



EntheoNation

PSYCHEDELIC MEDICINE

Primer

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 | Welcome, and Meet Your Host
- 2 | Introduction
- 3 | Plant Spirit Healing and Psychedelic Medicine
- 4 | Psychedelic Therapy and Integration Therapy
- 5 | Microdosing
- 6 | Applications of Psychedelic Medicine
- 7 | The Promise of Psychedelic Medicine
- 8 | Ancestral Plant Medicines
- 9 | Legality
- 11 | Finding a Psychedelic Ceremony
- 13 | Reflection
- 15 | The Plant Spirit Summit On-Demand Upgrade

Welcome!

Hello, psychedelic explorer! Thank you for joining us at the Plant Spirit Summit, and welcome to this introduction to psychedelic medicine and plant spirit healing.

The Plant Spirit Summit aims to bring together some of the most important voices in the psychedelic renaissance - indigenous and Western - to discuss the best ways we can integrate psychedelic plant medicines into our lives, respectfully and effectively.

We hope this Primer will be an excellent companion to your experience at the Summit, and we've included some reflection questions near the end of this book that can be used to enhance your immersion in our live panels and talks.

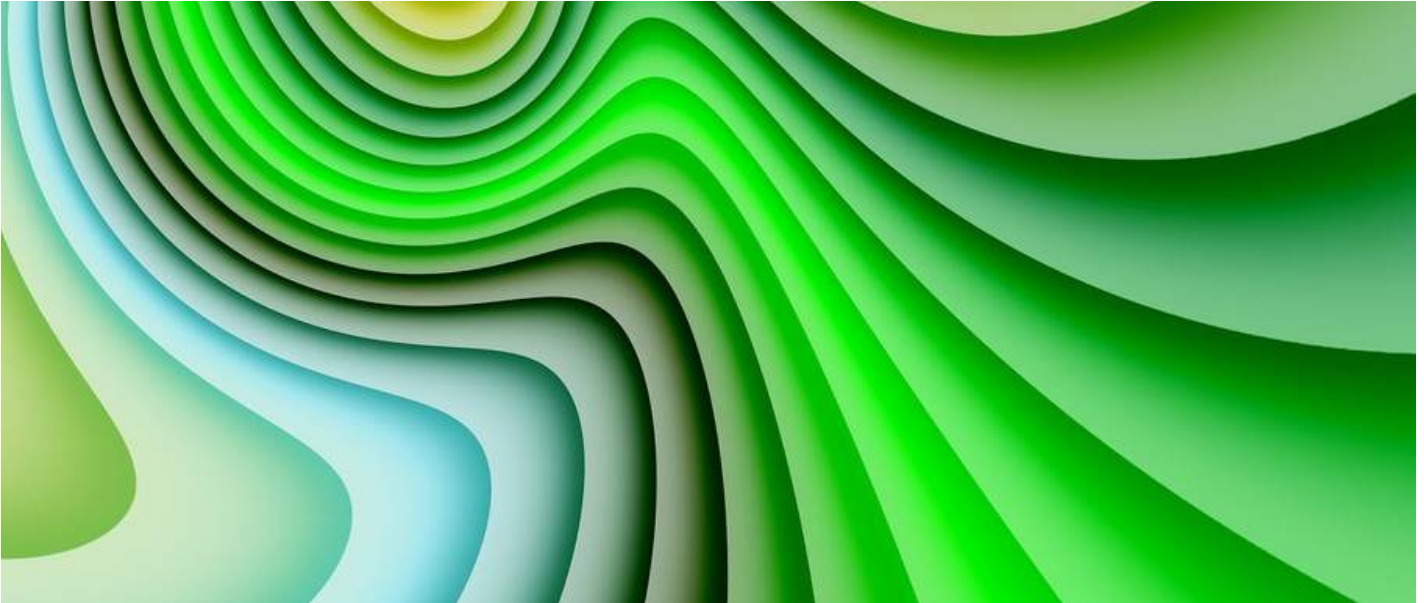
If you'd like ongoing access to Summit materials after the event, you can sign up to our On-Demand Digital Bundle (plus special bonuses) - find it near the end of this book.

Meet Your Host: Lorna Liana



Lorna Liana is a new media strategist and online business coach. With over 25+ years of psychedelic experience, Lorna tracks the developments in the Psychedelic Renaissance and global expansion of plant medicines through extensive research and conversations with thought leaders in the field.

Since 2003, she's attended plant medicine ceremonies with 30+ different shamans and facilitators, 7 indigenous tribes, several Brazilian churches, and a host of neo-shamanic circles, in Peru, Ecuador, Brazil, Europe, the US, and Asia.



