



ZENDO
PROJECT

PSYCHEDELIC PEER SUPPORT

ZENDO PROJECT MANUAL

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DISCLAIMER

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ABOUT THIS MANUAL

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The concepts and tools provided in this manual are applicable to diverse situations and environments where people may be using psychedelic substances. This includes festivals, parties, music venues, and home settings. The content of the manual is part of the Zendo Project volunteer training. Obtaining or reading this manual does not qualify an individual or group to provide “Zendo Project” services or to use the name “Zendo Project” or “Zendo” for peer support or harm reduction service provision. The name “Zendo Project” is protected under US Federal Trademark laws.

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ABOUT THE ZENDO PROJECT

The Zendo Project is a program of the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) Harm Reduction department. MAPS is a 501©(3) non-profit research and educational organization developing medical, legal, and cultural contexts for people to benefit from the careful uses of psychedelics and marijuana.

Zendo Project Mission & Vision

MISSION

The mission of Zendo Project is to provide a supportive environment, specialized care, and education designed to transform difficult psychedelic and psychological experiences into opportunities for learning and growth.

WE FURTHER OUR MISSION BY

- 1) Providing a supportive space for guests undergoing difficult psychedelic experiences or other psychological emergencies in order to help turn those experiences into opportunities for learning and personal growth and to reduce the number of drug-related psychiatric hospitalizations;
- 2) Creating an environment where volunteers can work alongside one another to improve their harm reduction skills and receive training and feedback; and
- 3) Demonstrating that safe, productive psychedelic experiences are possible without the need for law enforcement-based policies.

VISION

We envision a world where communities are engaged in providing safety and support for people having psychedelic and psychological challenges; and harm reduction principles are used foremost to reduce the risks associated with substance use.

CONTEXT

The majority of people who take psychedelics do so outside of a clinical, therapeutic, or ceremonial environment. The Zendo Project believes that it's important to provide support and education for people who choose to use psychedelics in what is commonly referred to as "recreational" contexts-at home, in nature, at festivals and events, with friends, and related contexts. Every year millions of people will use psychedelics, many for the first time. Some of these psychedelic experiences will be difficult ones. Even though society has termed these experiences "bad trips," a difficult psychedelic experience is not necessarily a bad one. The challenging situation can be seen as an

opportunity for transformation. The Zendo Project provides a supportive environment and specialized care designed to transform difficult psychedelic experiences into valuable learning opportunities, and even potentially offer healing and growth. The Zendo Project also provides training and education for groups and populations interested in learning how to support someone having a challenging substance-related experience.

MAPS has provided psychedelic peer support at festivals and events since the early 2000s. The Zendo Project was formally formed in 2012. We have provided service at dozens of events and as of 2020, have assisted over 6,000 individuals. Producers are increasingly recognizing the necessity for services dedicated to helping attendees through challenges that can result from substance use or over-stimulation. Emotional and psychological support services are beginning to be seen as equally important as medical services in event environments. There are more or less skillful ways to work with challenging psychedelic-related experiences. Situations can escalate and result in negative outcomes for event attendees, staff, and event producers and promoters. The Zendo Project offers an alternative and complementary approach to assist with these situations, which prioritizes compassion, safety, human dignity, and basic elements of psychological and emotional first aid.

PSYCHEDELIC HARM REDUCTION AND PEER SUPPORT

Psychedelic peer support is a specialized focus area within the field of harm reduction. “Harm reduction is a set of strategies and ideas aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with drug use.”-Harm Reduction Coalition. The harm reduction approach includes education, strategies, and services that address drug use from a compassionate, non-shaming perspective. Harm reduction contrasts with prohibitionist models of addressing substance use, which are rooted in stigma and misinformation. The field of harm reduction aims to:

- Increase knowledge and awareness of the risks of drug use
- Create a well-informed, conscious community
- Invites honest conversations about drug use

Psychedelic harm reduction and peer support does not condone drug use but is a system of principles and practices that takes into account the reality that despite a clearly stated event policy and the legal schedule of certain drugs, attendees still access and consume illicit substances. Of those individuals, some may experience adverse emotional and psychological reactions, for which they can be assisted with by peer

support harm reduction, reducing harm to the individual as well as the community and other event staff. Peer support strategies can help de-escalate situations and decrease the number unnecessary arrests or psychiatric hospitalizations.

