

A Journey to Your Inner Child with Magic Mushrooms

I've battled with depressive symptoms since I was a teenager. I'd become emotionally upset with life's struggles, get quickly frustrated, and engage in self-defeating behaviors. Initially, it may have looked like typical teenage angst, but it was more than that. I didn't tell anyone. Instead, I would write for hours in my journal about how much I hated myself and my life. I wrestled with guilt, regret, worry, anxiety, and negative thinking. I read my first self-help book at sixteen! I think I was too young to comprehend the principles in the book. Not much changed.

During college, as my symptoms worsened, I sought out a counselor. He introduced me to cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). I talked through some childhood trauma. I still had depressive episodes that would escalate to suicidal ideation. I felt aimless and worthless. Attending medical school was an unfortunate choice to boost my self-esteem. It worked for a while. Soon the grueling reality of training would overwhelm my ability to cope effectively. I started to manifest physical pain while not acknowledging the underlying emotional turmoil.

I decided to take an antidepressant after 20 years of therapy was essentially unsuccessful. I now had been indoctrinated by western medicine to believe that depression was genetic or a chemical imbalance requiring treatment with a pharmaceutical. It seemed plausible. Depression and addiction existed in my family tree. I started taking Prozac, an SSRI that blocks the reabsorption of serotonin in the brain, thereby improving my mood. It worked, but the positive effects eventually waned. My patients often needed to increase their dose, add another antidepressant, or change the medication. After a couple of years, I also had to increase my dose to achieve the same results.

Unfortunately, the medical community does not warn patients of side effects, and it doesn't sufficiently recognize the withdrawal syndrome. The list of potential side effects is long. My patients often stopped SSRIs due to sexual problems such as low desire or difficulty reaching orgasm. After about ten years on Prozac, it wasn't working for me anymore. The first time I tried to stop taking it, I had a significant withdrawal syndrome. I became irritable and acutely suicidal. I reluctantly restarted the medication. Later, I weaned down slowly but still experienced a withdrawal phase. I had bizarre physical symptoms. I called them 'head zaps.' It felt like something in my brain misfired and a brief lapse of attention followed. It took weeks to resolve. This particular symptom is not well documented in the literature but has been commonly reported by my patients as well.

In my mid 40's, a slow improvement in my mood evolved after reading 2000-year-old Buddhist and Yogic texts. Once I regularly practiced this ancient wisdom, it outperformed any therapist or drug. It was not the quick and temporary fix of Prozac but provided long-lasting improvements. However, even though my mood was less negative overall, I occasionally spiraled down when life got tough. Some bad habits – like negative thinking patterns – are tough to change.

I detail my lifelong journey to get to *this* point. Most recently, I have been taking ‘microdoses’ of **Magic Mushrooms**. The psychoactive substance in magic mushrooms is psilocybin. Microdoses are between 250-400 milligrams of the dried mushroom taken every other day. I started about two years ago, and within several weeks, I felt different. It was subtle but noticeable. I felt more connected to myself, my friends, and life. I felt more balanced. I had expanded my awareness of options. I saw opportunities instead of obstacles. It didn't matter if I missed a dose. The longer I took it, the less I needed—the exact opposite of SSRIs.

While low dose psilocybin slowly provides antidepressant effects, higher doses offer a unique experience that may also have psychological benefits. When ingesting from 1.5 - 3 grams, it would be considered “*Trippin’ on mushrooms*” (See the reference at end of article regarding even higher doses). I admit I was initially afraid of it. Still, as I discussed psilocybin with people in the psychedelic community, I became more curious and less concerned. They described their experiences with mushrooms. I did online research uncovering a whole community of people sharing ideas and safety tips. I have learned that there is almost no risk of toxicity to the brain or body at any dose. Ultimately, a therapist friend recommended that I take 1.5 grams of powdered mushrooms and take a long nature walk. He suggested I take it with someone I trust. It was great advice.

My boyfriend joined me on my first trip, and it was revelatory and wondrous beyond words. Within 30 minutes, I started to notice the initial effects. My vision changed. The colors were more vibrant. My visual acuity appeared to improve as well. It was as if I could see the world in HIGH DEFINITION. No hallucinations. No impaired perception. It was heightened awareness and appreciation. At first, I felt slightly unsteady, but that resolved quickly. I felt my mood elevated but not "high" like on opioids.

I was compelled to move. We walked in a nearby nature park with a variety of trees, flowers, birds, and very few people. After the effects fully kicked in, it was as if the trees were communicating with us – not verbally – *spiritually*. I touched and hugged the trees. I couldn't pass up smelling the flowers. I was in awe at the majestic symphony of nature. We were communing with all of its greatness. The tree leaves seemed to be BREATHING in the wind. We noticed a patch of flowers all facing the sun and understood the most fundamental principle of plants – the sun provides the energy they need to grow. At the time, it seemed profound and elegant. Off mushrooms, we may not have noticed or even cared. We saw birds and marveled at their grace and abilities. The bird songs stopped us in our tracks, and we listened intently. We appreciated nature with all of our senses – our vision, hearing, touch, and sense of smell.

