



THE GUIDING
P R E S E N C E

P R E S E N T S

Holding Space for a Psychedelic Journey

A Manual for Voyagers and Guides

by The Guild of Guides

Visit TheGuidingPresence.com for more information on guiding psychedelic journeys, or take a deep dive with established guides in our online course, **The Guiding Presence**.

The information contained in this Manual is provided for harm reduction and informational purposes only. Many of the substances mentioned in this manual are illegal pursuant to the Federal Controlled Substances Act. This manual does not encourage the use of illegal substances. The reader is solely responsible for his/her/their own health and wellness decisions and should always consult with a trusted medical professional about their suitability to use psychoactive drugs.

The following Manual covers the basics of “holding space” for another person who chooses to use a psychedelic.

This Manual assumes that you have access to these unique materials.

Here are some important things to pay attention to when accessing psychedelic molecules. It is essential that you:

- 1) trust your source,
- 2) understand the subjective effects that the molecule you plan to use occasions and are aware of risks associated with that material,
- 3) are knowledgeable about the particular psychedelic’s dose ranges, and
- 4) are able to assess your mind set and the safety of the setting, when and where you choose to use these materials.

1. TRUST YOUR SOURCE

If you acquire materials like MDMA, LSD, 2-cb, or any of the hundreds of molecules that are offered for sale in the grey market, it is essential for your safety that you verify the content of the material. Extensive testing has revealed that a great number of the psychoactives sold through underground networks do not contain the drug that was advertised at the dose that was represented. Unfortunately, many grey market psychedelics contain a mixture of molecules that you don't want to ingest. Dancesafe.org provides excellent information on this topic and sells very affordable reagent testing kits that should be used before consuming any street drug. Dancesafe also sells fentanyl test strips which will tell you if the material you have has been cut with this very dangerous drug. Dancesafe posts testing information on street drugs at [drugsdata.org](https://www.drugsdata.org).

2. UNDERSTAND THE SUBJECTIVE EFFECTS AND DANGERS OF THE DRUGS YOU USE

Erowid.org is the “go to” resource to learn about psychedelic molecules (basic information, dosages, subjective effects, FAQ, health concerns, and more). Their website provides extensive information about the most common psychoactives. For both the novice psychonaut and the experienced journeyer, Erowid.org is an invaluable resource.

1. TRUST YOUR SOURCE

2. UNDERSTAND THE SUBJECTIVE EFFECTS AND DANGERS OF THE DRUGS YOU USE

3. KNOW YOUR DOSE

4. ASSESS YOUR MIND SET AND THE SAFETY OF YOUR ENVIRONMENT

3. KNOW YOUR DOSE:

Once you have a material in hand that you trust, the next step is to determine your appropriate dose. Everyone's body and mind will react differently to psychoactive molecules. A prudent "best practices" protocol is to begin to use them at increasing dose levels. In this way you will have a good felt sense of the subjective effects that arise at escalating dose levels.

The rule of thumb is, you can always increase your dose, but you cannot decrease what you have taken (you have to ride it out).

A first step may be to micro-dose. The next step would be to find your threshold dose. Erowid.org can provide you with essential information about dose ranges. Erowid only offers suggested ranges, because different people have different sensitivities. As you increase your dose level- to a light experience, and then to a stronger experience (and perhaps on up in dose and intensity)- you will be well served to have a sitter (the subject of the following Manual). By conducting your own dose work up, you will develop an intimate understanding of the molecule, from the inside out, and come to a clear understanding of how different doses amplify your body/mind experience.

Many choose to use psychoactive plants and fungi. Cannabis, which is legal in many jurisdictions, is an excellent material even though not commonly considered a psychedelic. At higher doses, edible cannabis can occasion subjective effects that are as intense as those offered by mushrooms and LSD. Cannabis experiences can also occasion challenging journeys, paranoia, and discomfort, which is why it is always good to increase doses slowly and carefully.

One benefit of using plant and fungal materials, especially if you grow them yourself, is that you know what you have.

4. ASSESS YOUR MIND SET AND THE SAFETY OF YOUR ENVIRONMENT

One should only embark on a psychedelic journey when and where you feel safe, in a protected place- with people you trust. Create an environment in which you feel secure and where you will be well cared for.

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Meeting the Divine Within

Part One of a Manual for Voyagers and Guides^[1]

by The Guides Guild^[2]

This manual is the first two chapters of a book: *Shattering Certainty: Using Psychedelics Wisely and Well*, written and edited by James Fadiman Ph. D. and published (in English) by Inner Traditions Press (2011)

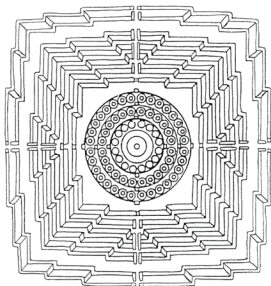
Nothing in this manual is intended to encourage or support illegal behavior. However, even though psychedelic use remains illegal in the United States, government researchers estimates that more than twenty-three million Americans have used LSD, and at least that number have used it worldwide. Given that psychedelics continue to be widely available, this manual has been prepared to encourage safe and sacred ways to use psychedelics, if these powerful materials are to be used at all.

The Guild is an informal, largely invisible fellowship, international in scope. Its members include practitioners from major religions as well as the arts, health sciences and mental health professions. The term "guild" refers to the practice of training by which a guide accepts apprentices. Only when a person's level of work is close to that of their mentor are they encouraged to work independently. The guild does not maintain a public web presence under this name.

There is an almost sensual longing for communion with others who have a larger vision. The immense fulfillment of the friendships between those engaged in furthering the evolution of consciousness has a quality almost impossible to describe.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin





Why this manual was created

In a study of nearly a hundred people who took a psychedelic, guided as outlined in this manual, seventy-eight percent reported, “It was the greatest experience of my life.” This response was true even for those people who had taken a psychedelic many times before. This manual describes how to benefit from having an experienced guide, sufficient psychedelic material, and being in a supportive setting.

Many people who hope to have a spiritual or an entheogenic experience using a psychedelic don’t know how to reach and stay open to those levels of consciousness. And, few people who wish to help others on that voyage have had the benefit of being taught how to serve as effective guides. This manual has been written to offer useful tested suggestions to guides and voyagers. The guidelines in this manual are intended to promote spiritual, rather than recreational use.

This manual brings together the insights of a number of psychedelic guides who have been working discretely over the last forty years to facilitate maximally safe and sacred entheogenic experiences. This compilation is being made available to support increased spiritual understanding and to minimize negative experiences.

Many of those who have never had a guided session appreciate how psychedelic experiences have impacted and improved their lives. However, the presence of a knowledgeable guide greatly facilitates the probability of reaching, recalling and integrating expanded levels of consciousness.