The Zendo Project was developed in response to a need for more compassionate interventions for those who choose to use psychedelic substances. Common ways of working with challenging psychedelic experiences are often unnecessary and can cause harm. These approaches are often rooted in simple misunderstandings as well as decades of stigma and fear around psychedelics. Education about psychedelics and their effects can help others respond with compassion and help deescalate situations when they arise.

Psychedelic peer support is a non-restraint, non-sedate model that focuses on providing compassionate care through de-escalation, emotional and psychological support, and safe spaces.

The Zendo Project is supervised by a leadership team of professionals knowledgeable in the emotional and psychological effects of psychoactive substances. We provide peer counseling services at numerous events all over the world with a team of dedicated staff and volunteers. In turn, we help take a burden off of other emergency service providers, who are able to focus their human resources on other elements of festival safety such as medical emergencies and criminal activity.

The Zendo Project assists with a spectrum of situations, from people experiencing slight distress to de-escalating situations with aggressive altered individuals. We have had numerous successful triage interactions with law enforcement at the events we attend, with law enforcement bringing people to us in distress and also being available when a situation escalates beyond our scope of practice (violence, sexual and domestic violence, mental health).

The Zendo Project does not offer therapy or psychiatric treatment. Our intention is to hold space for our guests and support them in their process so that they may integrate their experience in the most graceful way possible. Guests also receive a space to rest, water, electrolytes, snacks, and other supplies that help them to have a more comfortable experience. When guests are in need of additional medical or mental health care, we help assist their transition into these services.

RESOURCES

Websites

- Zendo Project: ZendoProject.org
- MAPS: MAPS.org
- Zendo Project Resource List: ZendoProject.org/resources/
- Manual of Psychedelic Support: PsychSitter.com

Videos

- MAPS: How to Work with Difficult Psychedelic Experiences
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1aBjoARwIOY&feature=youtu.be>
- Zendo Project Volunteer Training Burning Man 2016
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAmEfoBIKGg&t=9s>

Books

- Psychedelic Reflections, Ed. Lester Grinspoon & James B. Bakalar
- The Adventure of Self-Discovery, Stanislav Grof
- LSD Psychotherapy, Stanislav Grof
- Spiritual Emergency, Stanislav and Christina Grof
- Green Psychology, Ralph Metzner
- The Unfolding Self, Ralph Metzner
- The Healing Journey, Claudio Naranjo
- The Cosmic Serpent, Jeremy Narby
- The Ethics of Caring, Kylea Taylor
- Shamanism, Roger Walsh
- The Psychedelic Explorer's Guide, James Fadiman
- Healing with Entactogens, Torsten Passie

UNDERSTANDING DIFFICULT PSYCHEDELIC EXPERIENCES

Challenging psychedelic experiences are not uncommon. The very nature of the psychedelic state, with its limitless sensations, expressions, and dynamics, can be disorienting, confusing, and at times frightening. The same elements that can influence someone's decision to explore psychedelics - change in perception, expanded awareness, and altered consciousness - can be the very things that can contribute to a difficult experience, challenging our beliefs and assumptions about ourselves and the universe.

Various psychedelic substances have been used for thousands of years by different cultures to induce altered state experiences, which has been seen by many as a doorway into personal and collective healing. By seeing that which we have suppressed, we have an opportunity to heal it. When psychedelics are used in a ceremonial or therapeutic setting, difficulty is expected and even welcomed as part of the experience. With certain substances like ayahuasca or peyote, it is commonly understood that facing the fears and inner demons revealed by the medicine is a trademark of the experience. Becoming conscious of our repressed aspects and memories and integrating them into our awareness is at the core of the psychological and emotional healing process. Psychedelics can catalyze this process of awareness, which is why they hold so much promise in mental health treatment.

In recreational environments, however, this knowledge can often be forgotten and replaced with often unspoken and misleading beliefs about the psychedelic experience, for instance that it is supposed to be fun, connecting, enjoyable, transcendent, peaceful, or euphoric. It can definitely be these things-and much more...

Because psychedelics are nonspecific amplifiers, the ingestion of these substances can allow us to expand our insight into every possible aspect of the human experience, everything from joy, bliss and love to fear and confusion, and hatred.