On another occasion, we went for a swim in the ocean. The water felt like silk on my body. The small ripples of waves were exceptionally scintillating. We floated and watched the ever-changing clouds on the brilliant blue backdrop. I had uncontrolled and spontaneous giggles. A little annoyed by my constant chuckling, my boyfriend said, "Close your eyes and just listen!" I did and noticed my hearing was also apparently improved. I isolated the sound of each wave

crashing on the shoreline, the ospreys screeching, and the wind through the trees. We spend so much energy LOOKING at everything that we fail to really listen, smell, and touch our surroundings. The mushrooms guide you to this fullness of the senses.

Each time we trip the laughter starts slowly but becomes contagious. You don't need to watch a comedy show or a funny movie. Nature provides the material for intense laughter. Walking, too, brings out great conversation with shared memories to revisit through a new lens of hilarity. The most mundane becomes fascinating and somehow provokes uncontrolled chuckling. A tree trunk spiraling up to reach the sun evokes us to invent a story of the tree's journey through time. The wonder and imagination were comically combined.

My therapist friend asked me after, "When was the last time you laughed that hard?" I thought back through my life and replied, "not since I was probably 2-3 years old." I have a picture of me at age two, doubled over and laughing. I have no real memory of that day, but it reminds me of when life still had exquisitely simple surprises. I call these mid dose trips a *Journey to Your Inner Child*. Mushrooms help to access the simple joys of life and connect with your inner child.

Why is this important? Laughter doesn't come as easily as an adult. As we get older, the higher thinking mind filters out that which may provide spontaneous amusement. Judgement and inhibition gets in the way. If I detailed what was so incredibly funny during my trips – it would not translate. You have to experience it firsthand. The phrase "Laughter is the Best Medicine" is true. It draws people together in ways that trigger healthy physical and emotional changes in the body. Laughter has proven to strengthen the immune system, boost mood, diminish pain, and protect us the damaging effects of stress.

Also, time is distorted while on mushrooms. It's always surprising to look at a clock during a trip and realize not that much time has passed. It isn't a negative. I believe it's because TIME doesn't matter during a trip. We are 'in the moment' or 'in the now.' Spiritual teachers profess that living in the present moment is the path to joy. Mushrooms taught me the essence of those teachings. During a trip, we were enjoying *only that which we were experiencing*. We were not feeling regret or guilt about the past, and not weren't worried or anxious about the future. We were firmly based in the present and grounded in BLISS. I do not believe I understood this until my mushroom experiences.

Along with the perceptual enhancements, the feeling of gratefulness is significant. Words do not serve to convey the intensity of AWARENESS and CONNECTION. It has to be something you experience. Each trip is unique and special. We both agree that mushrooms help expand our relationship with nature and each other. We also learn something about ourselves and each other. We do not have any hallucinations at these doses, just a wonderfully altered sense of reality.

After about 5-6 hours, all the effects are completely worn off. No fatigue. NOTHING negative. We feel back to baseline, but a better version of normal. In comparison to alcohol, it's far more enjoyable and no hangover! I have used mushrooms in microdoses to alleviate my chronic

depressive symptoms. These longer journeys to connect with my inner joyful child have transformed my appreciation of life in general.

Safety Tips

1. Plan the trip but stay flexible.
2. Start at 1.5 grams of dried mushrooms – then, in subsequent trips, go up by 300mg and find your “sweet spot.” I weigh 120 pounds and take 2-2.5g. My 190-pound boyfriend takes 3-3.5 grams. Would NOT take more than 4 grams and leave the house. *Higher doses will provoke a more intense and potentially emotionally difficult trip.*
3. Hydrate beforehand.
4. Have a light meal 1-2 hours beforehand.
5. Consider taking an antinausea medication 30 minutes before ingesting the mushrooms.
6. Trip with a trusted friend or loved one.
7. Avoid strangers.
8. Getting out in nature is a MUST DO. Bring along what you need for the day (sunscreen, water, money, ID, phone, etc.)
9. Don’t drive.
10. Trip no more than once a month.

Other recommendations for after the trip

1. Journal about it.
2. Relive the experience with your partner in tripping.
3. Reflect on your mood the week before and after.

If you trip, share your experience with me!

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Note – Doses in excess of 4 grams should not be taken without supervision.

In a small double-blind study, Johns Hopkins researchers report that **a substantial majority of people suffering cancer-related anxiety or depression found considerable relief for up to six months from a single large dose of psilocybin.**

Read more here: <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/psychiatry/research/psychedelics-research.html>