The fact that a guide makes a significant difference in the quality of the experience underscore the difference between psychedelics and almost all other medications. That difference is not only that the plant or “drug” opens one to a wider range of experiences, but that the direction, content and overall quality of the experience can be focused and enhanced with guidance.^[ii]

To establish the best possible environment for spiritual psychedelic sessions, it is critical to keep in mind six primary factors that most affect the nature and value of these experiences.

- Set
- Setting
- Substance & quantity (dose)
- Sitter/Guide
- Session
- Situation

Notes about words used in this manual

PSYCHEDELIC: The general term for the spectrum of natural and synthesized conscious-altering substances. These include LSD-25, mescaline (and the peyote cactus that contains mescaline), psilocybin (and the mushrooms that contain psilocybin) as well as other plants and substances. This manual focuses on LSD-25 (simply called LSD here), generally regarded as the most potent psychedelic that facilitates access to the broadest range of experiences. (See “Dose” in the manual for information on related psychedelics.)

ENTHEOGEN: Any psychedelic used specifically to enhance the probability of spiritual experience. Etymology: Derived from Greek: “That which causes God to be known or experienced within an individual.”

VOYAGER: A person taking a psychedelic.

GUIDE: Someone with considerable personal experience and knowledge of altered states of consciousness, with and without the use of psychedelics. A guide helps others experience the full positive range of an entheogen and provides support when experiences are challenging. In this manual, we assume that a guide **does not** take a psychedelic during the session nor does he or she take any other drugs or alcohol— before or during the session.

SET: The preparation and expectations of the voyager and the guide.

SETTING: The surroundings, primarily physical, but also the atmosphere of the space for the session itself.

SUBSTANCE: The psychedelic used to facilitate the journey.

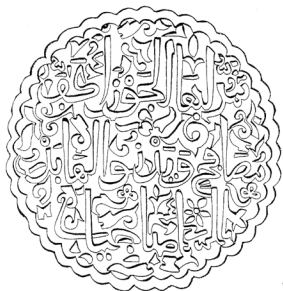
SITTER: The terms *sitter* and *guide* are sometimes used interchangeably. In this manual, the sitter is the person, often, but not necessarily, a close friend, who cares for the voyager after a session and as well as during the initial re-entry period.

SESSION: The time for a voyage (6 to 12 hours).

SITUATION: Post-experience integration. The relationships and support available especially after a session (home, work, friends, environment, etc.).

Preparation for a guided session

Once a decision is made to work together, even if the guide is familiar with how to manage a session, it will be useful for the voyager and the guide to both review the suggestions in this manual. By reviewing the sections each deems important, together they can better align their intentions and increase their rapport.



Why a guide?

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. Despite the intensely personal nature of the experience, the importance of a guide cannot be overstated. During the experience of awakening to oneself, it is invaluable to be with someone who supports you. Your guides know the terrain, can sense where you are, and will be able to advise or caution you as appropriate.

It cannot be emphasized enough that this manual is not about “drug experience,” but about how best to become open to your own inner worlds and make use of a vast range of experiences after taking these substances. In the words of one guide discussing the role of psychedelics in relation to other practices, “It enhances mind states also accessible from intense practice and focused attention discoverable through yoga, meditation, fasting and other disciplines.” Seemingly universal, this opening is often experienced as reuniting one's self with an eternal flow of energies and understandings.

Aldous Huxley, the author and philosopher, writing about his first psychedelic experiences, talks about “the heightened significance of things.” Objects he had seen countless times, but rarely noticed, fascinated him as if for the first time. The psychedelic gave his mind freer play to see myriad connections, linking formerly mundane items to an ocean of ideas, memories, feelings and attitudes. Huxley also described vibrant visions and ancient archetypal constellations that he felt had been present but unnoticed in his mind.

After reviewing many different spiritual breakthroughs, William James came to the following conclusion, especially true of entheogenic experience: “One conclusion was forced upon my mind at that time, and my impression of its truth has ever since remained unshaken. It is that our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness. Whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence; but apply the requisite stimulus, and at a touch they are there in all their completeness, definite types of mentality which probably somewhere have their field of application and adaptation. No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves those other forms of consciousness quite disregarded.”^[iii]

Albert Hoffman, who first discovered LSD's effect, echoed James' statement.

“The first planned LSD experiment was therefore so deeply moving and alarming, because everyday reality and the ego experiencing it, which I had until then considered to be the only reality, dissolved, and an unfamiliar ego experienced another unfamiliar reality.”^[iv]

Initial Experiences

It is natural to hope that one's first full sexual experiences will be loving and pleasurable. However, for many people that initiation can be awkward and uncomfortable – even traumatic. Unfortunately, self-administered psychedelics also can have severely disturbing, long-lasting effects. A well-structured session makes it far more likely that early psychedelic experience will be meaningful, healthy and life enhancing.

What you need to know to guide a journey

SET: Preparation for the Session

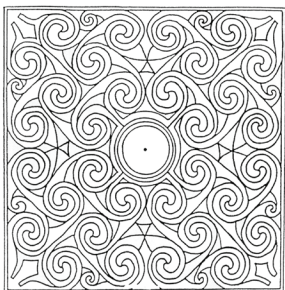
Suggestions for the voyager:

If possible, approach a voyage as a three-day process. Ideally, the first day, stay quiet and unhurried. Reserve time for self-reflection, spending a portion of the preparation day in nature. Set aside the second day, all day, for the session. Try to take as much as possible of the day after the session to begin to integrate the experience and to record your discoveries and insights.

Prior to the session, it's wise to clarify your personal preconceptions about psychedelic experiences, sacred plants and entheogens in general. In addition, consider and reflect on your understanding of mystical experience, cosmic consciousness or whatever else you may have heard described might arise. Share your expectations, concerns and hopes with your guide or guides. This will help you stay attuned with one another during the session.

Discussing the range of possible experiences in advance enables the session itself to go more smoothly. Whether you are a novice or an experienced voyager, internal experiences that may be entirely novel for you may occur. These might include:

- Cascading geometric forms and colors (usually early in the session).
- Alteration of felt time (expansion and/or contraction of “clock time”).



- Finding yourself in a different reality, as if you had lived or are living in another time or place.
- Being in a different body of either sex.
- Becoming an animal, plant or microorganism.
- Experiencing your own birth.

As a session progresses, it is not uncommon to find yourself encountering entities that some refer to as “the presence of spirits.” In most cases, these meetings are positive. However, if you become upset or frightened, let your guide know.

In order to maximize the usefulness of realizations that may occur during your psychedelic voyage, it is invaluable to write out beforehand what you hope to learn, experience, understand or resolve. Whatever you’ve written should be available to you and your guide during and after the session. Some experienced guides have observed that a voyager can, in fact, direct their own journey by choosing a small number of questions beforehand, in order to organize the direction of the session. One can use this opportunity as a focused inquiry into very specific psychological, spiritual or social concerns. At the same time, one can be open to engaging with whatever arises from a new encounter.

In addition to clarifying questions, for some people, it is helpful to identify your goals.

