

Although physical pain may occur whilst under the influence of psychedelics, the experience is usually pain-free.



Stay clear of dangerous things

It may well be that knives, cars, ledges and scorpions are things you find amusing in your everyday life, but it's a bad idea to mix them up with a psychedelic trip. Things could go wrong, so avoid being anywhere near dangerous objects.



during the
trip 3 & 4

You're not having a psychotic episode

You're not having a psychotic episode. You're not having a psychotic episode. You really aren't having a psychotic episode, no matter how much it might seem that way at the moment. Psychedelic experiences can be very challenging. Unpleasant feelings, images, physical urges and the sensation of being on the verge of death can arise when the ego feels its deepest convictions are under threat.

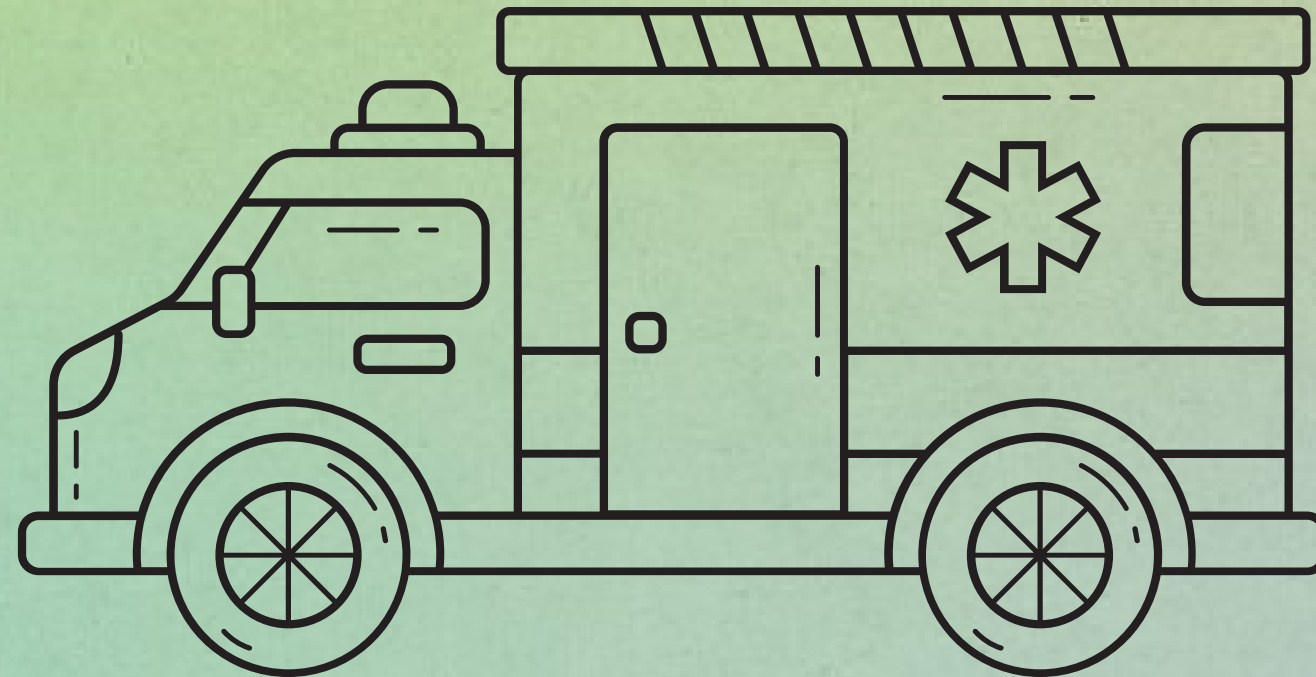
You're fine. Everything will return to normal before long. Sit back, let go, accept your situation, have fun, and try to enjoy the fact that you're right here, right now, and get to experience this world.



Emergency services as a last resort

during the
trip 5

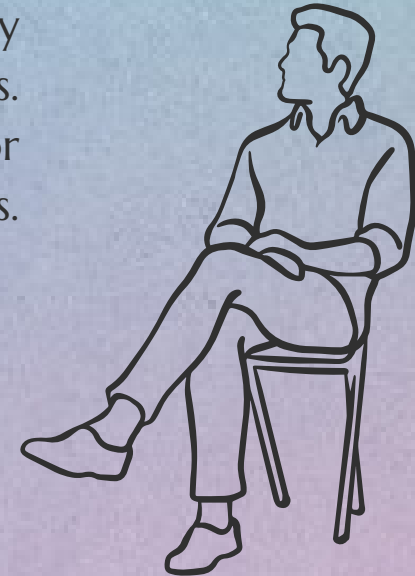
Remember that in an emergency, it is safe to call 112. Paramedics do not care whether you have taken an illegal drug – their job is to help you.



