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So if you enjoy what we're doing here, please consider becoming one. As always, I never want money to be the reason why someone can't get access to the podcast. So if you can't afford a subscription, there's an option that Sam Harris, Doug, to request a free account and we grant 100 percent of those requests. No questions asked. OK, a lot going on out there in the world. Lots of shootings and other chaos and just absolutely abysmal coverage of seemingly everything in the media.

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If ever we needed a sign that journalism was broken, my God, some of the stories we're telling ourselves now. But rather than get pulled into that morass, I will press on here, but I'll be doing some more Amma's that might be the context in which to process a lot of this topical stuff. We're bringing Amma's back on the podcast and the way to submit questions. If you're a subscriber, you can submit questions by sending an email to ask Sam at Sam Harris.

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Doug. Or you can do this on Twitter with the hashtag Ask Sam. And we will gather questions and I will release arms on those topics. I think it will only be selecting questions from actual subscribers, whether you're paying for that or it's free doesn't matter, but you need to be a subscriber. Today, I'm speaking with James Fadiman. Jim is a psychologist who has degrees from Harvard and Stanford, he's also taught at four different universities and has had a very long standing influence on the topic of psychedelics.

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He is one of the early researchers here and is probably more responsible than anyone for the phenomenon of micro dosing. He's written several books, most relevantly here, The Psychedelic Explorer's Guide. He also has a new book on the structure of the self that he co-authored with Jordan Gruber titled Your Symphony of Selves. And in today's conversation, we cover the terrain in both those books. To some degree, the first half is entirely on psychedelics. How to think about taking them, who should take them, who shouldn't take them?

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Considerations of set and setting the role of a guide, the effects of micro dosing, the difference between MDMA and other proper psychedelics, so-called good and bad trips, the power of thought. And then we move on to a discussion about the nature of the self and the fiction of there being a unified self. So we talk about the self and its multiple forms, states of self and even multiple selves persay. And how all this might relate to compassion and an understanding of and acceptance of what we are as people.

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Anyway, if this is your cup of tea, Jim is a very wise companion for this. Apologies for the audio quality. This was one of those conversations during covid where the local recording failed. So all we had in the end was the backup recording of the actual Zoom conversation. So there are some drop outs on Jim side. Everything of importance is intelligible, but the audio is certainly less than ideal. So I think your ear will get used to it.

[00:04:37.670]

And now I bring you James Fadiman. I am here with James Fadiman. Jim, thanks for joining me. It's a great pleasure. We could spend a lot of time trying to figure out where our mutual history intersected. I'm about ninety five percent sure that you and I once met face to face at least once. And

I'm sure we know many people in common, but and perhaps we'll we'll get there organically. But perhaps you can summarize your background here.

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How do you how do you describe what you've focused on lo these many decades that you've been covering the topics we're about to touch? Well, I got involved in psychedelics before I entered graduate school because Richard Alpert turned me on, I was living in Paris writing a very bad novel, and my draft board said, would you like to graduate school or Vietnam? And. I took the obvious choice and then worked with the clinical group in Menlo Park, and just as I had completed my dissertation on psychedelic therapy and by the way, I said it was good, the government said, we don't want to know anything more.

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Thank you very much. And closed us down in the midst of a research project. Where people were using psychedelics to solve absolutely linear, rational, physical, scientific problems. And then I had another few careers outside of psychedelics since the government didn't want us to know much. And a number of years ago got back involved in psychedelic research, particularly in micro dosing. And in between. I've worked with and taught a number of of of psychology systems or, you know, life changing systems like affirmations, psycho synthesis.

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And I recently just completed a book on internal healthy multiplicity, which was. Apparently from the outside, like, where did that come from, given what I just told you, I've been working on that quietly for twenty five years and finally got it out. So I'm at a place of feeling a lot of life. Ambitions, perhaps, or inclinations or directions are in a completed state, so I have a couple of turns left and a lot of things I'm intending to do, and it's a pleasure to to be with you.

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And several of my relatives are very excited because they're long term fans of yours. And I'm a short term fan of yours. Nice, well, the the admiration is mutual. I found your book, your books very useful and illuminating, and I want to cover them somewhat systematically here. I think that the focus will be on this first book that that not your first book, but this first book. I want to touch the Psychedelic Explorers Guide. And I want to have a fairly structured conversation that can be useful to people who are thinking about taking psychedelics, are that they are taking them and how that can be done safely in a way.

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Who should do it, who shouldn't do it. You know, all the related questions here and then we can happily to do those. And then we can touch your your latest book, which is titled Your Symphony of Selves, which you wrote with co-author Jordan Gruber and talking about just how you think about the self or selves, plural. And that could be interesting. But just to get a little more of your back story. So. So when were you were you did your graduate work at Stanford, correct?

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Yeah, that's correct. So you weren't at Harvard getting dosed by Richard Alpert and Tim Leary. How did you how did you come to.

