

Ten reasons why ketamine is the best entry level agent for psychedelic exploration

1. It is legal. You can schedule a ketamine session in most major cities in the USA. An increasing number of centers like ours have ketamine-assisted therapy sessions available. This is the harbinger of a new paradigm in mental health. We believe that medicine-assisted therapy represents the emerging model for enhanced care of the psyche.

2. Ketamine is anxiolytic. It quiets that part of our central nervous system that worries and frets. Many of the major psychedelic medicines (especially LSD) can have a significant element of anxiety as part of the journey. If you are new to psychedelics this can be intimidating and overwhelming. Research indicates that ketamine is euphoric and mood boosting for most people. Bad journeys are possible, but they are much less likely than with psilocybin or LSD.

3. Ketamine offers a sense of pure non-dual consciousness that introduces people to a non-cognitive open field of awareness that is unique and awe-inspiring.

4. Both ketamine and the major psychedelics decrease the default mode network, which is our closest neural equivalent to the ego. With the conscious constraints of the constructed self dramatically reduced, the major psychedelics can and will release a tsunami of unconscious material that can be very powerful (and sometimes overwhelming). Ketamine does decrease the filter of the self, but it simultaneously decreases the power of cortical awareness, and this reduces the unpredictable wave of the unconscious material that is brought to experience. Traumatic experiences may be accessed, but the weight of the new insights is more limited. Ketamine can work as a mild introduction to these experiences.

5. Never mind that ketamine is not a true psychedelic, this experience may be one of the most profound alterations of consciousness that you will ever experience. As a dissociative agent, ketamine disconnects most of our cortical awareness and leaves people with an experience that will astound you. Do not underestimate this experience.

6. Ketamine modifies the default mode network, disrupts thalamocortical relays, and enhances neuroplasticity. Quite simply it offers a new way of thinking, particularly about one's own life and the big picture of our existence. People come away with a refreshed look at their life journey and their options for change.

7. Ketamine has a clear dose response curve, so people can dial in the type of experience they would like to have: mild, verbal and lightly dissociated (somewhat like peyote); moderate, some verbal capacity, but mostly gone (more like psilocybin); high, non-verbal and totally disconnected from this plane (similar to DMT).

8. The short half-life of ketamine is under 30 minutes. This means that the entire experience usually lasts less than one and a half hours. Good or bad, the journey is short and manageable. The total time from arrival to walking out the front door is typically less than three hours.

9. The alterations in the default mode network and hippocampal plasticity, while maximal for the hour's journey, do linger for a day or so. This offers a practical window for enhanced therapy. Low dose lozenges provide a twilight type of experience that enhances access to painful material and speeds therapy. We tolerate the difficult insights better and can process our wounding at a much deeper level. Ego controls are reduced, but not gone. This catalyzes therapeutic change. It is an anesthetic agent but used in this manner it opens our process and does not numb. This is because it is dissociative and thus does not diminish our awareness. By comparison, alcohol reduces ego controls, but it also reduces clarity and self-awareness simultaneously rendering it useless.

10. It is legal. This bears repeating. The only other options that might be better involve travel to another country or breaking the law. Years from now we will likely have MDMA, psilocybin, and perhaps other legal options. We have ketamine right now.