Introduction

Peoples throughout the history of our species have been using psychedelic plants and fungi for divination, healing, and transformation. Yet the Western world is only just waking up to the ancient power and potential of psychedelic plant medicines.

The cultural shift that began with the counterculture of the 1960s is now accompanied by a mounting wave of clinical evidence. But the healing and transformational power of plant medicines has been around for millennia.

The question is now how do we encounter this power, from our Western framework of understanding, while still respecting and learning from the indigenous wisdom at the birthplace of human psychedelic knowledge?

Here we guide you through the basics of the healing power of psychedelic plant medicines, and offer a companion to the Plant Spirit Summit that can help you reflect on the major issues facing the psychedelic renaissance.

What is Plant Spirit Healing?

Also referred to as “Spirit Plant Medicine,” healing with plant spirits is the process of developing a relationship with plant medicines in a way that helps you recover from trauma or nurture a healthier way of being.

Traditionally this process will be guided or overseen by a shaman, who has spent years of their life learning everything there is to know about one or more plant medicines, and understands how to travel into the unseen spirit world and return with insights and knowledge.

In the West, you may be more likely to encounter plant spirit healing through a Western facilitator who has been educated by an indigenous shaman. You may also find so-called “neo-shamans” - people who blend Western and indigenous spirituality, often without authentic training.

While particularly profound plant spirit healing may occur during individual ceremonies, a process of healing can take a lifetime. There is no guidebook for your own personal healing journey, and plant medicines could play any number of roles in life transformation.

What is Psychedelic Medicine?

Psychedelic medicine is a term used to denote a more Western approach to healing with psychedelics, and can include both natural and synthetic psychedelics. Generally, it refers to the use of psychedelic substances to help treat mental health conditions, including depression, anxiety, PTSD, and addiction.

Although psychedelic medicine includes both natural and synthetic substances, it generally overlooks spiritual issues and shamanic perspectives, which some find limits its healing scope. Substances are sometimes overlooked; including cannabis, kambo (the secretions of the *Phyllomedusa bicolor* frog) and the venom of the *Bufo alvarius* toad (containing 5-MeO-DMT, bufotenine and other compounds).

The model of medicalized psychedelics is oriented around the identification and synthesis of psychoactive compounds that can be used to treat specific disorders. It also seeks to develop targeted delivery methods that support precise dosage and effective absorption, which cannot be accurately measured when working with plant matter and other organic substances.

Currently, psychedelic medicine is a large factor in the surge of psychedelic interest in the Western world - with it comes the promise of increased access to healing for many people in our society, along with the risk of corporatization and monopolization of psychedelic knowledge.

What is Psychedelic Therapy?

Psychedelic therapy usually means using psychedelic substances in a Western therapeutic style, to help address mental health issues. Mostly, the psychedelic will be in the hands of a trained clinical therapist, who will gently guide a participant through a psychedelic experience, alongside a copious therapy course before and after the trip, to help them address a specific mental health issue.

Although we are still in the early stages of developing a model for this kind of psychedelic therapy, researchers seem to agree that the most positive outcomes happen when people are given lots of supportive and focused therapy for several weeks before and after the psychedelic session. The psychedelic experience itself is mostly led by the patient, with minimal interference from the therapists.

This is in contrast to many shamanic styles of plant spirit healing, where the shaman plays a very involved role during the psychedelic experience itself. In ayahuasca ceremonies, for example, the shaman will usually be interacting with ceremony participants - blowing smoke, playing music, and generally responding to and influencing the energetic signature of the individual.

What is Psychedelic Integration Therapy?

Psychedelic integration therapy is the specific care given to people who have undergone a psychedelic experience - whether in a Western, clinical setting, or an indigenous shamanic one. Any kind of psychedelic experience, no matter how challenging or traumatic at the time, can be reflected upon during integration therapy to help amplify future healing and reduce trauma.

Integration therapy is recommended by pretty much every single Western clinician who works with psychedelics. Being able to delve into your past psychedelic experiences with a trained therapist can help unearth missed opportunities, or unpick confusing and traumatic events. It seems as if patients who take part in clinical trials on psychedelics find great healing value in the integration sessions that follow their experiences.

What is Microdosing?

Microdosing is a popular way of taking psychedelics that involves taking a very small dose - technically one-tenth of an active dose - so as to create a barely perceptible "sub-threshold" effect.

While many cultures that use psychoactive plants often practice taking small amounts for health, well-being and spiritual purposes, this typically involves an amount that has a mild effect on consciousness. Microdosing aims to be almost imperceptible.

