

**PSYCHEDELIC SAFETY ALLIANCE**  
NO-BS DRUG EDUCATION FOR RESPONSIBLE ADULTS

## The Psychedelic Safety Quickstart Guide: Installation 1

Unless you've been living under a rock, you've probably noticed that psychedelics have been getting a lot of media attention for their remarkable benefits.

As psychedelics have become more mainstream, more and more people are getting curious and trying them out, which makes us nervous.

Why?

Psychedelics are incredibly powerful and occasionally unpredictable tools which can harm you in a myriad of ways if something goes sideways.

That's a pretty big statement and there's a lot of nuance in there, so let's unpack it a bit.

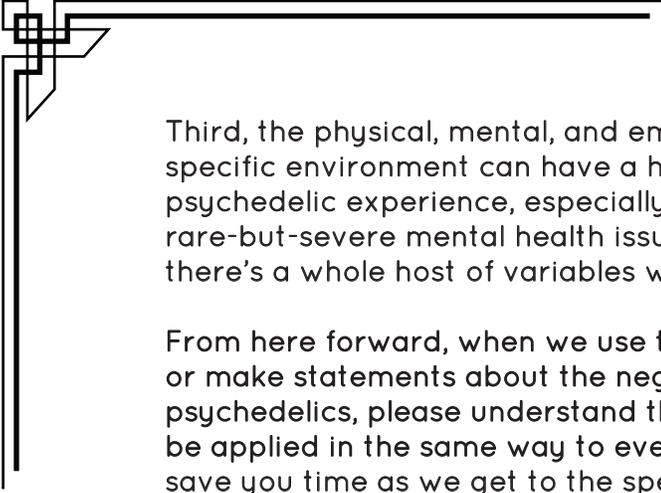
### WE'RE NOT HERE TO SCARE YOU

Most drug education out there tends to overstate the risks and harms of using drugs. We feel this is unhelpful, which is why we're committed to giving it to you straight.

In this vein, we're going to start by noting that many (but not all) psychedelic drugs carry little or no toxic overdose risk and have a low potential for addiction and abuse. (This is especially the case for so-called "classical hallucinogens" like LSD, psilocybin, and DMT.) From this limited perspective, such compounds could be considered "safe" relative to other classes of drugs, leading some to ask, "Why do I need safety education for psychedelics?"

Well, first, there are hundreds of other psychedelic drugs out there, some of them have a much higher risk of toxic overdose, and a few even have addictive properties for some people.

Second, the fact that most people have to source their psychedelics from unregulated underground markets introduces a higher level of risk and uncertainty into the equation.



Third, the physical, mental, and emotional state of a specific individual in a specific environment can have a huge impact on the safety profile of a psychedelic experience, especially when it comes to the array of rare-but-severe mental health issues some psychedelics can precipitate. So there's a whole host of variables which have to be considered there as well.

From here forward, when we use the word "psychedelics" as a blanket term or make statements about the negative outcomes that can occur around psychedelics, please understand that this is not a commentary which can be applied in the same way to every psychedelic. Rather, it's shorthand to save you time as we get to the specific skills, systems, and awareness which must be applied to every psychedelic compound and situation to establish safety.

## PSYCHEDELICS CAN BE FORGIVING OF MISTAKES AND THAT'S NOT ALWAYS GREAT

The low risk of toxicity and addiction that accompany many (but not all) psychedelics means it's possible for people with no safety training to take them in uncontrolled environments, and by sheer chance, have a benign or beneficial experience where nothing major goes wrong.

This happens to a lot of people when they start taking psychedelics. Over time, this absence of major negative consequences can contribute to overconfidence and a cavalier attitude, fueled by the belief that bad things aren't happening because the individual knows what they're doing now.

We've seen this a lot, and from our perspective, it's not great.

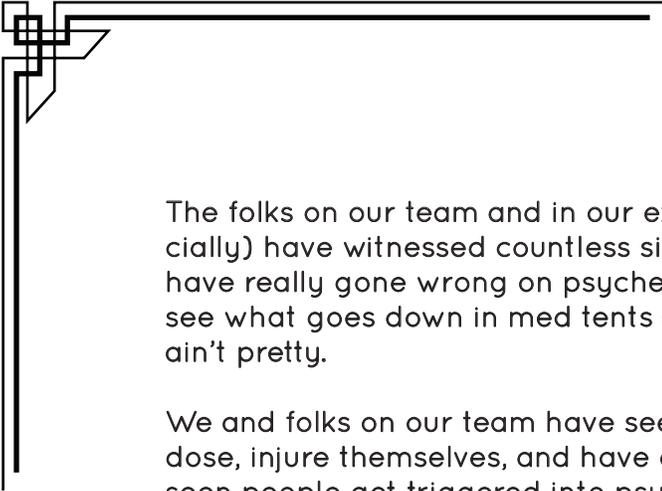
You see, despite the fact that many (but not all) psychedelics can be used by untrained people without negative consequences, there are a wide variety of things that can and do go sideways.