Your goals may be spiritual—to have direct experience with aspects of your tradition or another, to transcend prior beliefs, even to transcend belief itself. You may hope to have what is called a “unity experience” in which there is no separation between your identity and all else.

Your goals may be social – improved relationships with your spouse, children, siblings, parents, colleagues, friends, spiritual, and secular institutions.

Your goals may be psychological – insight into neurotic patterns, phobias or unresolved anger or grief. If you know you want to work in these areas, this manual, by itself, may be insufficient. For these goals, additional preparation is recommended, and it would be best to work with a guide who has psychological training.

NOTE: Because in many cases a single individual is guiding a session, this manual is written as if there is only one guide. Ideally, if possible, there should be two guides, a man and a woman. At times and unpredictably, a voyager may prefer the support of one gender or the other. Having two guides makes the task of guiding easier for the guides and allows them to take short breaks during the session. The presence of both male and female energies is the optimal situation.

Suggestions for the Guide(s)

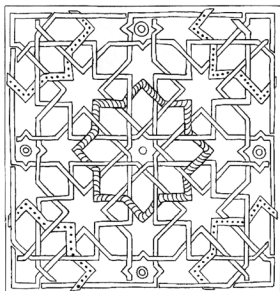
Guiding someone on a psychedelic journey is sacred work. You are there to ensure that the session is maximally safe and beneficial, to increase the probability of the voyager entering into transpersonal or transcendent states, to minimize difficulties and to honor the trust placed in you. It is not necessary to have

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a great deal of specialized information to be a superb guide. The essential prerequisites are compassion and intuition. However, in addition to those qualities, it is valuable to have basic knowledge in certain areas: the range of possible effects, the basic principles of various spiritual traditions and a sense of how and when to share useful ideas and concepts with the voyager. Your suggestions at the right moments may help the voyager make a pivotal discovery or retain an important insight.

RANGE OF EFFECTS: Any psychedelic experience might include a wide range of responses, reactions, visions and internal dramas, from ecstatic to terrifying. At times, you may need to reassure the voyager that a certain experience, even if troubling, is normal, and it will pass. In other cases you may need to help an individual cope with a physical symptom. Rarely, it might be necessary to get outside help. A significant body of disinformation about psychedelics has been circulated. Therefore, as part of the preparation for any journey, it is essential to dispel untrue ideas about the effects of psychedelics. A well kept up site that discuss misinformation about LSD and other mind-expanding substances is: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urban_legends_about_illegal_drugs and www.snopes.com.

SACRED TRADITIONS: Voyagers may or may not begin with their own religious orientation. With or without having a given spiritual orientation, it is not unusual to encounter beings or experience states of consciousness described in traditions other than their own. You can reduce any anxiety about such encounters should they occur by preparing to be supportive and respectful of any tradition that emerges. As every tradition has its own symbols and descriptions of higher states, it is unlikely that you



can know about them all. The highest levels of all traditions may be essentially the same, but each individual's capacity to fathom and integrate altered states will be unique. For example, each of these approaches toward being closer to God arises from a different tradition: wanting to be aware of God and still remain separate; yearning to love and interact with God, yet not lose one's personal identity; or dissolving and merging with God. Your support of the voyager's initial intention about spiritual or religious experience is the best possible way to begin. However, be willing to realign your support with the voyager's shifting experiences as well. In other words, remain open and present to whatever occurs.

WORKING WITH FEAR: If a voyager has limited experience with altered states, he or she may be frightened as familiar dimensions of identity begin to dissolve. A guide can alleviate this fear, by discussing this possibility as part of the preparation.

When a voyager looks directly at a complex tangle of memories, desires, insecurities and other unresolved inner threads, a natural reaction may be to become frightened. Be reassuring; clarify that a feeling of fear is normal and will pass. Your reassurances will make it possible for the individual to process fear more easily.

"If you are in an ethnocentric stage of development and you have a unity-state experience of being one with everything, you might interpret that as an experience of oneness with Jesus and conclude that nobody can be saved unless they accept Jesus as their personal savior. If you are at an egocentric stage and have the same experience, you might believe that you yourself are Jesus. If you are at an...integral stage... you are likely to conclude that you and all sentient beings without exception are one in the spirit..." Ken Wilber [v]

During fearful moments, you can use a gentle touch and suggest deep breathing. Notice any shift in the depth or pattern of breathing. Shallow breathing or panting suggests resistance, while deep slower breathing usually occurs when a barrier is being dissolved.

REMAINING CENTERED: The more centered you are as a guide, the more effective you will be. The more you know about yourself and whomever you are guiding, the more likely you are to be able to stay centered and tranquil throughout the session. When you yourself are more comfortable, it will be easier for the voyager to transition from one state of awareness to another. After reviewing hundreds of sessions in different settings, Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert (Ram Dass), concluded, in most situations, that a voyager became distressed when the guide had become unsettled, uncertain or upset.

VOCABULARY: Individuals with little or no exposure to spiritual ideas or a limited vocabulary for describing altered states often still have profound entheogenic journeys. However, when these individuals try to integrate these experiences into their lives, an insufficient vocabulary makes retaining the core events and insights more difficult. It may be helpful during the session, for the guide to validate what someone is seeing and feeling by rephrasing or summarizing their experience in simple language. For the voyager, a heightened sense of trusting in one's self arises from this validation. Your reassurance or clarification can enable that person to relate better to his or her own experience in the weeks following the session.

A useful response to any experience that stretches a voyager's sense of reality during the session is to gently invite that person to go deeper by saying, "Yes! That's good. Would you like to know more?" When a voyager feels secure, the capacity to reach greater heights, and also to remember and integrate the experience, is most likely.

Common issues for guides

INTENTIONS: Review your own hopes and fears for this individual and for yourself before the session begins. Be careful not to intend or hope for a specific outcome. Your assignment is to hold the space for your voyager's journey, not to set the goals.

PERSONAL: If you are the voyager's lover or spouse, think carefully before guiding. If the relationship is an issue for either of you, allow someone else to be the guide. If sexual feelings arise in you or in the voyager (and they often do), allow the feelings to exist as you would any other part of the experience. However, don't be sexual even if asked. In an entheogenic setting, any acting out will narrow the voyager's experience and can be confusing. [vi]

SOCIAL: Be wary of your own judgments about the voyager's personal relationships. It's important not to suggest looking at any particular relationship during the session unless this inten-



tion has been agreed on beforehand. Your approval or disapproval of any relationship can easily disrupt the voyager's own process of discovery.

POINT OF VIEW: You may hope the person you're guiding will agree with you about certain issues, especially spiritual ones. It is natural to want that (you are human, after all), but it is distracting to express those opinions during the session. Discuss this beforehand if you feel your own point of view might be an issue that could interfere with your objectivity.

TRANSPERSONAL: During entheogenic sessions, voyagers will usually experience realms beyond their personal egos. As a result, they may undergo transformational transitions. Keep in mind that there are an infinite number of ways to find "God" as well as innumerable ways to describe that discovery. Let the voyager stay with his or her own realizations. As a general practice, encourage the voyager to collect experiences and save discussion about them for later review and reflection, and not even try to figure them out as they occur.

