



## Be Your Own Psychedelic Therapist

Only you can interpret your dreams. Why should psychedelics be any different?

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“Throw away all weakness. Tell your body that it is strong, tell your mind that it is strong, and have unbounded faith and hope in yourself.”

— **Swami Vivekananda**

Preparing for a voyage might mean having some idea of what to expect, laying the groundwork, getting in shape, or considering the details. A psychedelic trip is all of these, and your experience will be determined by how you prepare for it.

A psychedelic trip is a blind date with yourself. The less rigid you are and the less entitled you feel, the better the result. You’re not committed on a blind date, but you are committed to a long-term relationship with yourself. This does not make for a relaxed night out.

Is it safety or change that you want? Are you here for fun or growth? Growth is rarely fun. Change only comes with risk. If you’re looking for change, then you need an explorer’s frame of mind.

## Set and Setting

To get the most out of your experience, don't focus on set and setting. By the time you've reached the point of arranging for these, the results are locked in. Aside from ensuring safety, set and setting arrange the pillows.

You're obliged to ensure your safety in any situation. Know who you're working with, know everyone's intentions, know who is providing backup, and perform due diligence.

In my many altered state experiences, set and setting played little role in what transpired. Most pleasant situations went nowhere and did nothing. The most effective experiences were either unpleasant or did not fit on the comfort scale.

To use a business analogy, your investment carries risks and offers a return. Set and setting are issues of risk. Once safety is assured, your return on the experience is determined by who you are now and who you're prepared to become.

## Intention

“Plants do not grow merely to satisfy ambitions or to fulfill good intentions. They thrive because someone expended effort on them.”

— **Liberty Hyde Bailey**, horticulturist

Intention is portrayed as what you're aiming for, but it more accurately reflects what's led you to this point. It often reflects what you can't do, not what you will do. More important than your intentions are how you're prepared to change.

Intentions take you to your boundary. Do you intend to watch comfortably or engage with the dragons at the gates? There is no right answer. More importantly, the landscape will change as you enter it. Most usefully, what do you intend to do when you fail?

See intention as a decision to act, not an expectation. In psychedelic trips, as in dreams, what you intend won't make any difference. It's what you're committed to that you'll experience. What counts is not what you want, but what you offer.

## Preparation

“The preparation phase includes and surpasses the concept of set and setting... and can be summarized as ‘how you are, where you are, and who you are with.’”

— **D.M. Tripson**, from *The Psychedelic Experience: Preparation and Integration*

When we say “psychedelic trip,” we're talking about a journey of exploration. Most people are unschooled in exploration. Most of what we're taught discourages innovation.

Invention fails 99% of the time, and you are not paid to fail. Nevertheless, unless you know how to build a path toward changing yourself, there's little chance that you will.

In few other things are you committed in heading into the unknown. You are committing yourself to innovation and you might hope to change by accident, but accidental changes fail almost always. The solution is simple: accept failure. Failure is how you learn, so don't be disappointed.

“If you do not change direction, you may end up where you are heading.”  
— **Lao Tzu**

Without wiser guidance, we focus on our fears, and this assures we will encounter them. That's good because encountering our fears is necessary, but protecting ourselves from their dangers doesn't help us understand them. We only learn through engagement.

Preparing for psychedelics is like therapy without the therapist. There will be therapists in the future who can help you prepare, but few of today's therapists can. Therapists still cannot legally take psychedelics themselves, so the closest you'll find is a guide, an experienced psychonaut, or a shaman.

None of these are therapists. They are not here to heal you. A psychonaut can tell you what they've seen, and a shaman will help you reach the deep end. They are doorkeepers to the right doors, but they are not guides.

A guide is someone who both knows you and the territory you'll enter. I question whether such people are available for hire. I believe the best guide will be someone inside of you. As a therapist, I'm always looking for that person in my clients.

## The Work of Preparation

As preparation for vision journeys, visualize past and future situations. Gain a facility in dreamwork. Use my self-hypnosis tapes. These are vehicles for exploring the forests of your subconscious.

The key to preparation is being able to talk to those people within yourself who you have not been listening to. To give yourself a larger voice than the one that reads the script you've been handed.

If you're depressed, then you want to talk to your depression while you're still in a semi-normal state. If you're anxious, talk to your anxiety, for anger speak to your anger. For every emotion, we have a person inside us, and they are more complete than you expect. They don't live and breathe separately from your dominant self, but they have their own thoughts and color your feelings.

You're going to have a more dramatic and less organized conversation when you open your gates of perception. Better to build alliances and establish the conversation now.

You encounter parts of yourself in psychedelic journeys, and this is cathartic. It's not just about healing injuries, it is also strengthening yourself for change. These parts may carry injury, but they also carry wisdom. The result may be more of a start than a conclusion.

Therapy is soul education, and it must be cleansed of the stigma of disease management. We are told therapy is for disabled people, but therapy, or as it is better termed “guidance,” expedites positive change.

If psychedelics are therapeutic, they require a therapeutic base. This comprises being grounded, open, flexible, and honest.

The journey starts with calm and relaxation, not when the chemicals kick in. What you’ll accomplish is embodied in your initial state, which reflects all of your preparation. You don’t want the chemicals to open the doors indiscriminately.

You are not the author of your journey, but you are one of its producers. Other producers are hidden within you, or are projected onto people in your outside world. If you’re honest with yourself, you may set the boundary of your exploration. You want the flexibility to move with this container without falling off the edge of the world.

## Resilience

Resilience is comprised of flexibility and strength, and is limited by fear and tension. Prepare to encounter these. Where psychedelics boot you to the front lines of confrontation, you must prepare yourself with resilience, persistence, and gratitude.

Flexibility and resilience are the most important skills in a psychedelic journey. These reach the limits of your mental health not because you’re weak, but because you are an incomplete person. Your disenfranchised ghosts need to talk to you.

Patience is needed. If you have not been practicing equanimity in the face of distress, then give yourself a month before your psychedelic experience to think about it. This is not a normal experience and you should not feel limited by what you normally do. Create a space in yourself to be a wisdom keeper, a warrior, a guide, and a healer.

Anyone planning a therapeutic psychedelic experience should invest in an hour of counseling with someone who’s walked these paths. They need not be a professional, but they need broad experience and they need to be encouraging. Many therapists do not encourage psychedelic exploration because they have little experience or they are misinformed. You cannot help people who don’t know. Avoid them.

Consult with people skilled in alternate realities who have intuitive insight. People attracted to the paranormal are often adept at probing the subconscious. They may be mediums, tarot readers, or meditators. Many of my life-changing journeys have resulted from extended meditations without psychedelics.

You’re looking for the injured or overlooked parts of yourself, undeveloped parts who live in your forgotten past. Invite them all, even those you think you’ve lost or vanquished. Reach out to the important beings who are no longer alive. The degree that energies will appear will determine the power of your experience. Invite them before you start in your dreams and daytime meditations.

If you'd like my help in making your own preparations, book a free call using this calendar link:

<https://www.mindstrengthbalance.com/schedule15>