If the individual under the influence is in a supportive environment free of shame and judgment they are more likely to be able to surrender to whatever the substance is revealing to them.

Helping someone having a difficult psychedelic experience means creating a safe environment for the individual to surrender to the experience.

One of the challenges with recreational environments like concerts, festivals, and parties is that these environments can be highly varied and unpredictable. Combined

with a psychedelic this can create conditions in which the individual cannot surrender and can begin to resist, causing a spiral of more struggle and challenge.

Individuals may be confronted with their fears or unresolved issues from the past. Some may attempt to avoid this experience because it makes them feel afraid, threatened and uncomfortable. For others, such states may simply be a case of sensory overload.

People may feel panicked or overwhelmed. Fear can quickly escalate, aggravating and magnifying the very thoughts and feelings that the person is trying to avoid. Helping to remove or reduce resistance and fear can help shift the person's mental perspective. Such reassurance can help the person focus on the personal growth that can be gained from these experiences.

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Set and Setting

Though the effects of psychedelic substances vary widely, all psychedelics have a similar pattern: there's the doorway with different physical, mental and emotional manifestations. There is a buildup, then an extended stay on a plateau, then the coming down, re-entry.

A psychedelic experience is influenced by the set, setting, and drug. Set refers to the mindset of the person taking it. What is the person's intention, their emotional state, and their previous experience with the substance? Setting refers to the physical environment: noise, lighting, other people, familiarity, safety. Drug refers to the substance taken. What is the dose, duration, and purity of the drug? Changes in set and setting can radically shift a psychedelic experience.

Contributing Factors

Old traumas can be remembered and relived. These memories can be of a physical nature (reliving one's birth, childhood abuse and/or illness, memories of famine and/or war, accidents, or rape are some of the possibilities of re-emergence). These memories can also be of an intellectual, emotional nature (reliving verbal abuse, a lack of basic emotions, body contact, love, nurture, or a disassociation due to a traumatic experience). These traumas can be of a transpersonal nature, meaning phenomena that go beyond our personal identity or biographical understanding of the universe.

One of the most commonly felt threat to sanity is the feeling/experience that one is going crazy, losing one's mind, or that this will never end. This feeling/experience can be brought on by changing mental states and sometimes powerful changes in perception. Major shifts in ego and personality structure, regarding one's belief and understanding of oneself, the world, and god, are common.

Effects of Psychedelics

There can be many different, sometimes never experienced, sensory, energy, and body sensations. These can range from hearing colors to seeing music. It could be an extremely heightened sense of smell, taste, hearing and vision. Some of the most frightening manifestations of the psychedelic experience are energetic. People go through powerful releases, rendering their bodies out of control, shaking, twisting and vibrating. These energies, being activated by the psychedelic substances, could be related to birth, an opening of a frozen body pattern, bioenergetic, neo-Reichian type of release (could add a link here for people who are unfamiliar with this and would like to learn more), or be a reconnecting with the universal life force. The life-force is called the kundalini and it manifests in a powerful opening of the body's energy center. It could also be an intensive sexual or other emotional release.

A LIST OF POSSIBLE PSYCHEDELIC EXPERIENCES:

- Reliving birth
- Remembering different deaths
- Reliving accidents
- Reliving illness
- Reliving drowning, torture, and many other physical experiences from this and other lives
- Reliving mystical states

- Identifying with and reliving in detail the victimization of humans throughout history.
- Leaving the body and traveling in the spirit realm
- Merging with rocks, animals, plants and experiencing the pollution and death of the planet and different species
- Merging with people, reading their minds, feeling their emotions
- Being caught in a certain experience
- Being overwhelmed by feelings and emotions

WORKING WITH DIFFICULT PSYCHEDELIC EXPERIENCES

Principles of Peer Counseling

ZENDO PROJECT'S FOUR BASIC PRINCIPLES OF PEER COUNSELING

Principle 1: Safe Space

The presence of a grounded, compassionate individual can go a long way in helping someone feel safe in a time of crisis. Approach guests with kindness and openness, creating an environment of acceptance and compassion. Let the person know that they are in a safe place and that their experience is welcome. Let them know that whatever is coming up for them emotionally or mentally is ok and invite them share their experience if they would like, making no expectations.