WHEN TO CANCEL OR POSTPONE: For whatever reason, if you have an intuition that the timing is wrong, that the person is not well prepared, hasn't done what you feel has been the necessary preparation, or that you're not the right guide for a certain person, don't hesitate to delay or cancel the session. Specifically, in preparing for a session, if someone expresses that his or her intention is to delve deeply into suffering, darkness or the nature of evil, be cautious. Unless you have psychotherapeutic training related to altered states, you should seriously consider **not guiding** that person. People who begin with these intentions often become stuck in hellish parts of their own psyches and can damage themselves. If you're not sure that you can deal with problems that may arise, you are right and should not guide such a session. Suggest that this individual work in a non-psychedelic therapeutic context instead. This is not to deny the value and utility of what may be extremely negative experiences, but entering that realm as a primary focus for a psychedelic experience with an inexperienced guide may be treacherous.^[vii]

Setting

INDOORS: All that is necessary for a safe journey with infinite possibilities is an uncluttered comfortable room with a couch or bed on which the voyager can rest, a comfortable chair for the guide and easy access to a bathroom. Having a variety of soft pillows and blankets on hand is usually a good idea. The room should also have some kind of a music system. It is better if the room can be insulated from outside sights and sounds, includ-

ing people's voices, pets and phones. Your goal is to create and maintain a simple environment that supports inner quiet. When in doubt, make the space even simpler.

MUSIC: Most cultures that use plants for healing, divination or spiritual revivification use music to facilitate the transition from one level of awareness to another and to enhance the feeling of safety by providing non-verbal support.

During a session, music becomes a richly layered tapestry of sound and often evokes strong emotions. For most people, the music seems to come from inside one's own body and is felt, not just as sound, but also may be perceived as color, shape, texture, odor or taste.

Headphones or ear buds are fine. Stereo speakers near a person's head are good and allow freer movement. Discuss beforehand what music may be played. Music selections may be suggested by guides and by the voyager.

With or without psychedelics, drumming, chanting, dancing and singing are used worldwide. Music proves to be invaluable in helping people travel beyond their usual thought patterns. Music supports and suggests so choose wisely.

If any selection does not feel right during the session, the voyager should be able to signal or say, "Please change the music." Stay with whatever is playing for a few more minutes to be sure that the request is appropriate, and not just a way for the voyager to voice a reaction or simply try to stay in control. Explain in the preparation session how you will be handling the music. In deeper states of consciousness, the voyager may not even hear the music. However, even then, music serves a protective purpose like the net of a trapeze artist. Have at least eight hours of music on hand to be able to choose or change selections as needed.

MUSIC RECOMMENDATIONS: When the psychedelic first begins to take effect, put on the person's choice of starting music. Many guides have their own collection of music from prior sessions that may be used from that point on. In any case, use music on which you agreed or about which the voyager trusts your choices.

Classical music tends to feel appropriate to most people, even if they have not chosen it. Hovhanness's Mysterious Mountain, Faure's Requiem, Gregorian chants, solo piano, piano with one or two other instruments, unaccompanied flute, ragas and indig-



enous drum recordings can all be used effectively. Anything with words the voyager can understand may be distracting and should not be played after the first hour. Music that could be considered emotionally leading or manipulative is potentially problematic.^[viii] By mid-afternoon (after about six hours), almost any musical choice will be enjoyed, but during the most intense early hours, the selection of music is important. Near the end of the session, if requested, play any music the voyager wishes, including pieces with words.

Listening to music with closed eyes increases its value and its potential impact. An eyeshade, eye-pillow, a folded washcloth or a scarf makes it easier for the music to be experienced internally.

INCENSE: For centuries incense has been part of many entheogenic rituals and can serve as another way to orient and accompany the voyager.

INDOORS/OUTDOORS: Most experienced guides prefer to begin the session indoors with music so that the voyager's mind is the primary source for what unfolds. That being said, an outdoor setting has its own advantages. Wind, stirring leaves, birds, streams, rivers, ocean waves —the connectedness of nature can become an essential part of the session. When questioned about taking a psychedelic, Albert Hoffman, the chemist who created LSD and discovered its entheogenic potential, said, "Always take it in nature." If you do decide on an outdoor setting, the experience may be extroverted. However, even outside, music is helpful.

There are valuable facets of consciousness to enter with open or with closed eyes, but many guides recommend that a voyager spend most of their time, especially during the period of intensely heightened awareness, with closed eyes. As one guide said, "It's amazing how much one can 'see' with eyes closed." With a sufficient entheogenic dose, indoors or out, the voyager tend to want to spend much of the time, day or night, lying down.

An ideal balance might be to allow the more intense segments to take place indoors, then to go outside later in the session. What is critical is maintaining physical, personal and psychological safety and support.

Substance

LSD itself is almost completely metabolized well before its peak effects are felt.^[ix] It seems to act as a catalyst, creating an environment in which other reactions can then occur. LSD serves as a lubricant, allowing certain capacities to interact with one

another more easily, thus allowing latent brain functions fuller expression. The resulting experiences range from a subtle shift in perception to breathtaking plunges into other realities. Other psychedelic substances are metabolized at different rates, as the substance allows consciousness to expand beyond its customary limits.

DOSE: Obviously, using any plant or plant extract precludes exact measurement. However, there are some parameters. 150- 400 micrograms of LSD is a normal range. While this manual focuses on LSD, a full range of similar experiences can occur with mescaline or psilocybin. If the voyager is taking mescaline, 1 microgram of LSD = 1-2 milligrams of mescaline. If psilocybin is used, 30 milligrams has been called "a safe high dose." Body weight or metabolism does not appear to be, in and of themselves, deciding variables in selecting the right dose for an individual. A reliable resource for information about dosages for a range of psychedelics can be found at: <http://www.erowid.org/psychoactives/dose/dose.shtml>

The Entheogenic Voyage

Part two of a Manual for Voyagers and Guides by The Guides Guild

Guiding a Session

LSD and other entheogens have the capacity to open an infinite number of doors. The following descriptions represent stages which are reported following many voyages; however, a spectrum of variations can and do occur. The approximate

In LSD inebriation the accustomed worldview undergoes a deep-seated transformation and its integration. Connected with this is a loosening or even suspension of the I – you barrier. Albert Hofmann

amount of time given for each stage is typical for LSD, mescaline or peyote. These times are usually shorter, though in the same sequence, for psilocybin and mushrooms.

INGESTING THE PSYCHEDELIC: Know that you are about to create a sacred space together. Early on the day of a session, a light easily digestible breakfast, of fruit or toast, if desired, is fine. If



the voyager wishes to say a prayer, express gratitude or invoke any spiritual tradition, you might set up an altar or just sit in silence together. (See suggestions for rituals at the end of the manual.)