The practice of microdosing psychedelics has surged in recent years due to its popularity among entrepreneurs, athletes, and other otherwise healthy, high-performing "productivity hackers."

In the realm of psychedelic medicine, a number of drug development companies are investigating psilocybin microdosing therapies to treat mental health conditions, or boost creativity.



What are the Main Applications of Psychedelic Medicine?

The surge in psychedelic medicine is largely due to the fact that psychedelics can very effectively treat some of the most common problems in Western society.

Depression and anxiety are some of the most widespread and debilitating conditions in the world, and psychedelics have huge potential to treat them. Clinical trials using LSD, psilocybin (found in magic mushrooms), ketamine and ayahuasca have shown that these psychedelics can help reduce depressive symptoms in people suffering from severe depression. Studies have also consistently shown that these psychedelics can reduce anxiety - most notably anxiety related to death, but also general anxiety.

PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) is a lasting condition resulting from trauma, and could be present in many people without them really knowing it. MDMA, together with therapy, has been shown to dramatically reduce PTSD symptoms in war veterans, and these findings are being applied to people suffering from all kinds of trauma.

Addiction runs wild in our society, and psychedelics could offer one potential treatment route. Studies on psilocybin have shown that it can effectively help people quit smoking, while LSD is effective at treating alcoholism and ibogaine has been shown to help people break free from opioid addictions.

Although we're still discovering all the different applications of psychedelics, **personal transformation** is the more general area in which they hold the most unquestionable power. People have found psychedelics to be effective at boosting creativity, helping with major life decisions, solving problems, and finding healthier and happier ways of living.

On an even more abstract level, psychedelics can help people **find meaning** in a world that seems increasingly cold and meaningless. The powerful mystical experience that psychedelics offer can help bring profound spiritual epiphanies into people's lives.

Why are Psychedelics so Promising?

In the shamanic perspective, psychedelic plant medicines are so powerful because they allow the shaman (and sometimes the participant) to journey into the world of the unseen, and gain insight into the web of relationships between spirits that influence our world - allowing the shaman to return with an understanding of why the participant is suffering, and how to treat them.

The Western perspective, although existing within a different framework, is very similar. Psychedelics allow patients to delve deeper into their own trauma, helping them see their problems from new angles that can offer new truths. Therapists can make use of this altered state by encouraging patients to reflect on the causes of their suffering, and hopefully nudge patients towards epiphanies regarding future changes that could improve their lives.

In this way, the most promising applications of psychedelics are in allowing people with mental health conditions to be guided towards new states of mind that can shed light on their suffering. Psychedelics have been shown to make people more psychologically flexible - and therefore are especially useful in helping people shift out of the harmful, repetitive thought patterns that are often the hallmark of conditions such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, and addiction.

As well as these therapeutic benefits, people are finding that psychedelics can have benefits in expanding our leadership styles and creativity. When our understanding of the way we interact with the world is opened up by psychedelics, it can help us develop new ways of running businesses, or undertaking meaningful work. Psychedelics can help us start to move away from exploitation and destruction, and start practicing styles of business that give back more than they take.

What are the Main Ancestral Plant Medicines Used Today?

Magic mushrooms are one of the most common ancestral plant medicines used today. Their use dates back thousands of years, and they were possibly even used by prehistoric humans. Currently they are traditional sacraments across the world, especially in parts of Mexico, and are used recreationally by millions every year.

Ayahuasca has a long-standing history of use in native Amazonian societies, being integral to the wellbeing and survival of countless indigenous groups across the Amazon basin. The explosion of ayahuasca's popularity in the West has boosted tourism in these South American regions, while also threatening the ecological stability of the plants used in the ayahuasca brew.

Cannabis is a truly ancient plant medicine, with its first recorded use dating back nearly 5,000 years ago in China. From there it spread to India and across the rest of the world. It is a ritualistic and medicinal foundation in many indigenous and religious groups. Although not usually considered a psychedelic, cannabis certainly has the potential to induce life-changing psychedelic experiences in the right settings.

Tobacco, although not among the first to come to mind as a plant medicine, has been used traditionally by indigenous groups across the world. Its divinatory and psychoactive properties play important roles in many shamanic rituals, and tobacco is used in many kinds of traditional medicine. In the Amazon, tobacco snuffs (most commonly 'rapé' or 'ha-pay') are often used alongside other plant medicines like ayahuasca.

Iboga is the name of a plant used ritualistically in West Africa, predominantly in the Bwiti religion. Ceremonies are intense and powerful, and are considered an encounter with death that can help you change your ways and reduce your suffering in life. One of its core molecules, ibogaine, has found popularity in Western medicine as a potential treatment for opioid addiction.