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I I was just before that. And they Richard Richard Dick Alpert and I had become friends. I was an undergraduate and I worked for a summer for him in a research project in California. So and we actually shared a house. So we were we were really genuine friends. And I was living in Paris truly writing a novel. And he showed up on his way to Copenhagen, where he was to present with Aldous Huxley and Tim Leary the first major presentation about psychedelics to the World Council of Psychologists.

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We met and I took him to a little cafe on the. Richard Alpert and I are sitting there and he's he's really

looking and feeling a lot, a lot less neurotic than I knew him to be. He was brilliant, neurotic, ambitious, charming, a lot of wonderful things. And he said the greatest thing in the world has happened to me and I want to share it with you. And I thought, well, how bad can that be?

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And then he took out of his breast pocket a little bottle of pills, and I didn't freak out, but I certainly withdrew emotionally. I was so straight I was not drinking coffee. But he said, here, try this. So I took a pill, which I now would say would be a moderate dose of psilocybin.

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I said this was synthetic psilocybin. This is not the LSD. Right. So this was they had not they had not discovered LSD at this time. They started with psilocybin. And after a while, the colors got brighter and the everything began to. Jiggle a little with energy, and that was all new to me, and then I was also aware of the conversations behind me as people were walking by. As one does, and then I suddenly realized that my French isn't that good.

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Wasn't that good? And I could never hear those conversations prior to this. And I looked at Dick and I said, this is really too much for me. And he said, well, why don't we go back to your hotel room and that was great. And he said, it's too much for me, too. And I said, What do you mean you haven't taken anything? He said, This is my first night in Paris. So we both withdrew to my sixth floor walk up and.

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Some of my cherished beliefs were disassembled about what was valuable and not valuable in my life, nothing, nothing therapeutic breakthrough, but just an awareness that there was a more to the way the world was. But I was still me and it was still my personality and my issues. And a week later, I had followed Dick to Copenhagen and where I had another session with him, which was really about human closeness and connection and kindness and support of one another at a level that the words don't handle too well.

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If we had one more notch up in value of each of those words, that's what it was.

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Mm hmm. Life went on, and a few weeks later, I was at Stanford and I discovered in one little tiny corner of Stanford, a professor who was working with Saikat. Experience that has forever shifted my my awareness, my belief system and also shifted my career. So that's a little more back story. When would this have been around?

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Sixty one. Nineteen sixty one. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, well, it's yes, I'm sure that you and I met with Richard Alpert, who was then later known as Ramdas at some point in the in the late 80s, somewhere near where Stanford. So anyway, it's great to meet again. Before we dive into this, I just want to offer the obligatory disclaimer to our listeners that, you know, we're not giving medical advice. We're not recommending that you personally take psychedelics.

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And we obviously we don't know your personal situation, dear listener. So you just have to read the lines and between the lines in this conversation to extract anything that might be useful to you in your specific situation. I mean, obviously, we're not going to soft pedal the underlying truth here, which is that psychedelics have been incredibly useful to to each of us personally, and the resurgence of research on them holds great promise for everyone, really. And it's it's one of the happier developments in recent years in psychological science.

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But obviously, where most people are living, these drugs are likely to be illegal and therefore you encourage some risk just taking them, however benign your experience on them might be. And, you

know, some people can have bad experiences, which we'll get into. So with that caveat out of the way, let's start with general considerations here, Jim, who should and shouldn't think about taking psychedelics? Well, one of the obviously the questions I get a lot over the years is.

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I'm thinking of taking LSD, but and I say don't do it, and they say, but I haven't told you my reasons. I said, no, if you feel there's a reason you shouldn't take a psychedelic, you have to listen to that. So my caveat is much stronger than yours, Sam, in that way. And the question of who and who shouldn't take it is only one that can be answered by an individual. I can tell you that if you read the literature, there's a lot of discussion about not having a psychedelic.

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These are all high dose discussions we're having right now.

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Yeah, we'll talk about micro dosing later. But for high doses, the science world says no one, not if you've had a psychotic episode, not if you've been a schizophrenic, not if you're bipolar and. Not if you had a serious mental, you know, something like that. No. I used to wonder about that is where did we get that information? So I started searching around and I asked some of the senior researchers who were friends. And the answer was actually, there isn't any information like that out there, what there is is.

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People doing research don't want those people in the research because if they have a bad experience or six months later they have a bad experience that has nothing to do with psychedelics, they will blame it on psychedelics. Now, I followed this a little bit more with bipolar, because that's one of the groups that can never get in any research projects. And if you go online, of course, if you go to the web, of course, there's a group of people who are bipolar who talk to each other.

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And so I asked them, would you comment if any of you had any psychedelic experience? Do you have any advice for the other people on this, this group and the general advice was from people who had used psychedelics and I don't know how or under what conditions. But they said on the manic phase of being bipolar, don't take anything. And on the depressive phase of bipolar, a number of them said that psychedelics had been very helpful. So that's not published and that's not science.