Some guides offer the material in a formal way: serving the tablets, capsules or plant materials in a small attractive dish or bowl, offering water in a crystal wine glass or even a metal goblet.

INITIAL ONSET (20-50 MINUTES): After ingesting the psychedelic, some people may want to move around the room and converse normally. If possible, it is better for the person to be quiet and reflective. However, you need to be responsive, and allow the person to do whatever comes naturally, especially if there is some anxiety. As the substance takes effect, the voyager should be invited to lie down, and begin to listen to his or her own or the guide's choice of music. If, after the initial onset, a person continues to sit up and talk or move around, he or she may need a booster dose. This can be given an hour or more into the session without any problems. A second dose should be about one half of the initial dose. Before giving the booster, check in and find out what the person is experiencing. If a deep spiritual journey is going to unfold, it will almost always begin before the second hour is over.

If after two hours, with or without the extra dose, the voyager is still up and interacting, do not give another dose. Needing to continue to move around or relate to someone else is usually a sign of resistance to going inward and should be respected. Suggest walking outdoors, listening to music sitting up. Do not continue to press for an entheogenic session.

DOSAGE: Too low a dose may diminish the intensity or depth of the experience; too large a dose can prevent what happens from being recalled or even understood. If in doubt, begin with a lower dose with the possibility of a booster.

Until this point, this manual has been primarily for guides. Suggestions will now alternate between voyager and guide.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE VOYAGER: After you have ingested the psychedelic, and while you are waiting to begin your voyage, feel free to talk with the guide about any residual anxiety or considerations you have. When you feel that the experience is beginning, you will probably want to lie down. If you feel comfortable doing so, put on an eyeshade or eye pillow. Once settled, allow yourself to relax and

1. Listen to the music.
2. Observe your breathing, and pay attention to any sensations you have in your body.
3. Notice how the music is affecting you.

It is not uncommon, for example, to feel as though your thoughts are coming more swiftly than you can absorb them. This rush of images and thoughts can be disconcerting, but if simply observed, can be experienced as pleasure. This sensation frequently comes when you are about to change levels, like shifting into a higher gear. Allow it to happen.

You may now begin to move in and out of awareness of being in the room. That "in and out" feeling is natural; it is a sign that your journey has begun. If you become concerned with anything you are experiencing, share this with your guide. If it feels right to you, you might simply put your hand out, asking for it to be held. Observe what is going on inside your mind and body, but do not try to control the flow of images and sensations. Allow your mind to take its natural course; relax and observe as your thoughts unfold without any effort. Affirm that all experiences are welcome.

It is not uncommon, for example, to feel as though your thoughts are coming more swiftly than you can absorb them. This rush of images and impressions can be disconcerting, but if simply observed, can be experienced as pleasure, with wonder or even amazement. This sensation, of heightened intensity, frequently comes when you are about to change levels, preparing to shift into a higher gear. Allow it to happen. As you let go, the discomfort will pass. Continue to lie down, eyes closed using the eyeshade and focus on your breath. If you feel extremely uneasy, sit up and tell the guide what you are experiencing. You may even wish to stand up and notice how you feel, and look at your guide before lying back down and relaxing. Your body will naturally prefer and find a restful position as your mind's capacity expands.

Opening and letting go (3-4 hours):

FOR THE VOYAGER: About half way through the session, you will be able, if you are willing, to let go of whatever



thoughts, feelings and concerns you don't need for this journey. Your guide will play music for you, unless you ask for silence. At this point, you will be able to:

- Let go of expectations about the session.
- Let go of personal concerns.
- Let go of concerns about personal issues such as problems in your relationships and habit patterns
- Let go of each experience, feeling or visual event as it occurs.
- Let go of your personal identity.
- Experience and deepen your awareness of other dimensions of reality.

It is during this stage, that the voyager is most likely to be in touch with the underlying unity of all existence. Some people will describe this as “seeing God”, others “joining with God”, while for others, it becomes an experience of “being God.”

For some people, this is an effortless, ecstatic period, for others it can be disorienting. For some moments, you may be frightened or confused by the content or intensity of your visions. You may experience unusual feelings associated with “letting go,” physical (“My arm is melting.”) or emotional (“Am I going crazy?”). You may feel unsafe, not trusting yourself, the situation or even your guide. Some people feel as if they are dying. Your guide may remind you that this is an inner experience of your mind and that your body is fine and that your guide is there to help you “ride it out.”

If something concerns you, ask for help. Your guide is there to support and re-center you. (The sensation of dying, for example, may be your personality's initial reaction to the recognition that “you” are greater than your personal identity.)

This dissolving of boundaries is the stage when you may feel as though you are in the presence of spirits. These experiences are usually positive. However, if they disturb you, be sure to tell your guide.

FOR THE GUIDE: Listen, watch and be sensitive to the voyager's shifting mental states. During this period you may do little more than monitor the music and remain close by being supportive. If you need to calm the voyager's anxieties, a reminder that he or she chose to have this experience can be helpful.

Sometimes this state includes the realization that not only

you, but also everyone else is God. Whatever form it takes, your primary responsibility is to support the person having the realization.

Especially at this point, it is not uncommon for guides to experience what is known as a *contact high*. Without taking any substances, a guide may recall vivid memories or have sensations of being tuned back into expanded states of consciousness. Hearing certain music, and/or being with someone undergoing experiences and exhibiting behaviors you may have done in the past can ignite sensations that echo or recreate your own past voyages. These states are natural, usually enjoyable, and do not need to interfere with your role as the guide.

Throughout the day, if the guide needs to go to the toilet, go. If the guide waits too long, the voyager may pick up the discomfort and become confused. Even if you are the only guide, be sure to go when you need to, say that you are leaving for a few minutes. When you return from the bathroom, if it seems necessary, mention that you have only been gone a few minutes. In those few minutes, a great deal of inner time may have transpired for the voyager.

PLATEAU (1-2 HOURS): Following the period of entheogenic recognition, music is optional. The guide may gradually lower the volume until it is off or alternate with periods of silence or music as requested.

FOR THE VOYAGER: Feel free to sit up, check in with the guide, continue to listen to with the music, or both. You may focus on the music or images you see internally. You can let go and enjoy the interplay and variety of what has been called the “10,000 worlds” of shifting realities. You may need to ask for assurance that what you recall and have experienced is valid. Generally, a guide can explain to you that what you have seen on your journey is real, in that it is real to you, while at the same time unique to you. Others who take a psychedelic will have had their own, and perhaps similar experiences—unique according to their interests, capacities and frame of mind.

FOR THE GUIDE: The voyager may report having had or is still having a vast expansion of identity...being part of the creation of the universe or the formation of the stars. He or she may report having experienced a recapitulation of personal creation, going from sperm and egg on through birth. Others will have entered what seems to be evolution itself or what appear to be past lives. Wherever the voyager reports having been or being, your role is to listen, be supportive and to clarify only if asked.