Reflecting on one's experience after the psychedelic journey

after the trip
1

Psychedelics can catalyse psycho-spiritual and existential experiences, which may leave the user with a blissful, calming and meditative physical sensation afterwards. However, it is also normal to feel sad, tired and emotionally vulnerable for days or weeks afterwards. Sit with the feeling, accept it, observe it, explore it, be curious. What is it telling you? Is there something in your life that needs to change?



A (spiritual) crisis or a (spiritual) breakthrough?

after the trip
2

Although full-blown psychoses are extremely rare following a single use of psychedelics, there are many people who (particularly with frequent use) may experience psychosis-like states for shorter or longer periods. In psychedelic literature, these states are often referred to as spiritual breakthroughs or crises. Whether an experience becomes a breakthrough or a crisis often depends on the resources we have at our disposal. These can include social, cognitive, emotional and financial resources.

A spiritual breakthrough is a journey that can last a lifetime, during which the journeyer continually gains a deeper understanding of their relationship with (that which is greater than) themselves. For some, this is nature; for others, the universe, spirituality, love or the community of humankind.

Such a breakthrough is often spurred by spiritual experiences in which one has transcended one's own ego and the identities and roles one normally identifies with.

These experiences can prompt deep and sustained reflection on the meaning and purpose of life. For some, this may require space and time for silence and contemplation, which may mean withdrawing from social obligations and activities.

These experiences can also be overwhelming and, for a time, lead to a crisis. It can be difficult to put into words what it was you experienced. Instead, questions may arise: What was the experience actually about? What do I do now?

This process may require support, but with the right assistance, it can lead to a deeper sense of peace, a connection to nature and other people, and a desire to be of service to the world. Under the right circumstances, and with the right resources and support, anyone can move from crisis to breakthrough.

It can help to stay with the experience, try to make sense of it, re-examine one's purpose in life, and talk to a therapist who understands spiritual crises and can support you through your process.



Grandiosity, inflated egos and messiah complexes

Another stage of the spiritual crisis which may seem more serious to the person experiencing it and to their loved ones. Under the influence of psychedelics, one may find oneself face to face with death, the divine, bliss, emptiness, freedom, the many layers of existence, repressed memories, parts of oneself that one has denied, and so on. These experiences can seem incredibly meaningful and transformative, but for some they can also be an overwhelming encounter, which may result in something resembling existential anxiety, fear, paranoia and isolation. Sometimes there may also be a sense of otherworldliness and a loss of touch with reality, a feeling that there is hidden meaning and significance everywhere, and that there is an urgent mission or crisis that needs to be resolved.

These experiences can be accompanied by a distinctive feeling that you are chosen. That you have 'seen the light'. That you have grasped the meaning of life and the structure of reality, and must spread the message to everyone else. This sensation can be beautiful and rewarding, but it can also manifest as a feeling of superiority over others, of knowing more than others, and of having a duty to 'enlighten' others. In this form, it is known as ego inflation or a messiah complex. In traditional psychology, it is known as grandiosity. It may also be accompanied by paranoid fantasies that you are a 'warrior of light', that you are fighting against an 'evil/dark force' that is pursuing you, and that the fate of the entire universe depends on you. Some describe it as feeling as though they are part of 'The Matrix' or 'The Truman Show', having seen beyond reality and now needing to save others by making them see 'the truth'. This can, of course, be a difficult task to shoulder, and the downside is often anxiety, feelings of inadequacy, confusion and loneliness. It can also lead to deep apathy – "if I can't save the whole world, I might as well just give up".



Grandiosity, inflated egos and messiah complexes (continued)

Remember, it is not your responsibility to save the whole world. You can make a contribution (and the world truly needs people who do), but you cannot and should not do it alone. You are just one person, and your first impulse after an overwhelming psychedelic journey is rarely the most effective one. Give yourself time.

It can help to approach the experience with acceptance, openness, curiosity and reflection. A psychedelic experience can be extremely meaningful, transformative and overwhelming. It makes perfect sense that some people have strong reactions to having experienced aspects of life and themselves that they didn't think existed. Your experience will fall into place if you can take the time to process and observe it, rather than feeling pressured to rush off and save the world. Sometimes, support is needed to go through this process. Remember, you are not alone. See 'After the Journey 5'. As a friend or relative, the best thing you can do is to remain calm, inquisitive, supportive and loving. Being anxious and worried only intensifies the other person's feelings. Remember, it's temporary.



Harmful use and a weakened sense of reality

Frequent and unstructured use of psychedelics (particularly outside the structured circumstances outlined in this booklet) can be confusing and lead to an accumulation of unconscious psychological material in the conscious mind. If this material is not processed within a meaningful framework of understanding, it may cause the user to lose touch with their identity, ego and everyday reality. The psychedelic reality, which at times can be fragmented and confusing may become dominant.