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But that's what I call citizen science. Which is what's actually happening out there. It's important to keep. There are a lot of research studies and most of them are very favorable and exciting, but behind that, since psychedelics were made illegal in the late 60s, early 70s in the United States and just the United States, 30 million people have tried high dose psychedelics or just LSD, not all psychedelics. And as of yet, we have we have no deaths and we have a lot of people who had very unhappy and difficult experiences, but in some senses it's a very safe.

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These are safe substances physiologically, and if you don't know what you're doing, you can have a terrible experience even on a moderate dose. So the variable is having some understanding of what you are, what you're doing and what you're learning. And so recommending or not recommending is not something I do except to not recommend unless you know what you're doing.

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Yeah, this is a bit of a conundrum, however, because even very experienced psychonauts, as you know, can feel significant trepidation when thinking about taking a high dose of anything. I mean, even knowing what you're in for, even having experiences under your belt that you consider to be not only benign but incredibly transformative, you still approach this howling abyss with the appropriate awe and concern, you know, often and maybe even someone as seasoned as Terence McKenna would talk about the feeling of fear he would live with around this consideration of whether he should

trip again.

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And so if your prescription or nonprescription is if you feel any hesitation about doing this, don't do it. It's a little hard to apply.

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Well, that's probably why I put it out there, because it gives people a hesitation. And the image that came to mind, as you were saying it is, is skydiving. No matter how many times you skydive and how carefully you check your gear, you know that sometimes people fall out of the sky and it does. And the chute doesn't open. And it's not a matter of. Skill or experience, it's a matter of the facts are that these.

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These substances will take you places you do not intend, and I think that's part of the reason why I've backed off from high dose work and high dose research. Because it can be, it can always be. Not only a scary experience, which is fine, people, you know, pay a lot of money to be frightened if you've ever been to what's called an amusement park. But the question of benefit is really where I'm I'm looking at, I'm not really that interested in people who kind of are tripping because.

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They're streaming services down here. I'm very interested in people who are saying I really want to learn something important that will perhaps change my life and therefore I'm preparing appropriately. Mm hmm. Yeah, I should say I've said before that I didn't take any psychedelics for at least 25 years based on the kinds of concerns we've just sketched here. I mean, just just a growing awareness of what a colossal spin of the psychological roulette wheel it was. And having had some scary experiences, I decided, you know, I meditation was was a much more governable game.

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And so I you know, it wasn't until very recently, about a little over a year ago that I had my first in several decade significant trip, which I found incredibly useful, but. The seriousness of intent that should frame this project is worth emphasizing, because there really is a distinction between a recreational approach to these things. I mean, you're just bored and you want to have fun and you might do this at a party or do it at a concert or, you know, when under conditions where those things exist.

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Obviously, we're having this conversation during the covid pandemic and there's not a lot of either of those things, but. People tend to approach this frivolously, and it's not that, you know, that doesn't certainly doesn't guarantee a bad experience. You can have a great experience doing that. But it's not really the appropriate orientation, in my view. And it sounds like you agree, Jim. It's just that there really is these are incredibly powerful tools. Well, as my favorite kind of what why you have to why recreational, it may be a little more risky than you think is my kind of young people who said to me once we were having this fabulous trip until the car caught on fire, that really shifted everybody's reality in a way that they weren't able to cope.

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So we're really looking at something and actually in terms of my being conservative and it's wonderful that psychedelics have moved so far that I'm conservative. Is if you're going to have a high dose experience and you intend to get anything from it, it's very important to have a guide, a companion, a designated driver, so to speak, somebody who knows more than you do and cares about you. That turns out to be a way of preventing almost all strongly negative experiences, because when you're caught in a negative experience and you're on your own or you're with other people who are off on their own trips, it's very hard to get out when there's a guide.

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It's very easy to get out. So let's talk about that, each of those in chapter, so I want to talk about the

role of a guide here, but this section might be called Set and set in. How do you recommend? And again, we're talking about. Large effective doses here, not micro doses, which we'll talk about later. How do you think about people preparing for a significant trip, whether it's, you know, psilocybin or LSD or ayahuasca, or we can talk about specific compounds in a moment.

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How do you think about this, the concept of set and setting?

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Well, what we know is that. Psychedelics are incredibly sensitive to set or your mental attitude and setting the literally physical situation you're in, and that includes the other people who are around. And the main reason that I wrote that book, The Psychedelic Explorers Guide, is for the first two chapters which detailed how to become a good journey or how to be how to do how to set yourself up the best way possible, and also how a guide should behave and what what knowledge they should have.

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Because it's not a simple question. But fundamentally, the question is always, do you feel safe? Is it truly safe? Is it private? So you won't be disturbed? And do you have some idea of what you do you understand the substance? Do you understand what the doses are are like? And do you have some intentions? And perhaps that's what set is about, which is what do you intend? And it is likely that you will.