- Try to create a calm environment, most importantly, be a calm presence.
- Invite them to move to a quiet place with few inputs. Bright lights, loud music, and lots of people can contribute to disorientation.
- Ask what would make them most comfortable. Offer suggestions of items rather than open-ended questions:
 - “Can I get you a blanket?” – rather than “Do you need anything?”
- Offer blankets, snacks, water, and electrolytes.
- Confirm with and remind the person that they are in a safe space where they will be treated with compassion and without judgment.
- Remind them that their experience is welcome.
- Let them know that whatever is coming up for them emotionally or mentally is ok and invite them share their experience if they would like, making no expectations.
- Keep personal information in confidence.

- Suggest that they may want to wait until after their psychedelic experience has resolved to assess any major life decisions in a clearer light.
- If a person indicates that they may do something that impacts their well-being and safety, invite the person to explain the situation as clearly and calmly as they can while seeking support of needed (see “Situations Requiring Additional Assistance”).

Principle 2: Sitting, Not Guiding

Words can often confuse or get in the way. Use them sparingly unless the individual is desiring to engage in a dialogue about their process. Rather than analyze their experience, listen with an open mind and heart. If engaged in dialogue, ask questions which help the individual deepen into their experience. Listen from the heart and become curious about their reality. Allow and encourage the individual to come to their own insights or conclusions. It is ok to provide your perspective on their experience, but focus should be more on helping them come to their own insights and conclusions through compassionate inquiry. Let go of your agenda and try not to get ahead of the process.

- Focus on promoting feelings of trust and security.
- Help the individual turn toward their experience rather than away from it. Trust in the process and the person’s inner guide.
- Seek to be a calm meditative presence of acceptance, compassion, and caring.
- Let the person’s unfolding experience be the guide.
- Try not to get ahead of the process.
- Let them know that you are listening and that you care
- Encourage them to explore their self-awareness and ask clarifying questions where appropriate to confirm or clarify your understanding of their situation.
- Ask questions which help the individual deepen into their experience.
- Respond in a way that shows that you understand, or are genuinely trying to understand what they are saying.
- Explore with them what they would consider a good outcome to their situation.
- Everyone's experiences are unique. Be kind, attentive and reassuring.

- Individuals may want to discuss sensitive or personal topics; Sitters should give the individual permission to explore these issues in confidence, while maintaining their own emotional and physical boundaries.

Principle 3: Talking Through, Not Down

Help the individual turn toward their experience rather than away from it. Trust in the process and the person's inner guide and inner wisdom. Trust that whatever is showing up for them is something that they are being invited to learn about. Never dismiss or invalidate someone's perceived reality. Try to avoid rushing the experience, trying to fix the scenario, or find a solution. Rather than provide answers or solutions, remain in a place of not knowing, or a beginner's mind.

- Without distracting from the experience, help the person connect with what they are feeling.
- Invite the person to take the opportunity to explore what's happening and encourage them to try not to resist it.
- Encourage them to discuss their own perceived emotional strengths and resources.
- Encourage engaging in forms of artistic self-expression: writing, drawing, etc.
- If a person feels anxious or tense, you might encourage them to take deep, slow breaths or engage in some form of movement that releases tightly wound energy.
- Individuals should be given the opportunity to express themselves and/or release excess energy by whatever means they feel is necessary - such as making noises, crying, singing, chanting, or moving around in whatever way is useful to them within reason given the environment.
- When possible and appropriate, remain with the person while they are being cared for and continue to reassure them.
- Ask them if they want to lie down, change body position, or move their body. Sometimes simply moving from one position to another can help shift someone's experience.
- Don't dismiss or invalidate someone's perceived reality. Arguing with someone's reality is typically counterproductive. This is especially the case for paranoia. If someone is experiencing paranoia, it can be helpful to let them know that you hear their reality even if you don't agree with their perspective.

- Try to avoid rushing the experience, trying to fix the scenario, or find a solution. Rather than provide answers or solutions, remain in a place of not knowing, or beginner's mind.
- If the individual is behaving in ways that are aggressive, set boundaries around behavior while validating the emotions behind the behavior such as "I hear that you are angry. You are welcome to express your anger with your words and emotions, just not with aggressive behavior."