As is often seen in cases of harmful drug use, the user loses touch with their usual everyday consciousness. This can, for example, result in a feeling that nobody understands them, that they judge both their own and others' actions excessively hard, and that they feel almost constantly angry and confused or become easily agitated.

Frequent use of psychedelics may be a sign of escapism and can be viewed as a form of self-medication. As a user or a relative, you should consider what underlying problems might be causing this, and how you can address these issues.



Support is available afterwards

If you need to process your psychedelic experience, it may be helpful to get out and talk to others who have had similar experiences. For example, you could take part in sharing circles, attend workshops, go for walks, or do other activities.

The Danish Centre for Psychedelic Literacy (Cepda) regularly organises such open events.

You can find them at www.cepda.dk/kalender.

You can also join Cepda's online community for free at www.forbundet.cepda.dk.

If you'd like to explore your experience further, you can contact an integration therapist. You can find one at www.cepda.dk/integrationsterapeuter or by scanning the QR code here.

Are you in acute crisis and need support, you can get in touch with Cepda's Support Service where we offer 6 free conversations with a licensed professional. Scan the QR code here.

after the trip 5



Cepda calendar



Cepdas
Online Community



Integration therapists



Cepdas
Support Service



Give yourself time to process new insights

after the trip
6



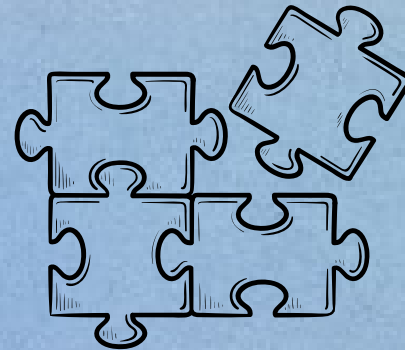
Avoid making any major decisions in the weeks immediately following your psychedelic experience. Now is not the time to break up with your partner. Now is not the time to quit your job. Nor is it the time to take out that payday loan and lease the car of your dreams. You may well have gained some great insight into an important issue in your life, but for the sake of yourself and the people close to you, take the time to explore it and let it sink in. Take it seriously by giving it time and space for reflection. Make sure you're feeling balanced and in touch with yourself before making any major decisions.

With this in mind, it's also important to remember that psychedelics can present us with uncomfortable truths and challenging decisions, which can sometimes feel easier to simply ignore than to act upon. Use the momentum from the psychedelic experience and the resulting openness to explore the themes – both pleasant and unpleasant – that may present themselves to you, rather than simply reverting to a potentially destructive status quo out of a fear of change.



Integration

**after the trip
7a**



Integration is one of the central elements in utilizing psychedelic substances consciously for self-development and the exploration of life. Integration can broadly be described as a process through which the psychedelic experience is connected to your specific circumstances, way of life and perspective on life and the world. The integration process can take many different forms, but often involves an attempt to bring insights, perspectives and/or ways of experiencing and being from the psychedelic induced altered state of consciousness into the non-altered state, thereby building a bridge between the psychedelic experience and everyday life.

The integration process can be made easier if one has prepared thoroughly and, where appropriate, set an intention, so that one has a starting point for interpreting the experience.

Many people find that the integration process requires persistent effort, dedication, patience and time, and that this work can be supported through conversations and socialising, establishing new habits and making tangible changes to one's daily life.

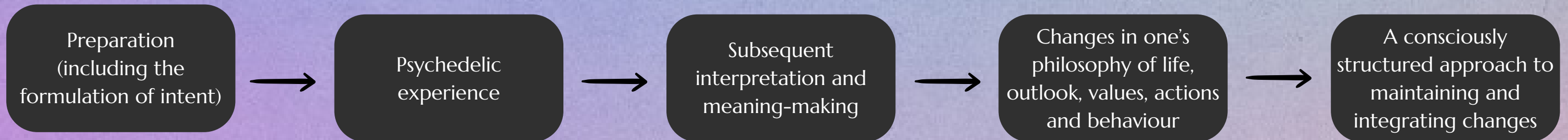


Integration (continued)

after the trip
7b

It is best to develop your own personal approach to integration over time, to try to understand your own needs and challenges, and to adapt your integration activities accordingly. That said, here is a list of suggestions for specific activities that others have found useful: meditation, breathing exercises, keeping a diary, expressing yourself through art, film, music or other creative forms of expression, connecting with your body through, for example, dance, yoga, winter swimming or martial arts, spending time in nature, listening to music, reading about philosophy, psychology and religion, taking part in group integration activities such as integration circles and social events with other people familiar with psychedelics, setting aside time to reflect on past psychedelic experiences, forming a new habit, and talking to like-minded people about one's experiences.