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Have what you intend, but you'll have something else that goes with it. So all of those are important, and I think the way I've said is it's set in setting and situation, which is what's your life situation? If your life situation is very difficult, even if you're in a lovely set and setting, it's not going to your life situation is going to impinge on that and you're going to be in trouble. What's the substance? Do you know what you're taking?

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If you bought it illegally, has it been tested? The word I use then is Sittar, because I'm actually trying to use Esses because you do that when you write books. But as a sinner is almost like a coach and a coach doesn't bother you unless something is needed to be helped. So if you for instance, you're lying on a couch, you have music, you take off the headphones, you sit up and you said, I think I'm dying.

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And you do you think you're dying and everything in your in your mind is telling you that and the guide friend Sittar looks over at you and said, oh, that's great. And reaches out his hand or her hand. And part of you says, wait, wait, wait, wait. I just said, I'm dying, and this person who I know and love says it's great. And then another part of you said, Oh. I took this substance and it's taking me in a different and I'll just see what what actually is being done by the notion that I'm dying and what people then find out, and this is more on reflection later, is as your ego is noticing, that it's about to be demoted from amazingly important to something that is useful.

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It often will come up with these amazing scenarios of what a bad idea it is for the rest of you to discover the correct placement or the correct kind of status of your of your so-called identity. Remember, Alan Watts had a wonderful comment as he would look in the mirror and he'd say, what percentage of me has ever heard of Alan Watts? If you just look at yourself physiologically, the answer is a tiny amount of your brain has to do with your identity and the rest of it really has other.

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Other preoccupations. So that's part of what I'm suggesting is why preparation is important. Do you want to say any more about the role of a guy and can a guide be simply any well-intentioned person who's not tripping along with you or does require some special experience?

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Well, the fact of the matter is that most people do not have access to highly trained, sophisticated guides who participated in research studies, et cetera. So the reality of it, what my opinion or not, is that very kind, loving people who have had prior psychedelic experiences that are positive often can be very healthy, safe guides.

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Again, the term is close to a designated driver where you don't need someone who is an auto mechanic and a race car driver to be your designated driver, you need someone who has control of their feelings and emotions, is physiologically sound and who knows how to drive. Right. So it would be there is a whole class of people known as guides. Michael Pollan in his work for his book, he says there are hundreds of them across the country. There is even an international guild of guides which has been formed in the Netherlands, so there is an occupation.

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Where you can actually, in many locations, find people who will who have a lot of experience and sitting with people, and so that's that's a kind of in-between place. And I was struck a few years ago in Berkeley on a. You know, on a power pole, there was stapled a little notice, it said trip sitter, just someone to sit with you while you are tripping. And it basically gave a phone number. And this was someone who you could hire to come to your house and sit with you.

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So we are creating a kind of new occupational. Grouping here of people who know not only a lot more than you do, but consider it, consider it usually more than a vocation to help you.

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And I guess the final question on set in, how do you think about the difference between taking one of these compounds, let's say, LSD or psilocybin out in nature or, you know, with with senses directed outward versus an internal journey, whether you're blindfolded or just in in a dark room? Well, I think it's it's the same discussion you have about mysticism is that there's internal mysticism where you go inside, then you find that everything in the universe is inside or you go outside and you find that everything in the universe is outside.

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The difference is that if you have if you're interested more in your own psychodynamics. And you have, say, therapeutic intentions, probably you will do better staying inside. Where you are less literally likely to be distracted by the the amazing beauty of the ten thousand things. If you wish to blend more, to become more aware of your continuity with the natural world, then outside is fantastic and will give you a a recognition of your continuity with the natural world.

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That is not that you don't lose. You don't forget. Now, let's talk about dosage, and here we can we can talk about micro dosing as well. And am I right in thinking that you're you're essentially the father of micro dosing at this point?

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I think at the moment I'm probably the the the person who has. The largest number of cases in his in his research base and has talked the most about it and is probably the most quoted, there's a generation of researchers coming up fast behind me and will soon push me aside. But for right now. Yeah, I'm probably I'm probably the most the most well known and person and has done and has reported on micro doses in ways that other people haven't.

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Yeah. Hmm. OK, well, that was that was a fourth round. What what was an attempt at humility.

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And I think you're going to have to boost the dosage that I think you have. That's always that's that's not necessarily always the best suggestion saying.

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So let's differentiate these two projects because they really are distinct. Let's talk about macro dosing first.

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Let me just go right up the line. Sure. And let's let's start at around twenty five micrograms where people report some psychedelic effects, very mild availability of we're just talking LSD and I'll do it in micrograms. OK, around 50 micrograms is a what was called originally a museum dose and now is called a concert dose. And if you've ever wondered when you go to a concert why there's that unbelievably huge light show, it's because such a large percentage of the patrons have come.