Peyote is an ancient psychedelic cactus that grows in arid regions of central Mexico, southern Texas, and southern New Mexico. It was used for its medicinal and mystical properties by the Aztecs, and is still used by a large number of native peoples across Mexico and North America. Peyote is used by the Native American Church to treat alcohol dependence, and some suggest it could be a more effective treatment than anything that's currently available.

San Pedro is another psychedelic cactus, growing in the high altitudes of the Andes mountains. It has been used for its powerful medicinal properties by South American peoples for thousands of years. Anthropological evidence suggests that San Pedro has been a central part of Andean shamanism for many hundreds of generations, and its traditional use is steeped in rich magic and culture, having survived the religious persecution of Spanish colonization.

What is the Legal Landscape of Psychedelics?

Psychedelics did not enter into the world already illegal. Modern culture has decided, at various points and in different countries, to prohibit both natural and synthetic psychedelic substances.

The major turning point in the legal status of psychedelics was the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances, declaring that substances including LSD, magic mushrooms and MDMA would become highly illegal in every UN member state that signed the treaty. This was partially a response to the counterculture of the 1960s, which politicians saw as a threat to the status quo - especially considering the overlap between the psychedelic counterculture, civil rights movements, and anti-war protestors.

Since then, most UN countries have imposed harsh criminal sentences for people who have sought out psychedelic healing with these (and many other) substances. While there have been some exceptions made for the indigenous or religious use of some psychedelic plants, psychedelics have remained mostly illegal throughout the world.

Now, with the surging psychedelic renaissance, laws are starting to change. A spate of US states have begun decriminalizing psychedelic plant medicines, allowing for the goal of fair and free access to appear on the horizon. Cannabis has been legalized or decriminalized in many countries and states worldwide, helping to shift stigmas about natural psychoactive medicines.

The question now is not if psychedelics will become legal - but how. It may be difficult to ensure that psychedelic plant medicines become available to all who need them, and that religious and indigenous rights are not overlooked in the transition out of psychedelic prohibition. There is the risk of psychedelics becoming corporatized, monopolized, and restricted to those with the utmost privilege.



What Options are Available to Seekers of Facilitated Psychedelic Ceremonies?

There are several options for people who want to experience psychedelics in the hands of a trusted facilitator. Here are the most popular approaches:

1. Attend a psychedelic retreat center

There are many legal retreat centers around the world that offer full psychedelic ceremonies by trained professionals. Sometimes these centers will be run or overseen by indigenous shamans; sometimes they will be entirely managed by Westerners. There are retreat centers to cater to pretty much every preference you may have - beginner or veteran. The price tags may be high, and you will probably have to travel, but you will usually be well cared for and relatively safe.

2. Visit an indigenous shaman

If you're feeling more intrepid, you could venture into the Amazon to find an indigenous shaman willing to share a plant medicine with you. There are the usual risks of travelling in a foreign country associated with this, and it may be a challenge to find exactly what you're looking for. However, if you manage to find a good shaman, you may have a more authentic experience.

3. Find an underground psychedelic ceremony

If travel is out of the question for you, there are underground psychedelic ceremonies to be found in almost every country. The difficult part is making the right connections to discover where they are! But if you can find your local psychedelic scene (whether that's a psychedelic society, art group, or alternative living community), you'll be on track! Underground ceremonies can of course be poorly run and less safe than above-ground retreat centers, and also carry more legal risk for you as an individual - so make sure you take the time to build trust with your facilitators.

4. Hire a professional trip sitter or facilitator to come to your home

Sitters-for-hire can be found in many cities around the world, but you may have to do some digging - what they do is not always legal. They can often be therapists, counsellors or psychologists, but can also just be enthusiastic amateurs. You'll most likely have to provide your own substance, but a trip sitter will offer to come to your house and ensure your safety and wellbeing. Sitters will offer different levels of service - some may also include integration and preparation sessions, and could provide a more shamanistic-style of involvement in your actual experience rather than just watching over you.

Need Psychedelic Healing, but Feeling Lost?

There's a lot of psychedelic information out there. It can feel overwhelming - especially for novices. We recommend you take your time and ingest as much psychedelic information as you can before deciding how you want to embark on your healing journey. EntheoNation is a great place to start, or continue, your psychedelic research. We offer courses, eBooks, podcast episodes, and heaps of free information about psychedelics and plant medicines. Check out the back pages of this eBook for special offers that can help you encounter plant medicines.