A briefly illustrated example of an integration process:



In Denmark, it has also become relatively popular to seek out a psychologist or psychotherapist who specialises in psychedelic integration work. These professionals are open to discussing psychedelic experiences and can help make sense of them.



To the tripsitter

to the tripsitter 1



The next section of this booklet provides a basic insight into the role of the tripsitter.

A tripsitter (companion, anchor, support) is a person who remains unaffected and is present whilst another person is under the influence of a psychedelic substance. The tripsitter looks after the journeyer's needs, both physical (helping them to the toilet, fetching water, etc.) and interpersonal (holding their hand, offering reassuring words, and so on) during the session.

A tripsitter may benefit from having personal experience of psychedelic experiences, as well as an in-depth understanding of the spectrum of different experiences that psychedelic substances can induce. It can prove particularly useful to have prepared thoroughly for how to handle a challenging experience on the part of the tripper. Here, fundamental human qualities such as tolerance, compassion, openness and trust come into play.

In some sessions and ceremonies, a facilitator with more specialised knowledge of the process may be present, such as a therapist or shaman. These individuals may have various educational backgrounds, such as being a psychologist or psychotherapist, or may have undergone extensive training with indigenous peoples.

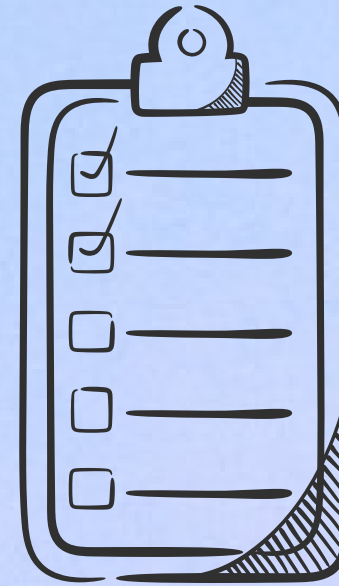
Everyone should choose their tripsitter (or other support) for their journey based on what they hope to gain from it.



Preparation

Be aware of and clarify all the points from the previous chapter in this booklet. For example, where does the person feel safe tripping? Are there one or more mantras that the person likes? Are there any objects that give them a sense of security (jewellery, art, soft toys, pictures or anything else)? How much time have you and the tripper committed to spending together (depending on the duration of the substance's effects)?

Find some suitable music together. Instrumental and soothing music is often a safe choice.



**to the
tripsitter
2 & 3**

Grounding and centering

If the tripper becomes anxious or upset, give them their 'object' (a teddy bear, necklace or similar), try to guide them to focus on their body or their breathing, or repeat a mantra they have chosen in advance (but avoid too many repetitions as this can create an uneasy 'looping' effect).

Stay calm and trust the process. Sometimes it is better to wait and see what unfolds than to intervene straight away.



Your qualifications, resources and the journeyer's circumstances

Do you have the skills to sit with someone and create a safe space during a psychedelic experience?

Do you have therapeutic skills? Do you have anyone in your network with a medical or therapeutic background whom you can call if you yourself become concerned?

Consider whether your qualifications and resources match the journeyer's needs. For example, are they seeking therapeutic relief, a spiritual experience, or simply to explore the psychedelic space with a close friend?

to the tripsitter 4

Before the trip, you can ask the journeyer the following:

Have you ever been hospitalised for a psychotic or manic episode?

Have you, in the last six months, seriously considered harming yourself or others?

Have you had a heart attack, do you have high blood pressure, or do you have any form of cardiovascular disease?

If the answer to any of these questions is 'yes', the most responsible course of action is to advise the journeyer to postpone a psychedelic experience until circumstances have changed or it becomes possible for them to undertake it in a clinical setting.

Furthermore, it is advisable to enquire about the tripper's history of trauma and their social network: is there anyone with whom they can share their experiences and who can support them? Are they in therapy?



Ethical considerations

to the
tripsitter
5a

Before you embark on tripsitting, it may be helpful to have given some thought to your own abilities and ethical compass.

Do you have the skills to ensure a safe space for someone having a psychedelic experience?

Do you know what a psychedelic experience entails?

Do you practise shadow work?

Do you reflect deeply and critically on your own actions and place in the world?

What might trigger you? Throw you off balance? How do you center and ground yourself so that you can be there for the tripper?

Do you have the resources to support the tripper after their psychedelic journey?

Do you know – and are you prepared to do – what you need to do in case of an emergency?



Ethical considerations (continued)

to the
tripsitter
5b

Are you balanced and grounded, and are you able to stay centered in your daily life, so that you can cope mentally and emotionally with difficult and stressful situations?