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Intending to get as much out of the light show as the music. And that maybe is 50 to 100. At one hundred micrograms, one can do very hard nosed scientific research. And there's a great many companies around the world, some of which admit to it, where a number of breakthroughs are attributed to working in that way with that dosage, when you get into the 100 to 200 microgram range, it's psychotherapeutic. Which is you can work with a therapist somewhat the way the therapist wants to meeting, you're still in communication.

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You will. Trip off into kind of thought loops, if someone if your therapist says, do you want to look, look at the death of your mother. Ten minutes later, you may return to the room and say, yes, thank you for for that, I understand it much better and I understand my reactions. Once you go above two hundred and up to, say, four hundred, then you're usually talking about what is called a transcendent or a mystical or a unity experience.

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That's when you lose your primary identification with your own. Physical identity and your own psychological identity, so you are no longer if I meant in taking 400 rounds at some point. Jim Fadiman becomes a subset of the larger being that I feel myself to be, and in that state, people report. Things like experiencing the birth of the universe or physically their own birth or memories of past identities. It's what we called in an original report in the 60s, the psychedelic experience which is experiencing that you're that you're Alan Watts said it nicely.

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As you exist, your body doesn't end at your fingertips. And that is a revelation to people. And on their return from that higher dose, they often will see that parts of their own emotional, physical, social system are really defective and they make massive change. I recall working with several alcoholics and they were referred by the courts, so they were not exactly eager to have a psychedelic experience. This is the early 60s in all of this was not known, and each one of them a week later went out and drank and then came back to us and said, What have you done to me?

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And we said, you know, we gave you a psychedelic. And they said, But I don't like drinking. It doesn't feel like it feels like it shrinks my my my expanded awareness. So there's a wonderful bit of video footage from some work done at Spring Grove Hospital again in the late 60s, this was 40 years later, one of these overnight recovered alcoholics. And the filmmaker is saying, well. Can you talk about your drinking, since I haven't had a drink in 40 years and the filmmaker talks about willpower and the man laughs and says it has nothing to do with willpower.

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I've never had any interest in drinking ever since. So a high dose or a mystical experience level dose has a number of additional effects that will not be found at lower doses. And that's pretty much all the way down that the two hundred the psychotherapeutic dose you have, things will happen at a lower dose, et cetera. Does that at once. What do you consider an analogous dose of of mushroom's? And or synthetic psilocybin. Yeah, in the couple of thousand cases I have, we have I think one person was

synthetic suicide.

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And so it's interesting.

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It's. Well, I guess it's coming back now right into the in the research, but it's not. Well, it's coming back because there are a lot of people who can make money from it. It's coming back research because researchers. Who come out of a psychopharmacology model wants something that's as close to a normal psychologically active substance as possible, and they love to have accurate measurement, even though the amount a person should take. Should be based on what the person actually needs, not on their weight or their age.

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It's a little bit as if people came in for meals and you gave everyone the exact amount of each food carefully measured, and they said, but hey, I want more potatoes. And they said, no. The study says everyone has to have the exact amount of potatoes. So I have obviously some biases about some of the scientific research, even the best of it. But what we're looking at with psilocybin is three to five. Grams of mushroom will give you a a fairly expansive trip.

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People have taken much more than that, and at some point they they stop bringing back useful information. And so in my world, that's what too much of a dosis. Each mushroom has its own level, its own amount of psilocybin, even if you have mushrooms from the same. Same little patch, the same species. They'll be different, so it's much harder when you get into natural substances. And for example, what I know is with ayahuasca.

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The Iowa Scarrow, the the shaman who is who's doing the giving the medicine, whether they're trained in South America or or one of the hundred or so in Los Angeles, they'll give you what they think is a good amount and then later on, they will give you more if that seems to be useful. Now, how much is a good amount? OK, it's a quarter cup. It's a half cup. They're using their clinical they're kind of intuitive knowledge rather than a scale, so once you get into organics, it's much harder to say what's the right amount when you get into micro dosing, it's much easier.

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Question of Dose has always been subjective. And the people that I worked with clinically, I gave you those numbers. But let me let me show you how it works. Four hundred micrograms is an amazing amount of psychedelic. When you have an alcoholic. And you give them 400 micrograms an hour and a half later, they're walking around the room and saying, man, something's going on, but I don't feel comfortable. And what are you guys doing anyway?

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Anyone else at that point is on the couch voluntarily asking for headphones and a blindfold because the input is so overwhelming. Well, when you add to the alcoholic's cocktail, another 400 micrograms, so they're now taking 800 micrograms, which I don't recommend to anybody. They settle down and again, behave exactly the way everyone else does on a much lower dose. And I looked at that for a long time, actually studied alcoholism and why most treatments don't work.

[00:40:10.270]

And what I realized with psychedelics is alcoholics have learned and have a physiology that cooperates to handle very large doses of substances that distort consciousness. So they're in a sense, their ability to hold on and to hang on to their defenses is far more developed than for the rest of us. So I'm dancing around the dosage question because it's not quite the appropriate question, the appropriate question is what is the correct amount for this person on this day for this intention?