Keep conversation at a minimum. If the voyager is



confused or upset, offer reassurance. Place your hand gently on their arm and say something like, “You can let it go; you’re doing well.” That comforting touch is often all that is needed. Experienced guides learn to intuit when it is appropriate to say something. Usually, it is more than enough just to be with the voyager. If the voyager needs to use the toilet, you may need to help with physical steps such as standing up and walking to the bathroom because their external visual world may be in flux.

Gentle Glide (The next 3 hours or until guide and voyager agree it is time to move on.):

Simple finger food (fresh or dried fruits, nuts, crackers, juice, etc.) should be offered. Water should be available all day. The voyager may or may not choose to eat something. (If an apple is included, you might hear a comment about Adam and Eve.) The guide should eat if hungry.

FOR THE VOYAGER: This time, after the peak, as you are re-entering your world, is often an excellent time to do personal work. You will be aware of your usual identity, but not as attached to your usual habits, templates or distortions. If you wish and your guide agrees, this is also a good time to go outside. If there is no outdoor setting that is safe and inviting, you may enjoy observing a flower or plant in the room or even looking through large format nature photography books.

FOR THE GUIDE: If you’ve been asked to help create a bridge between the mystical experiences earlier in the day and the voyager’s personal self, excellent tools to make this connection include a flower, a mirror and family photographs.

The preferred flower is a rosebud, ideally one that is just beginning to open. Encourage the voyager to look into it as long as that feels appealing. This may be as long as half an hour. If the voyager merely glances at it, smells it and hands it back, offer a second opportunity and suggest a deeper look. However, if there is no interest, be ready to move on.

Another way to deepen the connections made during the session is to invite the voyager to gaze into a full sized hand-held mirror. The voyager may see their own face aging or becoming younger, and may also see people of different sexes, ages and races from different historical periods. If this occurs, encourage continued looking. If the voyager becomes concerned or fearful,

suggest he or she focus on the eyes in the mirror. Eyes usually remain constant through the changes and are reassuring. Even if you have had similar experiences, don’t offer an interpretation of what is being seen.

If the voyager wishes to do more personal work, offer photos of people and places that have been brought to the session. The voyager may stare into a single picture for as long as an hour. After either commenting or sitting in silence, the voyager may put that photo down and ask for another one. Do not intrude with your ideas or opinions, especially if you know the individuals in the photos.

Note: When a person asks for his or her glasses, that is an indication of the return to more familiar, perceptual limits, still only lightly identified with personality but re-identified with the body. If a voyager arrived with a cold, an allergy or pain of some kind, these symptoms often disappear during the session and may come back about this time.

Complete or partial cures of physical conditions may happen. For example, Dr. Andrew Weil’s severe and lifelong cat allergy disappeared during an LSD session and never reappeared.^[xii]

If the voyager brought music to the session, this is an excellent time to listen to that. This is also a good time to review goals or questions written before the session. Read one item at a time aloud. As with the photographs, discuss or interpret as little as possible. Don’t suggest an answer or even a direction unless asked. Some people will want to discuss their insights and realizations; others will not.

End of Formal Session:

The guided portion of the day of the session should come to an end six to eight hours after taking a shorter-acting substance such as psilocybin or eight to ten hours after taking a longer-acting substance such as LSD or mescaline.

FOR THE VOYAGER: You may dip in and out of the experience for the rest of the evening. Don’t feel any obligation to be sociable. You may feel extremely loving toward your spouse or children or others close to you but not especially demonstrative. If you wish to call people, limit those calls to people who know what you’ve been doing and, ideally, have had psychedelic experience. Don’t worry if some parts of your session are difficult to recall. The major events will stay with you, both consciously and unconsciously.

You may still see the world flowing or sparkling. Enjoy these



visual gifts from your own mind. Eat lightly and be sure you drink enough liquids to replenish yourself. You will probably want to spend time starting to integrate what you've experienced. It's wise to avoid caffeine beverages, as these can interfere with your being able to go to sleep.

Sitter

INSTRUCTIONS: A friend or relative, if possible with psychedelic experience, should arrive to take the voyager from the session room either to the voyager's home, if possible, or to the sitter's. During the voyager's re-entry evening, you should be non-judgmental, gentle, open to listening and comfortable with silence. Long periods of silence indicate that your friend is still moving in and out of the experience and may be having significant insights. Take notes if asked.

Offer a light meal of simple foods. If the voyager takes medications regularly, remind them to take them. After a session, a person may go in and out of sleep for most of the night. If a person would like to go to sleep, but cannot relax enough to do that, warm milk, chamomile tea or just a single glass of wine may help. Most people prefer not to take anything, allowing the session to end naturally with normal sleep.

Situation: Post-experience integration.

FOR THE VOYAGER: In the first few weeks after your journey, take time to sort out what matters to you from what you remember. Don't rush. It is likely that you will find your life flows more easily than before. Some people will be curious and open to hearing about your experience; others will be afraid for you, apprehensive that you may be changing your worldview or disturbing theirs. Don't try to convince anyone of anything. Few people will want to hear too many details about your session. As your realizations become integrated into your own life, you will feel less need to describe your journey to others.

You may become more aware than ever before that some people in your life are nourishing and nurturing, while others are not. Stay with what nourishes you, as you would with food. Stay away, if possible, from anyone who belittles you or tries to diminish your experience.

Do not make major life changes for the first few weeks. Some people, for example, prematurely re-evaluate their primary relationships. Give yourself time to integrate your experience first. The exception would be stop toxic behaviors such as excessive drinking and taking harmful drugs. There is ample evidence that what drives many people to excessive use of alcohol or hard

drugs is a vague awareness of their spiritual estrangement and isolation. When people feel reconnected, as they often do after an entheogenic experience, excessive drug use or drinking may stop without effort or withdrawal symptoms.

FOR THE GUIDE: It's good to meet with the voyager at least once soon after the session to help the integration process. Beyond that, be available as needed. Knowing you are there if needed seems to be almost as valuable as your actually doing or saying anything in particular.

Prior to the session, make sure you learned about your voyager's support system: family, friends, people at work, church, mosque or temple as well as therapists or spiritual teachers. If appropriate at any later meetings, suggest that some of these people will be helpful while others might not, at least for a while.

FREQUENCY: How soon again? How often?

Like most other positive experiences, we usually want to do it again. However, psychedelics voyages are not like other most other experiences. If you take them again soon, you cannot expect that they will have the same effect. The rule of thumb is *the more profound the experience, the longer you should wait before doing it again*. The Guides Guild suggests a minimum of six months between entheogenic journeys as it takes at least that long for the learning and insights to be absorbed and integrated into your life.

The door between the worlds is always open. Rumi

Research conducted by the International Foundation for Advanced Study in Menlo Park, California over a six-year period found that it took at least a full year for deep-seated personality changes to stabilize. Many people who had truly profound experiences had no desire, for some years, or even ever again, for any subsequent session.