Principle 4: Difficult is not the same as bad

Difficult is not the same as bad - Difficult life experiences can be some of the most valuable learning opportunities and may lead to learning and growth. Strength, resilience, surrender, and deep wisdom are often forged in the fires lit in our darkest times. However challenging the situation may seem, being a calm and grounded presence will go a long way in helping someone who is struggling. Emotional struggles may be prompted by an effort to fight the experience in an attempt to maintain control. Not all encounters are easy but sitters can provide encouragement and reassurance. Sitters should also be open to a variety of approaches that can help shift the person's experience of distress to a positive outcome.

- Explore distressing issues as they emerge.
- Consider that the challenging experience may be happening for an important reason and encourage the individual to explore what might be underneath the difficulty
- Suggest that they approach any fear and difficult aspects of their experience with curiosity.
- Giving a person the time to talk about their concerns will often help them feel less fearful.
- Reminding the individual that their experience may be an opportunity for them to look at aspects of themselves that want their attention in order to be healed can be helpful.
- Invite in the possibility that they will emerge from the experience with new insights and understanding.
- Having a sense of humor or play can often be very helpful in the right moment. Use discernment when using humor so the individual does not take offense.

- Remind the person that their experience can be an opportunity for growth and can result in a positive outcome.

Situations Requiring Additional Assistance

Some situations that peer support providers encounter may fall outside their scope of practice and require additional assistance from emergency service providers (medics, mental health professionals, law enforcement, security). : Mental health, violence, and medical emergencies.

MENTAL HEALTH

Not all individuals can be treated with a safe place to reflect. More serious psychiatric ailments may be present. Some people may have preexisting mental health conditions that may remain when their distress has subsided or otherwise present itself during the interaction. If you believe someone to be experiencing substantial mental or emotional difficulties related to psychedelic use or otherwise, contact a medical professional, call 911, or contact your local emergency number.

CRISIS HOTLINES AND MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

United States

[National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) connects callers to trained crisis counselors

1 (800) 273-8255

SuicidePreventionLifeline.org

[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services National Helpline](#) is a free treatment referral and information service for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders

1 (800) 662-HELP (4357)

SAMHSA.gov/find-help/national-helpline

[National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) provides crisis intervention, safety planning, and information on domestic violence

1 (800) 799-SAFE (7233)

TheHotline.org/help/

[National Sexual Assault Telephone Hotline](#) connects you with a trained staff member from a sexual assault service provider in your area that offers access to a range of free services; online crisis chat hotline available at rainn.org

1 (800) 656-HOPE (4673)

RAINN.org/about-national-sexual-assault-telephone-hotline

[National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\) HelpLine](#) is a free peer-support service providing information, resource referrals, and support to people living with mental health conditions and their family members and caregivers

Text NAMI to 741-741

info@nami.org

<https://www.nami.org/help>

[Veterans Crisis Line](#) connects you with caring, qualified responders with the Department of Veterans Affairs. Many of them are veterans themselves

Text 838255

1 (800) 273-8255 (press 1)

1 (800) 799-4889 (Support for deaf and hard of hearing)

<https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>

[Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender \(LGBT\) National Hotline](#) provides free telephone, online chat, and email peer-support, as well as information and local resources

1 (888) 843-4564

GLBThotline.org/national-hotline.html

[Mental Health Association of San Francisco Peer-Run Warm Line](#) provides free emotional support available to all California residents via telephone or instant messaging

1 (855) 845-7415

MentalHealthSF.org

[Open Path Psychotherapy Collective](#) is a nationwide network of professionals dedicated to providing reduced-cost mental health care to individuals, couples, children, and families

1 (800) 268-2833

OpenPathCollective.org

International Crisis Resources

[International Association for Suicide Prevention](#) provides a forum for academics, mental health professionals, crisis workers, volunteers, and suicide survivors

IASP.info

[7 Cups](#) connects you to caring listeners for free emotional support

7cups.com

[GoodTherapy](#) enables you to find therapists and counselors, rehab and residential treatment centers, and mental health resources
GoodTherapy.org

Violence

Situations where an individual is a danger to themselves or others is outside the scope of peer support. Types of violence: harm or threats of harm to self or other, domestic violence, sexual assault and non-consensual touch. Seek the assistance of law enforcement or security personnel if someone becomes violent. If someone displays violent behavior towards themselves, you may try to stop the behavior without putting yourself in danger while awaiting for emergency services to arrive. If someone displays violent behavior towards others, attempt to move yourself and others to safety. When individuals become a danger to themselves or others or act in ways inappropriate to their surroundings, you may attempt to deescalate the situation while providing boundaries for individuals for their safety and the safety of those around them. Tools for de-escalation include: remaining calm and centered, crowd- control and involving only the least amount of people to address the situation (more people=more energy), guiding the individual to a quiet, less-populated space, and remaining un-argumentative with the individual. In situations where security personnel are present or restraint becomes necessary, work as a team with security, continuing to provide a compassionate presence and limiting fear response.