[00:40:47.410]

And that, of course, is an individual question, is there anything in your mind that significantly differentiates the experience on a high dose of LSD versus a high dose of psilocybin? That is mushrooms in most cases. Well, the feeling in the the underground who takes a lot more drugs than I do. Is that psilocybin is a kinder experience, it's a more emotionally gentle experience, and that's partly, it is said, because there is a plant spirit behind it.

[00:41:24.700]

LSD is considered a little colder, a little more. It doesn't let you off easy. And I know these are all very vague terms, unless you know what I'm talking about, my research associate doctors five Corb at one point set up a little bot and it asks the little bot to say, here's one hundred reports from Erowid about psilocybin experiences here. One hundred reports of LSD experiences. Can you this little learning bot distinguish the two if you if you can't be told which substance it is.

[00:42:03.280]

So it kind of blinded artificial intelligence at the A.I., a robot said, no, I actually can't tell the difference between those experiences. There's another group of people who are saying the difference between a synthetic psilocybin and a mushroom. Is also a great difference and. That is also not yet particularly we don't know quite what that means, but it's probably true since a mushroom has a whole nother set of alkaloids in it. So it should have a slightly different effect than just the psilocybin molecule.

[00:42:41.080]

Yeah, but one obvious difference is just the time course of the trip. LSD trip lasts about twice as long as a mushroom trip.

[00:42:49.540]

OK, that's important because that's one of the reasons that the research has gone. The way it has questions is with the psychedelic renaissance. Why are most of these studies psilocybin? Why not LSD? Because with LSD, we have a couple of thousand research papers to start with. And I asked one of the senior researchers. And this is this is this comes on a little ridiculous, but it's actually quite subtle and sensible. He said there are several reasons.

[00:43:23.050]

One is so Simon will give the same experience, but in a shorter amount of time, four to six hours. LSD eight to 12, if you're working with someone eight to 12 hours in a research setting, that's two shifts of personnel that doubles your personnel costs. So there's a motive. I said there's two things about psilocybin. One is it's not called LSD, meaning it doesn't there's not a lot of press about it and a lot of research, not a lot of.

[00:43:57.220]

Not a lot of negative press from the 60s. Yeah. The other, and this is my favorite, is psilocybin is hard to spell from what they're saying, is that just because it's more it sounds more like a scientific term, people are more comfortable with it.

[00:44:15.500]

Which makes me wonder why there isn't more research on DMT, because that's that's over in 15 minutes. And dimethyltryptamine is also hard to spell.

[00:44:24.110]

And DMT is not on DMT of you. Do you have experience with pure DMT as opposed to DMT? Is the one of the active ingredients in ayahuasca as well, but. That's a very different experience, apparently. Do you have the smokeable very short acting experience or the injectable very short acting experience?

[00:44:47.520]

Although I may now lose at least half of your audience, I have not a great many experiences and I don't seek out new substances to experience. It's kind of like people who like wine. Some people like wine to drink. Some people like wine to find interesting, difficult, rare, amazing wines. The question

always for me is what is the take home value? Now, that that's a little bit as if someone and I say, well, you went to a concert, what's the take home value?

[00:45:19.960]

They said, don't be ridiculous. I went to the concert for the the being there at the time. Well, I have nothing. There's nothing wrong with that, and I, of course, do the same thing, but because of my background, I probably take psychedelics more seriously than most people. So the question of of all these different substances and all these different forms. Doesn't it doesn't resonate, and I remember when I was sending out little I gave a talk at Santa Cruz, you see Santa Cruz some years ago, and I asked each of the people there to fill out a little form.

[00:45:58.110]

What's your best trip, what's your worst trip, why did you come here tonight and what have you used? And these were all undergraduates and there was one young man who had tried 24 different psychedelic substances. And I thought he probably doesn't get much out of it. He's a collector of of of having done experiences and that's very different. The other side of that, the other way of arguing that is the the notion is and this is I think from Jean-Paul Sartre or KOMU, which is when you ask God a question.

[00:46:38.300]

And he answers it, you hang up the phone. So for a lot of people, they say, well, I learned what psychedelics had to teach me and my interest then diminished. Yeah, yeah, well, that's certainly resonates with me, and I certainly felt that for 25 years, and it's just not something that I imagined doing with any frequency at high doses, certainly. But, you know, I've never taken ayahuasca, I've never smoked DMT.

[00:47:12.520]

And I just hearing about the phenomenology of those experiences. They sound like they are are certainly opening different doors in the the mansion of the mind. And I'm I do feel like I can attest to a somewhat significant difference between psilocybin and LSD at higher doses. What you said about the difference does resonate with me. There's all that LSD has a kind of metallic quality to it compared to psilocybin. That is not to say that it's bad, but it's it is different.

[00:47:50.350]

And then, of course, there's that because MDMA, ecstasy, which is not classically a psychedelic, which in terms of take home value, you know, has offered a tremendous amount to people. Where do you put MDMA in this conversation of the MDMA?