Another caveat in response to those questions is that "chasing the high" almost never works. It is like taking a photograph on top of another photograph on the same frame of film. If you expose another image on the same negative, the new one will cover the prior one and obscure it. However, if you advance the film so that an unexposed frame is available, the next captured image will be fresh, and can be as meaningful in its own way as was the first.

If you feel you absolutely "must" take a psychedelic again as soon as possible, it's likely that you need to face some issue



you're avoiding. That feeling is not a command from your highest self to take a psychedelic, no matter how much you want it to be. One option is to arrange a session with a therapist to look at what was uncovered or discovered. Keep in mind that your experience was not simply "drug-induced" but was facilitated by a blend of the substance, the guide, your intention and other factors unique to your situation at the time. Neglecting any of these variables may lower the value to you of any subsequent session.

Wait at least another month and then see what feels right. Keep in mind that your experience was not simply "drug-induced" but was facilitated by a blend of the substance, the guide, your intention and other factors unique to your situation at the time. Neglecting any of these variables may lower the value to you of any subsequent session.

Watering the Celestial Tree

This manual is a living entity. It is made up of the collective experience of a number of guides from different cultures. If you wish to add to it or suggest corrections, write to us at entrancepress@aol.com

Note: This manual in its entirety will be posted on the web at various sites.

Sample Suggestions for rituals to begin a session (suggested by different guides).

THE GUIDE MAY WISH TO SAY: You are consciously taking a substance to open yourself to whatever teachings you may need at this time. Neither you nor we know what these teachings will be or how they may occur. We will provide a safe place for the explorations and we'll be available to assist you with any difficulties. All you learn that is real comes from within you—not from us, or from the substance itself. (Adapted from Greer & Tolbert, 1998)

A Christian voyager may wish to say

Lord, I know not what I ought to ask of thee; Thou only knowest what I need; Thou lovest me better than I know how to love myself. O Father, give to Thy child that which I know not how to ask...I would have no other desire than to accomplish Thy will. [xiii](#) (Greer & Tolbert, 1998)

Other resources for ways to structure the opening of a session:

Link to mp3 of Ralph Metzner's invocation of the spirits of the Four Directions: <http://www.sonic.net/~cysmith4/media/4elements.mp3>

Link to Psychedelic prayers after the Tao Te Ching by Timothy Leary: <http://www.alamemeetoile.net/Psychedelic-Prayers.html>

Did you find the contents of this manual useful?

If you want to take a deeper dive, join our online program at TheGuidingPresence.com

This program features in-depth conversations with over 30 trail breaking practitioners who share their protocols to screen and prepare clients, use interventions in sessions, assess appropriate dosages, facilitate guided processes and mindfulness practices and assist in integration.

Footnotes:

[i] Sherwood, J. N., Stolaroff, M. J., and Harman, W. W. "The Psychedelic Experience— A New Concept in Psychotherapy," *J. Neuropsychiatry*, 1962, 3, pp. 370-375.

[ii] *Set and setting have long been ignored in medical research, but the growing literature on placebo effects, for example, is forcing some long overdue attention to the obvious fact that much of our reactions to any stimulus depends on the actual context and the way we perceive it.*

[iii] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experiences*, 1902.

[iv] Albert Hofmann. *LSD: My Problem Child*, MAPS, Sarasota, Florida, 2005.

[v] *Forward to The Translucent Revolution*, Arjuna Ardagh, New World Library, Novato, California, 2005, p. xvii.

[vi] *A guide recalled a session in which a woman in her late forties, over the course of a day had more than 50 separate orgasms. She would not discuss her experience with her guide, but when evaluated, psychologically, six months later was rated as much improved.*

[vii] "Yet, there are powerfully positive sessions that entail the courageous movement in and through personal suffering towards transcendence. It is of critical importance that the voyager accept whatever presents itself in his/her field of consciousness as a potential gift, even if it initially appears dark or threatening." B.R. (a guide)

[viii] *Every guide has his or her own favorites as well, as the following note makes clear. "So much more {than was in the section of the manual}—among the best seem to be the Brahms Requiem, Barber's Adagio for Strings, Gorecki's Third Symphony, the slow movement of the Brahms Violin Concerto, etc. The challenge for every guide is to differentiate between the 'very good' and the 'excellent.'"*

[ix] Passie, Torsten, Halpern, John H. Strichtenoht, Dirk O., Emrich, Hinderk, M., & Hintzen, Annelie. *The Pharmacology of Lysergic Acid Diethylamide: A review*, *CNS Neurosciences & Therapeutics*, 14, 2008, 295-314. Their conclusion, after reviewing nearly 10,000 scientific papers and citing 199 references, was "The pharmacology of LSD is complex and its mechanisms of action are still not completely understood." (p. 295)

[x] Griffiths, Roland, R. Richards, William A., McCann, Una, D. and Jesse, Robert. *Psilocybin can occasion mystical-type experiences having substantial and sustained personal meaning and spiritual significance, in Psychedelic Medicine: New evidence for hallucinogenic stances as treatments*. (2 volumes) Winkelman, Michael, and Roberts, Thomas B., Prager, Westport, Connecticut, 2007, v. 2, p. 230. For a longer and more complete discussion, see, Stafford, Peter, *Psychedelics Encyclopedia*, (Revised edition), Tarcher Inc. Los Angeles, 1983, pp. 271-273.

[xi] Weil, Andrew. *The Psychedelic Vision at the Turn of the Millennium: A discussion with Andrew Weil*, in *Hallucinogens*, Grob, Charles S (ed.), Tarcher Putnam, New York, 2002, pp.131-132. "I had a life long allergy to cats and didn't like them... one day, in an LSD state, a cat jumped into my lap...I played with the cat extensively, I had no allergic reaction and have never had one since."