How would you respond in a situation where the tripper starts to cry? Becomes sexually aroused? Projects negative images onto you? Becomes violently aggressive?

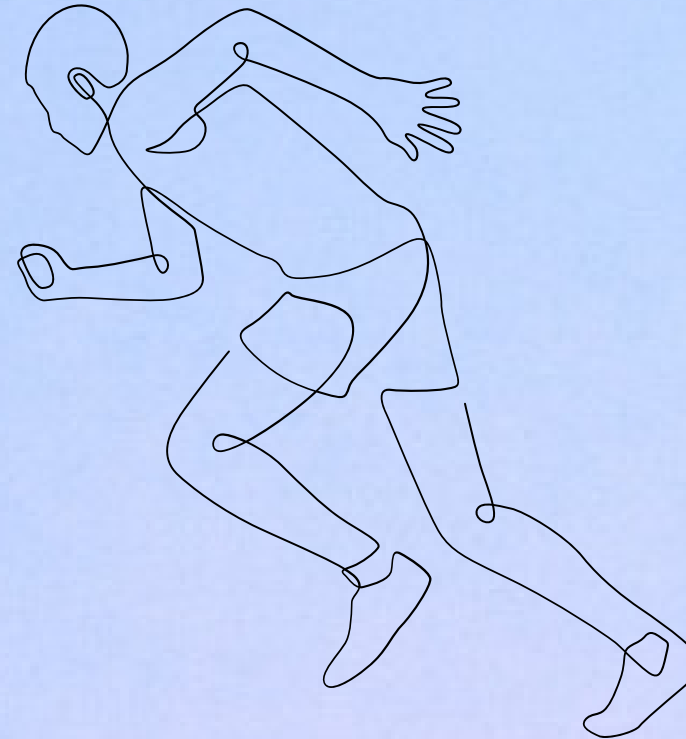
Are you familiar with existing codes of ethics in this field, and have you perhaps drawn up one for yourself?

You can find a number of existing codes of ethics in this field at www.cepda.dk/etiske-kodekser by scanning the QR code below.



Where are you going? I'm coming!

If you have agreed that the journeyer should remain in the room during the experience, but they nevertheless feel the urge to leave the room or the venue, you can remind them that they will get the most out of the experience by relaxing, letting go and being fully present in the moment. If they insist on going out for a walk, you must accompany them and do your best to ensure their safety. Alternatively, you may have drawn up a contract in advance stipulating that the journeyer must not leave the room or building whilst under the influence, in which case you can remind them of this.



to the
tripsitter
6

The inner healer and the path of least resistance

As a tripsitter, your role is primarily to ensure the journeyer's physical safety. Avoid distracting or interrupting them any more than is absolutely necessary. The tripper is not reliant on your intervention, words of wisdom or endless amounts of Palo Santo to get anything out of the experience. They need you to remain calm and maintain a safe and trusting space if they feel overwhelmed.



Touch, consent and sexuality

to the
tripsitter
7

Be very careful about physical touch. Make clear agreements in advance. For example, is it OK with the journeyer if you hold their hand? If you put your hand on their shoulder or pat their arm? Always ask before you do so, even (and perhaps especially) if the journeyer is under the influence. For example: “Would you like me to hold your hand?”

The journeyer may experience sexual urges and a desire to act on them. Remember that they are under the influence and are not in a position to rationally assess their actions. It is therefore deeply unethical to initiate physical contact with a journeyer that has not been explicitly agreed upon in advance.

Instead, explain to the journeyer that this session is not about acting on their sexuality, but that it can be beneficial to feel it and sense it within themselves. That it is perfectly fine for them to have these feelings, but that now is not the time and place to act on them.



Aggressive or violent behaviour

to the
tripsitter
8

If you and the journeyer have taken care of everything mentioned above, violent behaviour directed at others or self-harm will only occur in the rarest of cases. Should this happen nonetheless, it is important that you remain calm. Raising your voice or becoming physical with the journeyer can escalate the situation. Repeat your agreed mantra(s), observe the person, and tell them that the episode will soon be over and that everything will return to normal. Only call 112 in an emergency.