Reflect & Discuss

Many of the topics of discussion in the psychedelic renaissance are deeply nuanced and complex. As in life, there are rarely ever simplistic black and white explanations for complex issues with a long history.

At EntheoNation, we believe in our ability to learn, understand, and embrace complex issues, so that the intellectual capacity that we develop is ultimately empowering and supports us in navigating a complex and oftentimes chaotic modern world.

We have put together these questions to encourage critical thinking and intellectual openness to a reality where there might be multiple “right answers” or no “right answers,” without endorsing a nihilistic viewpoint that “nothing can be known.”

Who "owns" sacred plant medicines? And can they be "stolen?"

Who gets to consume ancestral plant medicines? Anyone? Or only a certain group of people?

Who gets to administer ancestral plant medicines? Anyone who feels the calling? Anyone who has received appropriate training?

Do you see a difference between the plant itself and the spiritual container within which it is administered? If an ancestral plant medicine is administered in a way that has no relationship to any ancestral spiritual tradition (for example, ayahuasca from Hawaii with recorded Western music), is this cultural appropriation?

Is it cultural appropriation for people to consume plants that were once indigenous, such as coffee, tobacco, cannabis, sage, or rosemary?

What benefits and risks can you imagine from the medicalization of psychedelics? What would be gained from widespread clinical psychedelic therapy, and what would be lost?

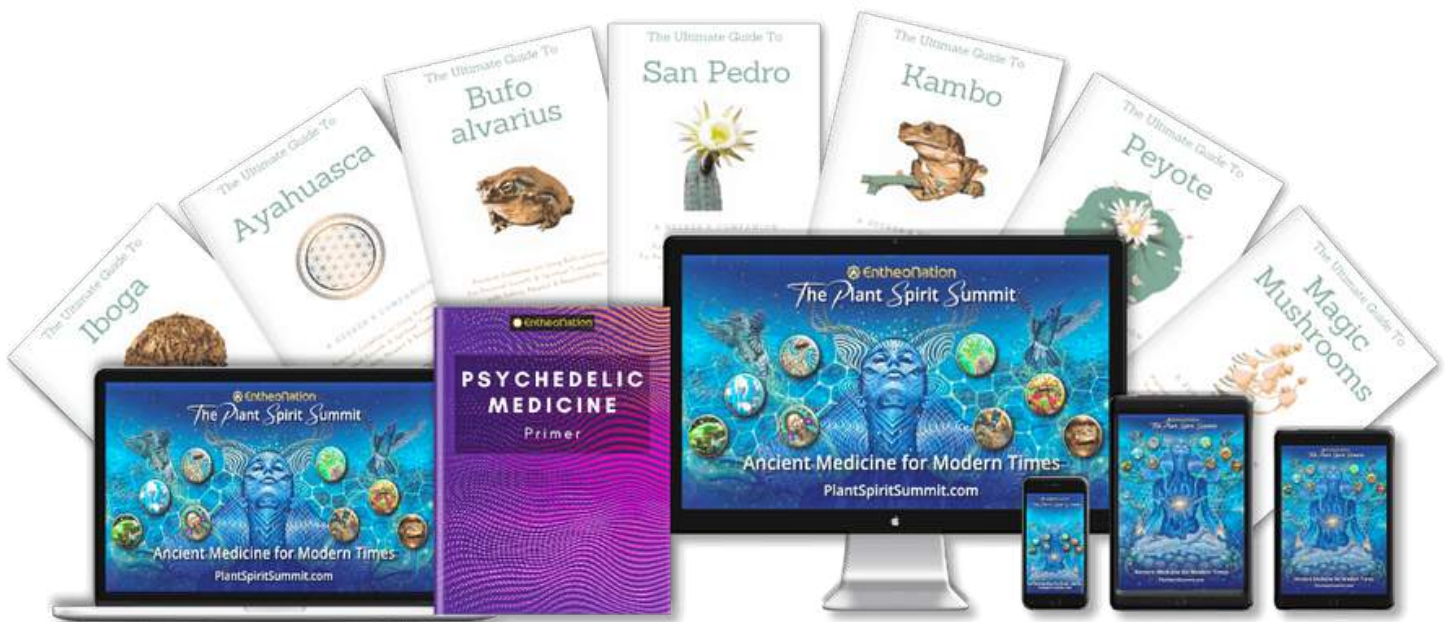
Should psychedelics be available to everyone? If not, who should decide who deserves access to them? How can regulation work without curtailing indigenous rights and cognitive freedoms?

What emotions come up for you as you explore these questions? What is the story behind these emotions? Is this story intrinsically true for you? For everyone else? Why, why not?

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