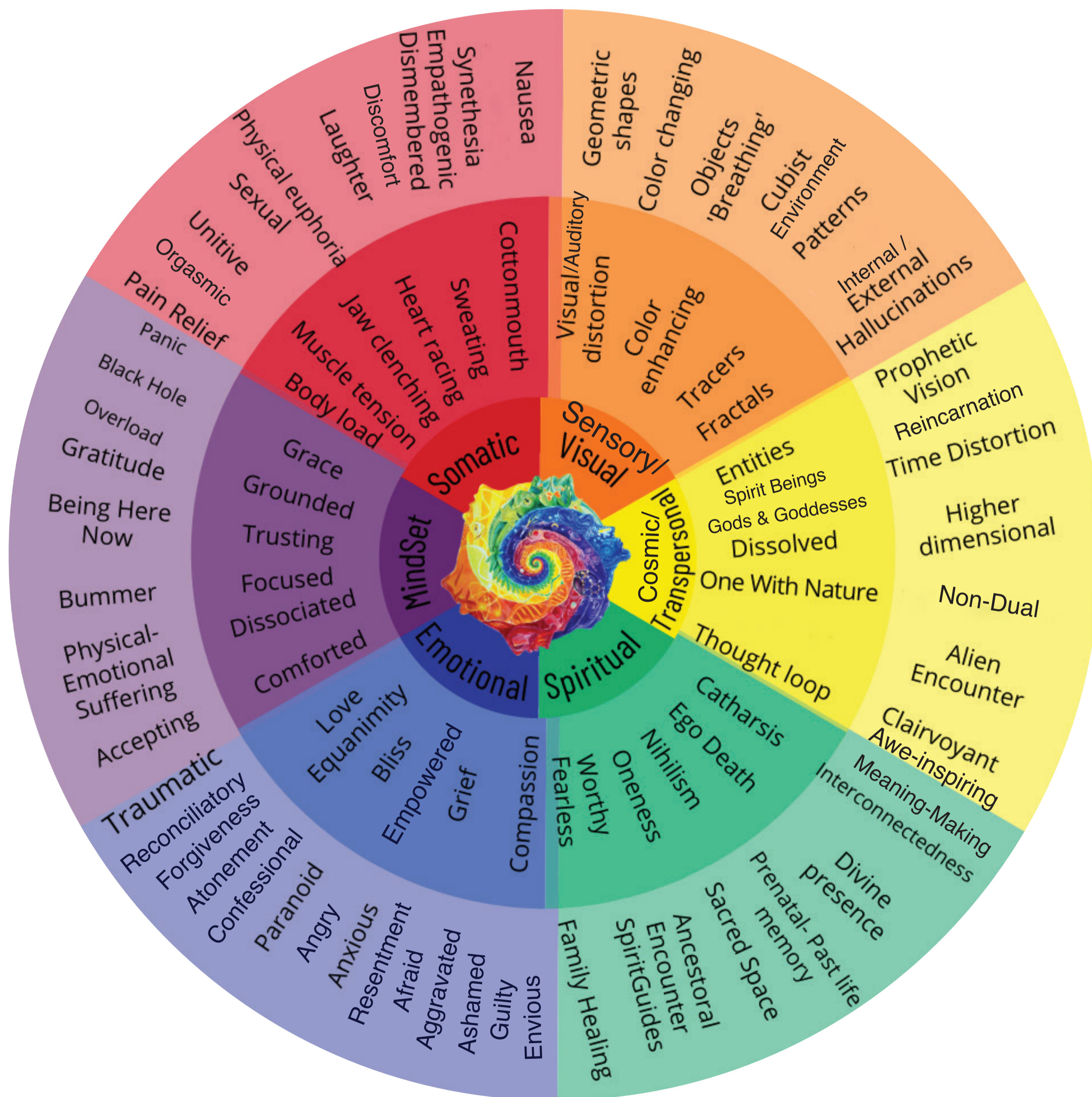
[xii] Greer, G. R., & Tolbert, R. (1998). *A method for conducting therapeutic sessions with MDMA*, *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*, 30(4), pp. 371-379. <http://www.heffter.org/pages/sessions.html>



THE GUIDING P R E S E N C E

PSYCHEDELIC SUBJECTIVE EFFECTS WHEEL

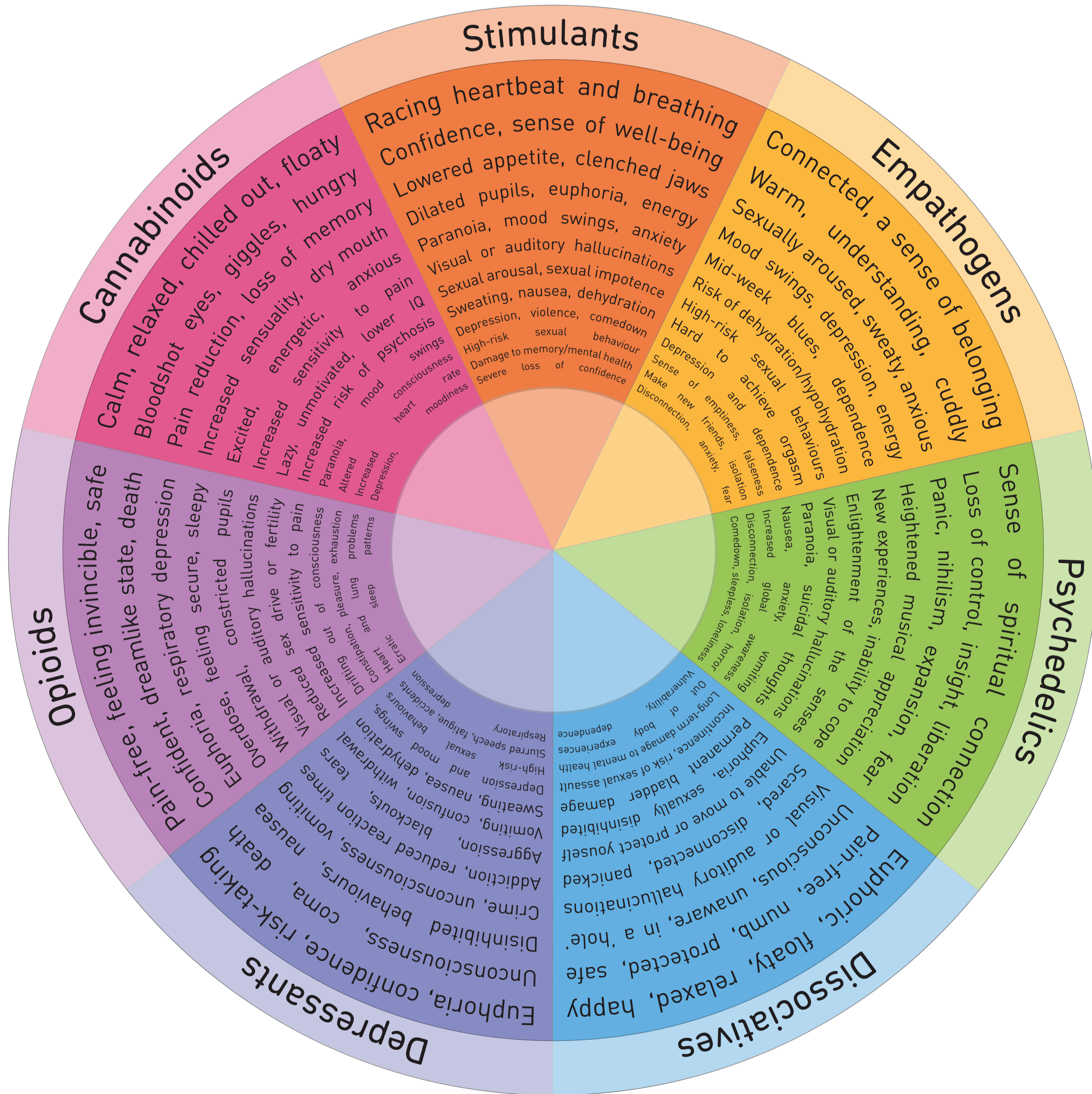
giving language to a trip report



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