Projections

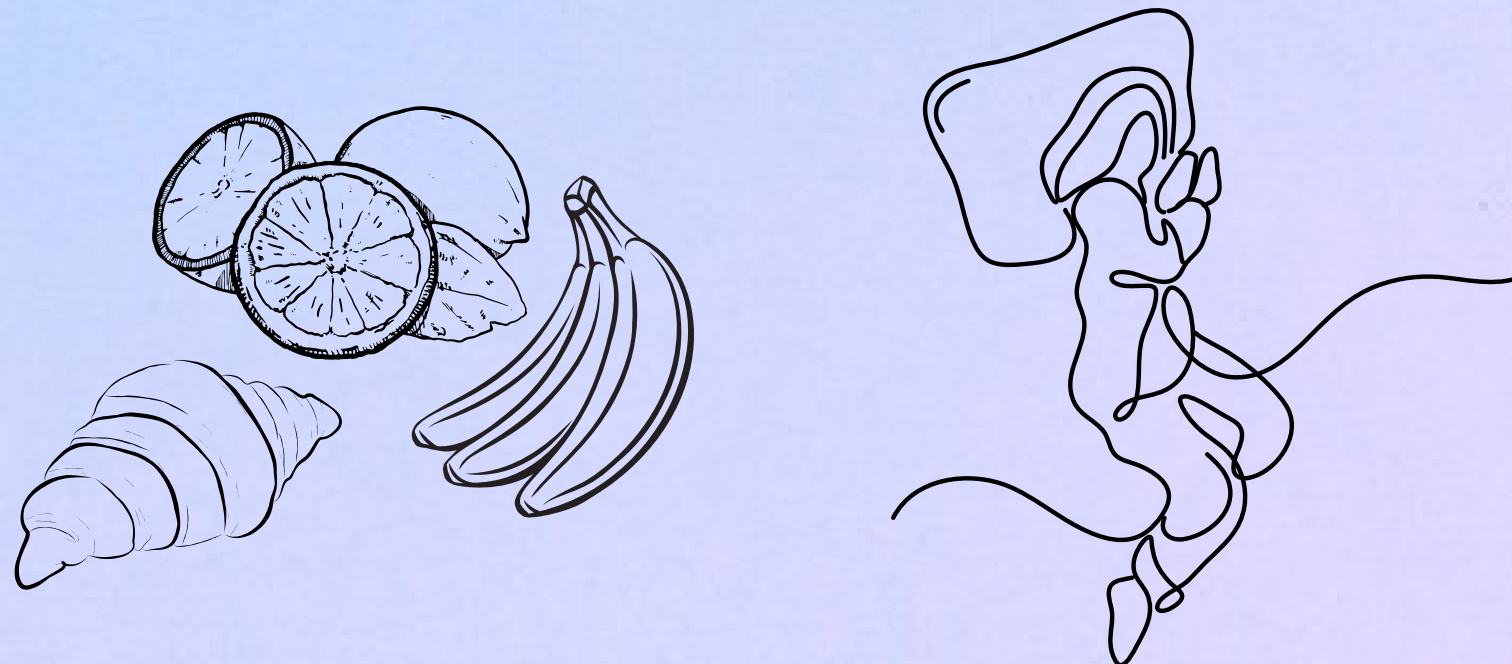
During the session, the journeyer may mistake you for someone else from their life – perhaps from a previous traumatic experience. They might, for example, ask, ‘Why did you do that to me?’ or something similar. You can calmly explain to the person who you are and ask if they would prefer for you to move a little further away or leave the room. However, always stay close by and remain attentive to the journeyer. It may be helpful to have discussed the possibilities of projections before the journey begins.

Positive projections may also occur. The journeyer may believe that you are a divine being, that you are pure love, a messenger from God or something similar. You can calmly remind the journeyer that they themselves, as well as all other people and all living things, are exactly that too.



The immediate time after the experience

Have some tasty food ready. Encourage the journeyer to have something to eat and, in general, to eat healthily in the days following their trip to maintain their energy levels. Psychedelic experiences can be tiring. Give the tripper some space if they don't want to talk. But make sure they aren't left alone immediately after the experience – if you aren't staying with them, you should ensure there's someone else who will be with them until the following day.



Integration

to the trip sitter 10



If the purpose of the journey has been therapeutic, the integration phase is important. You may not have the professional expertise to assist the journeyer during a therapeutic integration phase, but you can be of service by listening actively and empathetically to the experiences, insights and aims for change in their life. Encourage them, for example, to write these down or record them on audio so that they can easily be recalled. Avoid offering interpretations or analyses of the journeyer's experience – it is theirs alone.

If the journeyer is already undergoing therapy, you can encourage them to see their therapist in the days following their psychedelic experience (if the therapist is open to talking about such experiences). During this phase, the brain is more 'neuroplastic' than usual, which creates an opportunity for cognitive and behavioral changes. They may also wish to begin a course of therapy with an integration therapist if they feel they would like to explore the experience in greater depth.

There are also many other activities one can engage in as part of one's integration. What is most appropriate will vary from person to person, and perhaps you have already been guided towards this during your psychedelic experience. Should you take up an activity that involves your body? Your voice? Your mind? Should you spend more time with other people? Or on your own?