Medical Emergencies

If there is any doubt that someone's condition may require medical care, have the individual assessed by a medical professional. Psychedelic substances can vary in purity and dosage. Medical complications and emergencies can occur in conjunction with psychedelic use.

Common causes of medical emergencies related to psychedelic use include but are not limited to: adulterated substances, dosage, interaction with prescribed medications, pre-existing medical conditions, and other environmental and medical factors.

Ask the person about their immediate history such as when they last slept, ate, and hydrated; as well as what substances they may have consumed, especially alcohol. Ask them to describe their physical and/or mental state. It may also be helpful to ask them if they take prescription medication and if so, if they have kept on their regular medication schedule.

There can be medical pre-existing conditions that are adverse to the taking of psychedelics. Some of the most common are: pregnancy, mental illness, cardiovascular problems like abnormal blood pressure or other heart problems, recent surgeries and/or accidents, and epilepsy. If someone is believed to be experiencing a medical emergency, medical treatment should be sought immediately.

INTEGRATION

A psychedelic trip does not end after a substance wears off, rather it continues on through the process of integration. Integration is the phase within which an individual assimilates and incorporates an experience into their psyche, body, and life. After a psychedelic experience, integration is the process of reorganizing the self to include the material experienced during the altered state. The integration phase has no definitive time frame. In fact, it can be said that once one has ingested a psychedelic substance, they will be integrating the experience for their entire lifetime!

The Integration Process

Helping an individual process and integrate their experience can be hugely helpful, especially if the experience was difficult, extremely mind altering, or disruptive to their life or relationships.

The psychedelic experience really begins when we choose to ingest a substance. Intentions for taking a psychedelic medicine affect the entire experience, all the way through integration and are the threads that tie the whole experience together. Having a clear intention (ex. to access my creativity, to help heal my relationship with my family, to explore stuck life patterns, to connect with others, to play, etc.) sets the stage for a positive experience. When possible, we encourage people to develop clarity around intentions before taking a substance. However, in the Zendo we most often see people after the fact. Intention is still just as important during integration as it is in the pre-journey phase.

HELPFUL QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK INCLUDE:

- Now that you have had this experience, what would you like to remember/carry forward/complete?
- What visions/information are you bringing home to your community?
- How can you manifest these visions on the physical plane? In your life? Work? Relationships?

- What was your intention before taking the substance? (There is always some intention, even if it wasn't consciously considered at the time). How did your experience reflect your intention?
- How does your experience affect your identity? Who is the person you want to become in your life and how can this experience contribute to your growth and expansion?
- What are your intentions in life and how did this experience contribute to your larger goals and desires?

Focusing on the experience as a positive life-changing event (even if it didn't feel like one) can help the Guest focus on potential outcomes and help them connect with how to use the experience as a catalyst for change and transformation in their lives. Intention setting helps an individual use what they have learned during the journey to manifest change in their lives.

COMMUNITY

One of the most difficult aspects of integration is returning to a society that doesn't understand or support psychedelic exploration. In fact, re-entering society can feel like a stark contrast between the interconnected, transpersonal state of the psychedelic experience. Therefore, one of most important tools for successful integration is a supportive, understanding community.

The Zendo creates a community space where people can come to feel this supportive connection with others who can hold their stories with respect and reverence. Listening, mirroring, and reflecting someone's story helps them feel seen and understood and incorporates the experience into their psyche and life. Stories are sacred. Remind an individual that their stories are important, not just for them, but also for the collective. Creating a community culture where we share our visions and revelations with each other is profound and necessary not just for the individual but also for their community. We encourage people to connect with and build supportive communities around themselves when they return home from the event. We support them in seeking professional help if necessary.