[00:48:07.900]

The two reasons we're using the psychedelic one is biochemical, which is of the other things that you do not go beyond your self, your psyche out to experience your you in an incredibly inner safe place where all the parts of you that are awful to consider or terrible events or traumas. Or worse. You can objectively look at and move them from the part of your brain that holds them as terrible trauma and disturbs or destroys your life and puts them into conventional memory, where you can remember that you did terrible things but it doesn't dominate your present.

[00:48:50.370]

So it's a totally different set of experiences. And however, the way it's given is exactly the way we developed it in the 60s with the the comfortable room and the music and the headphones and the male and female guide. All of which are to make it easier for people to look at traumatic experience, if you give the same person a very, very high dose of LSD, they will they will pass right through the trauma area and have perhaps again, one of these transcendent experiences which may or may not affect the trauma.

[00:49:34.160]

We haven't really done that kind of research. So MDMA, in a sense, is psychologically less threatening because you don't go beyond your own identity. And that's a real difference.

[00:49:46.610]

Actually, this brings up an interesting point about which there may be research that I'm unfamiliar with. But just based on my own experience, it's often felt to me that not taking enough of a psychedelic is as much of a risk factor in determining having a bad trip. We'll talk about good and bad trips next. But, you know, here we're talking about dosage. Not taking enough, not not achieving escape velocity of some kind can doom you to an unpleasant experience as much as taking too much if taking too much is in fact a liability.

[00:50:29.330]

And I've had trips where it's felt like I took just enough to have in my ordinary mental reality, good and scrambled, or I took just enough to be given an unusual mental energy with which to fixate on my psychological problems, but not given enough to fly clear of them for any span of time. And so the net result was there was a something considerably more than a micro dose that potentially aided my capacity for unhappiness. And I believe I believe I've noticed this from both sides because, you know, I've had trips where I've gone, you know, very far out, well beyond any personal reference point to my life and my psychology.

[00:51:22.130]

And then it's only upon reentry, you know, as I'm coming down that you begin to punch into the atmosphere of the familiar and begin thinking about your life is at that strata of the mind that there's a sort of a new capacity for chaos and complication and neurosis and a commercial for guides at this point. Yeah, look at that particular event that happens in a high dose, which is you have found that you are immortal or that you are one with whatever your religious tradition teaches you is the highest, or you've gone past that into feeling that everything is interconnected and it's all the same stuff.

[00:52:11.030]

And then you come down and you find that there you are, there you are, a kind of middle aged physician in a difficult marriage. And one of your kids is has some kind of illness and you have economic problems and you love kitesurfing, that person. And as a little with a little bit right into the heart of their issues going down, then they could coming up. And one of the message that that we used when we're doing this clinical research was with a couple of hundred people is we asked them to bring in important photographs.

[00:52:48.880]

Again, notice this is visual. We also asked them to have a list of questions and I'll mention that. But we asked them to bring in important photographs. And this usually would be of important human beings in their lives. And we would say, would you like to look at your photographs? And they would look at us like, what's a photograph and who were you? But then you hand them a photograph and say it's their. It's their spouse.

[00:53:15.570]

Now, again, these are trained guides and what do they do? They do nothing. The person looks at this photograph and they may look at it for a minute and put it aside, they may look at it for forty five minutes. And then they say, OK, I'd like another photograph and you don't know what's going on. But when they write a report a few weeks later, you find out they spent a huge amount of time. Therapeutically reworking a lot of their issues around that particular person.

[00:53:48.030]

So it's a method of depth, psychological work without form, without vocabulary and without theory. That was we also gave them a rosebud, as opposed to starting to open and almost every religious tradition that had access to roses makes them an important either symbol or active force. And we found again that people would have an experience of working with a living, expanding, beautiful piece of nature. That they felt was important and again, people would take a long time just looking into that rose, indicating how it opened and they went inside it and how they became a rose and how that that made sense to them in their usual life.

[00:54:41.500]

So as as one comes down, but one that is coming down, aware that one is more than one's identity. And when you have those high experiences, Sam, the ones, as you said, coming back into being you, it's always a little puzzling, like. I'm part of everything there is why did I come back into a Sam Harris of all people? That's where you then get an opportunity to say probably I came back into the Sam Harris to clean him up a little bit so that he would get more benefit out of being in this lifetime.

[00:55:17.290]

So let's talk about micro dosing, which superficially seems like a similar project, because, again, we're talking about taking LSD or psilocybin generally. But the dosage. Being dialed down as much as you're about to describe, really does change things, what constitutes a microdots and what are people microdots?

[00:55:47.450]

Yeah, well, I have to make this super clear, Agim. Micro doses have no psychedelic effect, so they are not a little bitty high. Hmm. Maybe they're the difference between an you're still you know, there's still radio frequencies, but the microdots is one tenth to one twentieth of what is called a recreational dose with LSD. For the original work I did some years ago, we it was 10 micrograms, that seemed to be an appropriate amount.