These risks and harms may be less common than the negative consequences of other kinds of drugs, but they still happen, and untrained, overconfident people are more likely to engage in the kind of risk-taking behavior and lax safety protocols which make such consequences more likely

We know because we've been there when it happens.

## NOT KNOWING WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW CAN BE HAZARDOUS

Just as we're not trying to scare you, we're also not trying to avoid or ignore the reality that gnarly stuff happens to a small-but-consistent percentage of people who use psychedelics in real-world conditions.



The folks on our team and in our extended network (first responders especially) have witnessed countless situations over the years where things have really gone wrong on psychedelics. The general public often doesn't see what goes down in med tents and harm reduction spaces, but we do. It ain't pretty.

We and folks on our team have seen countless people accidentally overdose, injure themselves, and have difficult and traumatic trips. We've also seen people get triggered into psychotic episodes, have lasting, persistent mental health issues, and experience major medical emergencies.

Worst of all, we also know multiple people who have died in situations involving psychedelics, most often as the result of combinations with other drugs or accidents resulting from being too high to interact safely with their environment.

Sadly, none of these have been isolated incidents. Over the years, we've been in the unique position of witnessing each of these negative outcomes many, many times.

## WHO WE ARE

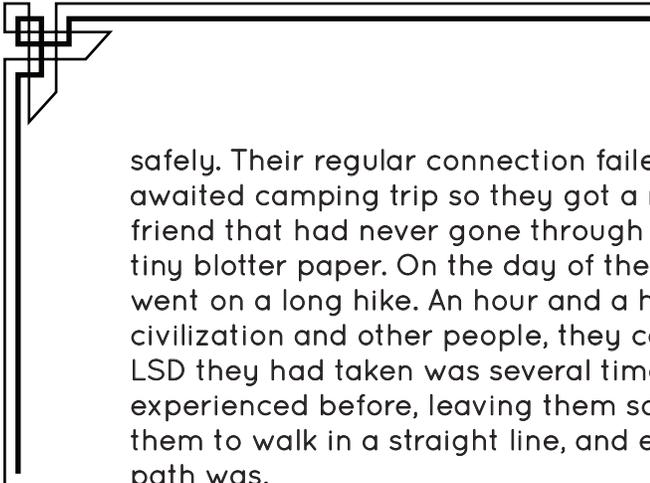
The Psychedelic Safety Alliance was founded by people who grew up working in the festival and nightlife industry as performers, event staff, and first responders. As a result of spending several combined decades in environments with lots of psychedelic use, we've seen a lot of stuff go sideways.

Many of the negative outcomes we've witnessed around psychedelics have happened to strangers at events, but it's been the incidents involving our friends which have been the most heartbreaking to watch.

One of the first times in our lives that one of us realized psychedelic safety might be important was a trip with five friends in the woods.

## BLOTTER SURPRISE

This is a story about five friends in their mid 20s who had been taking LSD together at festivals and at camping trips for about 5 years. In the past, they had received their LSD exclusively from one person, and every time they took it they took a single hit, which is enough for things to get sparkly, and occasionally have some productive feelings with each other but otherwise left them fully able to navigate an outdoor environment



safely. Their regular connection failed to come through on the eve of a much awaited camping trip so they got a recommendation through a friend of a friend that had never gone through before and procured five hits on very tiny blotter paper. On the day of their adventure they took one hit each and went on a long hike. An hour and a half into the hike, several miles from civilization and other people, they came up and quickly discovered that the LSD they had taken was several times more potent than what they had ever experienced before, leaving them so high that it was difficult for some of them to walk in a straight line, and even harder to identify where the main path was.

The experience was so intense that one person started to get scared and hyperventilate, the fear and anxiety they were experiencing became contagious and started to freak out several more people in their party, none of whom knew what to do to calm the situation down. Unsure what to do, they stayed put on the trail, did their best to calm each other down, but the fun, excited vibe had solidly disappeared.