Generally speaking, you are very receptive and impressionable in the period immediately following a psychedelic journey. Encourage the journeyer to choose their surroundings carefully in the days that follow: who they spend time with, what activities they engage in, what books they read, and who they watch on YouTube.



Risks associated with MDMA use

MDMA
1

There are a number of risks associated with using MDMA. These can be divided into physical, psychological and relational risks, as well as long-term effects resulting from frequent use of MDMA. The physical and psychological risks are primarily associated with the acute effects and therefore cease once the effects of the drug have worn off or in the days that follow, unless MDMA is used frequently, which can lead to long-term harm. However, research suggests that these adverse effects are reversible upon cessation of use.



Physical risks:

- Dehydration and overheating
- Heart problems
- Kidney damage
- Muscle breakdown
- Cramps

Mental health risks:

- Anxiety and depression
- Memory problems
- Sleep disturbances
- Feeling overwhelmed by the experience

Relational risks:

- Inappropriate behaviour
- Inability to set boundaries
- Oversharing
- Dependence on MDMA as a “social lubricant”

Long-term effects of frequent heavy use/abuse:

- Increased risk of depression
- Cognitive problems
- Addiction



Harm reduction

MDMA 2a

We advise against any use of MDMA in an illegal context, but if you nonetheless do intend to take MDMA, there are still a number of steps you can take to minimise potential negative side effects and experiences.

Test your drugs

MDMA is sold both as pressed pills and as powder or crystals. It is impossible to know whether it is actually MDMA, or whether it has been cut with other substances, unless you test it. By buying MDMA crystals and testing them to check that they are MDMA and to determine their purity, you can ensure that it is pure MDMA and thus also measure out a precise dose. If your MDMA contains impurities, it is possible to purify it or dispose of it.

Start with a low dose and increase it gradually.

You can always take more, but you can never take less once you've already taken it. It is therefore recommended that you start with a low dose the first time and then gradually – over several occasions – work your way up to a dose you feel comfortable with.

Avoid taking more than one dose in a day, but if you absolutely must take more, it is recommended that you take no more than half of the original dose you took and that you only redose once.

Subsequent doses will primarily only increase the negative effects, both immediately and the following days.



Dosage

MDMA
2b

EFFECT	DOSAGE
Threshold	20 mg
Light	20-80 mg
Common	80-120 mg
Strong	120-150 mg
Heavy	150+ mg

from <https://psychonautwiki.org/wiki/MDMA>

This table can be used to assess dosage. A rule of thumb for estimating one’s own normal dose range is to calculate 1.1-1.7 mg per kg of body weight. In clinical trials, doses ranging from 80 to 125 mg are used.

Doses higher than those specified in this table significantly increase the risks associated with taking the substance. For this reason, amongst others, the use of Ecstasy pills is strongly discouraged, as it is impossible to assess their precise content and potency, and these have been found to vary considerably in tests.



Harm reduction (continued)

MDMA 2c

Avoid pills

It is not recommended to take MDMA/ecstasy pills, as it can be difficult to know what dose you are taking and whether they have been mixed with other substances.

Nausea

Some people experience an unpleasant or nauseating sensation during the first 30–60 minutes after taking MDMA; this can be reduced by taking your dose over the course of 30 minutes, possibly mixed with a soft drink, sports drink, fruit juice or similar.

Avoid mixing MDMA with other substances and medicines

Mixing substances is generally discouraged, but with MDMA in particular, you should be cautious when combining it with MAOIs, tramadol, other stimulants and alcohol. The combination of MDMA and MAOIs can lead to unpredictable effects and greatly increases the risk of serotonin syndrome, which can, in the worst-case scenario, be fatal. It is therefore strongly advised not to mix the two.

Drink water and avoid overheating

As MDMA raises your body temperature, there is a risk of overheating, but there are a number of precautions you can take to minimise this risk. Make sure you drink water before, during and after. One to two glasses of water per hour is plenty, and it is a good idea to drink sports drinks containing electrolytes or eat salty snacks to maintain your salt balance.

It is important not to drink too much water, as this can lead to water intoxication. It is also recommended that you stay in a cool environment that is not overcrowded. This can be difficult if you are using MDMA in party or rave settings; it is therefore important to take breaks from dancing and, if possible, go outside several times during the evening to get some fresh air and cool down.

Overheating and dehydration are serious risks associated with MDMA use, and it is typically these that can lead to dangerous and, in the worst cases, fatal outcomes.



Harm reduction (continued)

MDMA 2d

Taking tramadol alongside MDMA can result in seizures, and this combination is therefore also not recommended. Using stimulants such as amphetamine or cocaine alongside MDMA increases the neurotoxic effects of both MDMA and the stimulants. Furthermore, it also reduces the positive psychological effects of MDMA.