[00:56:18.990]

For people to have the experiences that I'll talk about a little bit more. Without having to stop or disturb their life, they had their normal day, normal activities, normal work, normal driving, normal time with their family, etc.. The dose for mushrooms. Was about was then about point two grams, 2.5 grams. Now, when I say the doses, again, what we found after you, you get a few hundred reports is people say, gee, 10 micrograms was too much.

[00:57:01.620]

I'm taking seven. Point two was too much, I'm taking one tenth of a gram. What we found is that people she would correct the dose, so to speak, for their own understanding and experience. And we also found in terms of taking it how often, which is a huge difference between psychedelics and micro dosing. Micro dosing is done repeatedly. People found that after taking it one day on and two days off over a four month, that's about 10 times over a month.

[00:57:35.780]

Most people ended up taking it less often. So it looked like it was it was not addictive, just as all other psychedelics, but whatever value it had, people seemed to gain basic benefits within the first month and then allow it to continue at its own pace. Now, what are basic benefits? OK. It's very hard. To make this easy to understand, but. Ayelet Waldman did a book called A Really Good Day, and it's about her month of microdots and the best definition of micro dosing that I've come across again from one of our people.

[00:58:18.630]

I did better work than I usually do, I made a few more cold calls that were successful. I had a few ideas in the meeting that I usually have no ideas. When I went to the gym, I did one more set of reps. And I enjoyed being with my family more than usual, and I forgot that I'd taken a microdots. One never says at the end of a hydro session, I forgot I took a psychedelic rock. Well, actually, that's not quite true.

[00:58:49.700]

If it's a sufficiently high dose, you can completely forget you've taken a psychedelic, but then you eventually you remember as reality controls and you've taken a sufficiently high dose.

[00:59:00.110]

You forget that you're a human being on this planet. Yeah, because when you come down, you're very surprised to find out that that's true.

[00:59:08.540]

And hopefully you're not attempting any reps at the gym. No. Let alone driving to it. Oh, so microdosing seems to improve the overall function of the organism and I'm being kind of vague in the scientific. Because there are so many people who reported different benefits or different improvements in using micro dosing, that it's very hard to categorize. And we can look at some of the details of that. As much as you wish. Yeah, I guess so.

[00:59:45.210]

Let me just give you some anecdotal experience here and then get your reaction. So I only have experience microdosing and LSD. And so I guess first question is, is there any reason to differentiate the effects of taking psilocybin versus LSD or they essentially indistinguishable? I mean, given the given that a microdose is as close to subliminal as you can get, I can't imagine there's much to say about the difference there.

[01:00:16.860]

But when I was giving the differences in kindness and coldness, I was actually quoting someone who said in our microdosing community in Los Angeles, we've come to that conclusion that psilocybin is a little nicer. Interesting. The important question is how long is it effective? And this is where it gets interesting. We know that LSD has major effects, 10 to 12 hours. And we all say as if that as if it stops. At that point, we forget that with high doses.

[01:00:49.740]

There's also what's called an afterglow of four to six weeks where you feel better about everything in many ways and you're more creative and so forth with micro dosing very early on. What I discovered was what I called a two day effect, which is if it's psilocybin or LSD, there's at least a two day effect. And a great many people say, I actually prefer the second day. It's better. So we're dealing with something which isn't distinguished in the easy sense of time, it may be distinguished in terms of its emotional warmth, but because you're taking it as part of your normal life, you'll.

[01:01:35.500]

You know, if you feel better and you're more effective, it's hard to say is that Analytica or is that emotional? It's simply that, my goodness, I hadn't noticed. Way to work, that little niche at the bank that always I'm walking to work. I look forward to the flowers, particularly on days when I might produce.

[01:01:58.680]

Yeah, as far as the emotional valence, as far as how micro dosing might be recommended or contraindicated for any person, I can well imagine that micro dosing would have would have antidepressant effects. It seems to increase arousal generally. It may as you say, it kind of brightens your attention and it would surprise me if it wasn't functioning as a kind of cognitive enhancer, an antidepressant. But I could also see that it might be contraindicated for somebody with any kind of anxiety disorder.

[01:02:36.440]

And it seems to me that there is a kind of anxiety like Vaillant's to mere arousal. Well, I would say, Sam, as an aunt of one, you have hit on both of the most important aspects, positive and negative, that people are aware of.

[01:02:54.390]

And let me let me break that down. Let's look at depression. I'd say out of the first thousand words, we've got maybe 700 people. I have some. If you'd like to continue listening to this conversation, you'll need to subscribe at Sam Harris Network. Once you do, you'll get access to all full length episodes of the Making Sense podcast, along with other subscriber only content, including bonus episodes and Amma's. In the conversations I've been having on the Waking Up app, the Making Sense podcast is ad free and relies entirely on listener support.

[01:03:30.400]

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