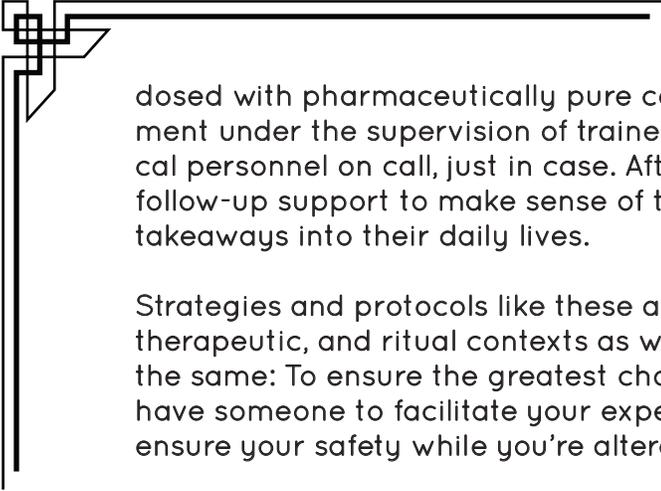
Several hours later, they all came down enough to make their way back to their cabin, where dehydrated and heavily sunburned they spent the next 5 hours feeling wrung out, emotionally depleted and staring at a lightly pulsating ceiling trying to sleep.

This group of friends was experienced with psychedelics, believed they were being safety conscious, and in many ways they were, and still had a bad time. This unfortunately is a fairly common flavor of story among many experienced psychonauts we know. If you take enough psychedelics over a long enough period of time, it is almost inevitable that something at some point will go sideways. The people in this story were fortunate that things did not escalate further, but this is a good example of one of the many ways that overconfidence and a lack of psychedelic safety training can turn an otherwise fun experience into a harrowing tale.

## PROFESSIONALS KNOW THERE ARE RISKS AND PREPARE ACCORDINGLY

Lots of people are getting interested in psychedelics because of the glowing research studies that have been coming out recently. What folks often don't consider is that participants in these studies are served and supported with a degree of precision and expertise that's still relatively inaccessible to most people.

Participants in these studies are thoroughly screened to make sure it's safe for them to participate from both a mental and physical perspective. They're prepared in advance for their experience. On the day of a session, they're



dosed with pharmaceutically pure compounds in a safe, curated environment under the supervision of trained clinicians who have emergency medical personnel on call, just in case. After sessions, participants receive follow-up support to make sense of their experiences and integrate any takeaways into their daily lives.

Strategies and protocols like these are used in other supervised medical, therapeutic, and ritual contexts as well. The underlying best practices are all the same: To ensure the greatest chance of benefits, it's a good idea to have someone to facilitate your experience, set you up for success, and ensure your safety while you're altered.

## THIS IS NOT HOW MANY PEOPLE TAKE PSYCHEDELICS

Lots of folks we've seen get into trouble with psychedelics weren't trying to connect with their inner child, their ancestors, or the Universe. They were just trying to have a fun adventure with their friends and thus didn't think they needed all the preparation and structure one finds in a supervised environment...until they did.

When you take psychedelics outside of a supervised context, there are no safety protocols, planning, or professional support systems provided. It all has to come from you.

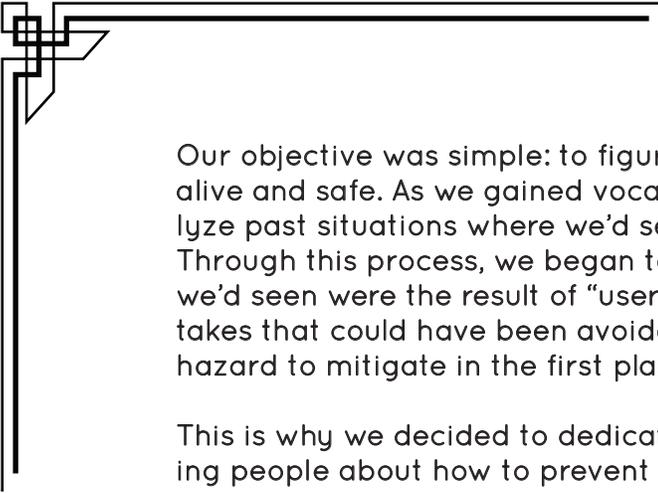
That means you are solely responsible for fully evaluating and preparing your internal and external environment before an experience. You are responsible for making sure what you're taking is safe. You are responsible for taking preventative measures to ensure nothing goes sideways during your experience. If something does go sideways, you have to know how to respond in the interest of preserving health, sanity, and life.