Alcohol reduces the effects of MDMA, which may lead to taking a higher dose of MDMA, thereby increasing the negative side effects. Furthermore, when drinking alcohol, one might forget to drink water, which increases the risk of becoming severely dehydrated, a condition that can be fatal.

MDMA blurs your sense of how drunk you are, which can lead to excessive drinking. Once the effects of MDMA have worn off, you may therefore suddenly find yourself very drunk, which can also lead to much worse hangovers and dangerous situations whilst you are intoxicated. If you are taking prescription medication, you should consult your doctor before taking MDMA.

Look after yourself and those you take MDMA with

Even if you're taking MDMA for recreational and/or party-related purposes, it can still bring up psychological and relational issues and challenges, so it's important to do so in a safe and comfortable environment with people you trust and care about. It can be helpful, especially if it's your first time trying it, to have a tripsitter present who remains sober throughout the experience and is ready to help and take action if any problems arise.



Harm reduction (continued)

MDMA
2e

Seek help if you have any problems

It is important to seek help if you are feeling unwell, whether physically or mentally. If it's an emergency or if you feel your life is in danger, call 112 so that an ambulance can be sent. If you experience negative effects after use or think you may have become dependent, it's important to speak to your GP, therapist, a friend or a family member.

If you've had a bad or challenging experience with MDMA or other psychedelic substances, or if you simply need a community where it's okay to talk about psychedelic experiences, you can contact the Danish Center for Psychedelic Literacy at stoette@cepda.dk or become a member at forbundet.cepda.dk.

Take breaks

One of the best ways to minimise the long-term harmful effects and risks is to take long breaks between using MDMA. A break of 3 months is recommended, and 5 weeks as an absolute minimum. In addition, you should not take more than your normal dose, if you know what that is. MDMA works by releasing – and thus also depleting – your serotonin supplies, so you need to give your brain time to replenish them. Furthermore, many people find that the 'magic' of MDMA disappears if you use it frequently, and it can take many years for the effect to return; for some, the effect never returns at all.



Recreational or therapeutic use?

MDMA
3

Research into MDMA-assisted therapy for PTSD has passed phase 3 (the final phase before approval for treatment) – and is already legal in Australia and Switzerland, amongst other places – but its therapeutic use is very different from its recreational use. When MDMA is used therapeutically, it forms part of a therapeutic programme that also involves numerous therapy sessions without the use of MDMA, and, amongst other things, two therapists are present whilst the drug is taking effect. Although recreational use with friends or at parties can have positive effects on one's well-being, it cannot be viewed in the same way as therapeutic use, as there are other potential risks and challenges associated with it; therefore, it is very important to take precautions and inform yourself accordingly. You can read more about MDMA-assisted therapy at www.cepda.dk by scanning the QR code here.



Psychedelic resources

www.cepda.dk

www.forbundet.cepda.dk

www.psychonautwiki.org

www.erowid.org

www.dancesafe.org

"The Psychedelic Explorer's Guide" by James Fadiman

"LSD psychotherapy" by Stanislav Grof



Mental health resources



Cepda Support Service (Denmark): stoette@cepda.dk

Psychedelic integration therapists (Denmark):
www.cepda.dk/integrationsterapeuter

Suicide helpline (Denmark): +45 70 201 201

Emergency helpline for relatives (Capital Region of Denmark: +45 21 15 14 29)

Free appointment counselling (Denmark) <https://bedrepsykiatri.dk/ring-til-os/>

Support for professionals (Denmark): <https://kombu.dk/til-fagpersoner>



Mental health resources

Advice from the Danish Association for Mental Health:
<https://sind.dk/faa-hjaelp>

The Danish Association for People with PTSD and their Relatives:
<https://lptsd.dk/>

Telephone numbers for psychiatric emergency departments
(Denmark): <https://www.borger.dk/sundhed-og-sygdom/Psykiske-problemer/Psykiatriske-skadestuer>

Advice from the Danish Mental Health Fund: +45 39 25 25 25

InsideOut (a Danish organisation supporting people who have broken away from a destructive community, or who need help to leave such an environment): www.insideout.center



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The Danish Center for Psychedelic Literacy (Cepda) is a non-profit organisation run by volunteers. We have created this booklet and a great deal of other information available free of charge because we believe it is important to make factual information accessible to everyone.

We are funded by membership fees, so if you'd like to support our work in producing more accessible, high-quality educational material, you're very welcome to sign up at www.forbundet.cepda.dk.



Membership also gives you access to our events, educational materials, online community and much more.

If you'd like to make a one-off donation, you can do so via Mobilepay to the number: 398930. Please include the text 'booklet' in the reference.