EMBODIMENT

It is relatively easy to ingest a substance and have a mind-altering experience. The real work begins when we try to carry what we have learned back to our daily lives and communities. Embodiment is the process of integrating knowledge, wisdom, and experience into the fabric of one's being. It is the process whereby ideas become actual beliefs, practices, and behavior. One thing that can be helpful is to remind the Guest

that the ego mind cannot possibly comprehend and make sense of the totality of a peak experience. When we try to mentally understand every aspect of the experience, we can become anxious, depressed, etc. The body and the heart have the capacity to hold our most intense life experiences including the grief, trauma, ecstasy, overwhelming emotions, and revelations that can come with psychedelic use.

Tools for embodiment include: art, movement, talking, music, dance, poetry, writing, the language of symbols and archetypes, spending time in nature, bodywork, somatic therapy, etc. It is never too late to begin this process.

Other useful Integration tools:

- Transpersonally-oriented psychotherapy
- Holotropic Breathwork
- Shamanic Integration work
- Different forms of bodywork
- Different forms of energy release work
- Work with archetypes
- Different art forms, making music, dancing, painting, sculpting
- Meditation and other spiritual practices (following the images or insights of the experience)

ETHICS

In order to provide a consistent level of compassionate care, sitters must embrace impeccable ethical standards while providing service. Someone on psychedelics is in a vulnerable state, and they must be treated with care and dignity.

Guidelines for ethical psychedelic peer support:

- Keep discussions and events in confidence whenever possible, unless the situation requires additional assistance and you must speak to your peers, supervisors, or emergency service providers for support. While peer support providers may not always be able to guarantee 100% confidentiality, the privacy of the individual should always be considered a priority.
- Ask senior others for advice and assistance if needed. If you feel in over your head or that you are for whatever reason unable to provide support to an individual, seek the support of other peer support providers or your supervisor. It is absolutely encouraged to ask for help.

- Do not provide care while excessively fatigued. This is not helpful for you or the guest. If you are tired or unable to focus, find another peer support provider to assist in the situation.
- Request permission from someone before touching them in any way. Forms of potentially appropriate and supportive touch include a hand on the shoulder, assistance in getting up or sitting down. Never assume that touch is welcome.
- Request permission from before using any special techniques in your peer counseling and avoid pressuring them into accepting.
- Sexual advances from the altered individual should be tactfully deflected. This includes during the peer support session as well as after. Sexual engagement between sitter and guest are unacceptable. Sexual advances from sitters are unacceptable.
- Respect your fellow sitters and strive to be helpful and supportive.
- Seek assistance from experienced sitters to resolve any disputes or disagreements with other sitters or outside services.
- Treat individuals with the care you would want for yourself or your own family.
- Act with integrity.

SELF-CARE

Sitters will be exposed to the extreme and expansive states of people on psychedelics. It is important to have awareness around the potential effects of this exposure on the sitter and develop tools to avoid burnout and compassion fatigue, otherwise known as secondary traumatic stress. Sitters may witness pain, difficulty, distress, and the reemergence of traumatic memories of guests. It is important to monitor yourself closely and continue to attend to your own needs while caring for others. Effects on the sitter can be classified as physical, mental, emotional, and energetic and are connected and interrelated.

Carefully monitor your own fatigue and emotional state. Learn to recognize your personal limitations and ask for help if needed. Do not try to apply skills you do not possess. Recognize when you need to leave the situation.

If you become ineffective while caring for someone, kick it sideways and ask another person to replace or assist you. Be open to suggestions from your fellow sitters.

Some signs that you may need to take a break or otherwise attend to your personal well being include:

- Exhaustion
- Fogginess, numbness, dissociation
- Difficulty focusing
- Irritability / Feeling triggered
- Feelings of sickness or physical pain
- Extreme upsetting emotional response

Sitting can be demanding work. It is essential that sitters take good care of themselves in order to be fully present to serve others. Remember to drink water, snack, breathe, and stretch. If you feel that your calmness, patience, or positivity is slipping, take a break and ask someone to take your place, introducing them to the new sitter. You cannot be fully present for others if you do not treat yourself with respect.

Psychedelic peer support can be an intense, demanding environment of novel situations. Curiosity, flexibility, and teamwork are your friends.

TRUST. LET GO. BE OPEN.