If some of our friends had had these kinds of skills, they might still be with us today.

## WE GOT NERDY TO PROTECT OUR COMMUNITY

Our work in the festival and nightlife communities started in earnest while we were college students, so when a lot of people around us started to get hurt, lose their sanity, and die, we had access to academic resources which helped us understand why.

Fueled by confusion, dismay, and grief for those we'd lost, we got nerdy, began taking psychopharmacology classes, started studying harm reduction, and began educating ourselves about all the ways things could go sideways on psychedelics.



Our objective was simple: to figure out how to keep the people around us alive and safe. As we gained vocabulary and awareness, we began to analyze past situations where we'd seen things go sideways on psychedelics. Through this process, we began to realize that many negative outcomes we'd seen were the result of "user error," preventable accidents and mistakes that could have been avoided if people had known there was a risk or hazard to mitigate in the first place.

This is why we decided to dedicate a significant part of our lives to educating people about how to prevent unnecessary harm, loss, and suffering related to psychedelics.

## WE RALLIED A TEAM OF EXPERTS TO HELP US GET IT RIGHT

At the beginning of our journey, it became clear that the topic of psychedelic safety is endlessly complex and requires input from a half-dozen different disciplines that didn't always talk to each other.

We didn't have decades and millions of dollars to become experts at everything, so we became experts at asking great questions instead. We then started networking with scientists, first responders, social workers, mental health professionals, and experts from the worlds of both conventional and psychedelic harm reduction to assemble a psychedelic safety team we could consult with.

We then brought the folks on our team case studies from the field, got them to explain what had likely gone sideways, and spent years aggregating and translating their wisdom into a concise, digestible format.

As we did so, patterns emerged.

## THE 5 COMMON PSYCHEDELIC RISK VECTORS

Most of the bad things that happen to people on psychedelics come from one of the 5 common risk vectors we identified:

1. Incorrect Dosing
2. Harmful Drug Interactions
3. Misrepresented or Adulterated Product
4. Medical Crises
5. Psycho-Emotional Crises

These risk vectors fall into two categories:

Risk vectors 1-3 are where the majority of “user error” occurs. These are the areas where preventative safety measures matter most.

Risk vectors 4-5 are where your ability to correctly assess and respond in an emergency can have a huge health and safety impact. These are the areas where not knowing what to do can make a bad situation even worse.

## AWARENESS OF THESE VECTORS IS WHERE PSYCHEDELIC SAFETY BEGINS

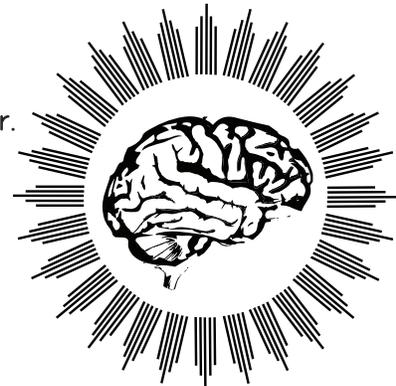
In our next installment, we’re going to teach you how to use an awareness of the risks inherent in Incorrect Dosing, Bad Drug Interactions, and Misrepresented or Adulterated Product to anticipate and mitigate potential issues before they happen.

If you want to have a beneficial psychedelic experience, locking in your safety in advance is the place to start, and we’re here to help you get started.

Stay tuned, psychonauts!

Until next time, may the cosmos be ever in your favor.

Love,  
Dax & Ally  
Co-founders, The Psychedelic Safety Alliance



Obligatory Disclaimer:

The Psychedelic Safety Alliance does not provide mental healthcare, medical services, or individual consultation on cases. The Psychedelic Safety Alliance is not a substitute for drug treatment or similar services, medical, psychological, or psychiatric diagnosis, treatment, or advice.

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Using psychedelics can pose serious risks to your mental and physical health, and in some cases, using psychedelics can lead to addiction or death. The Psychedelic Safety Alliance does not condone or condemn the use of psychedelics, nor do we encourage you to begin or continue taking psychedelics.

Do not disregard or delay seeking professional advice because of the availability of services or educational materials offered by the Psychedelic Safety Alliance. If you are in a crisis or if you or any other person may be in danger or experiencing a mental health emergency, immediately call 911 (USA) or your local emergency resources. If you are experiencing a medical emergency, please seek medical attention.