

Session 2: The Art of the Pre-Game

Key Terms

BIOAVAILABILITY: How much and how quickly a drug is absorbed after administration.

CONTRAINDICATION: Any condition - such as a pre-existing medical condition or another drug - that serves as a reason to not take a particular drug due to the harm that it could cause.

ROUTE OF ADMINISTRATION: Route of Administration refers to the place where you put drugs into your body.

HALF-LIFE: The amount of time it takes for 50% of a drug to be metabolized and excreted from your body.

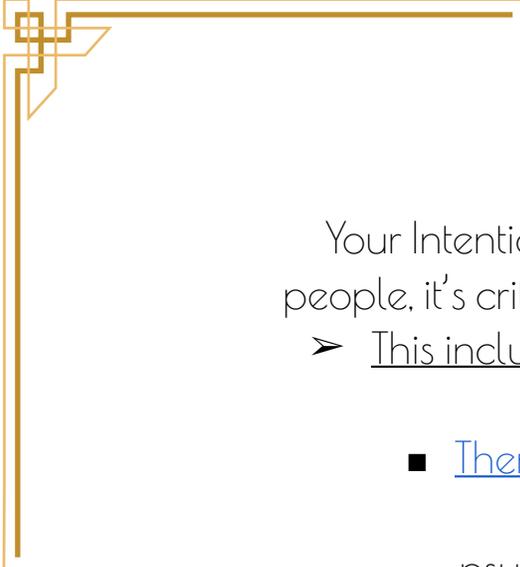
Intention

Drugs are tools that people use for reasons. Assessing and articulating your reasons is recommended to help create an intention for your experience

Due to the highly suggestive nature of psychedelics, having a clearly-defined intention is highly recommended to maximize the possibility that you have the kind of experience you want.

- Set boundaries around your own activity during your experience to hold yourself accountable for your conduct.

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Your Intention Isn't Just For You. When journeying with other people, it's critical to share intentions and ensure that they align.

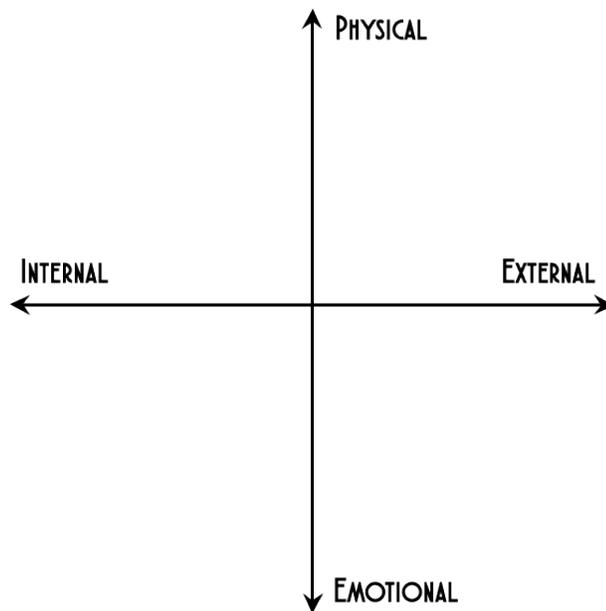
- This includes but is not limited to sexual consent in advance of any experience.
 - [There are many tools and checklists available](#) to review possible sexual activities that you can apply to psychedelic settings, where your needs may differ from a sober context.
 - Not sure where to start? [This guide from Scarleteen](#) walks you through it.
- Evaluate whether you feel comfortable setting boundaries - sexual or otherwise - with the individuals you are with.

Set & Setting: Critical Variables to Track

Set refers to your mindset, internal physical environment, and internal mental/emotional state going into a drug experience.

Setting refers to the physical and social environment in which the experience takes place.

Set & Setting have an impact on the effects of all drugs, but the effects of psychedelics are uniquely dependent on these variables. Psychedelic experiences can become undesirably weird, difficult, or hazardous if a variable in set and setting are off. Doing a pre-journey cross-check on set and setting is recommended before every experience to help ensure you're able to deliver on your intention and have the kind of experience you want.



- ❖ SET: Internal Mental & Emotional Environment
 - Both current and ongoing mental health issues can impact your experience.
 - Stress, anxiety and depression can all be amplified on psychedelics.

- If something acutely distressing is happening in your world, that distress can become heightened on psychedelics. If you're not in a good headspace today, consider waiting, especially if you lack support to process such things if they come up.



SET: Internal Physical Environment

- Recent injuries may be exacerbated
- Biological clock - when are you naturally the most alert?
- Sleep cycles - psychedelics are not a substitute for sleep!
- Overall health. Being sick is not fun on psychedelics.



SETTING: Physical Environment

- Temperature & Humidity
- Clear area of dangerous & sharp objects
- Transportation appropriate to sobriety level (if traveling)
- Clean and tidy your home environment
- Creating spaces to be undisturbed during your journey can be helpful



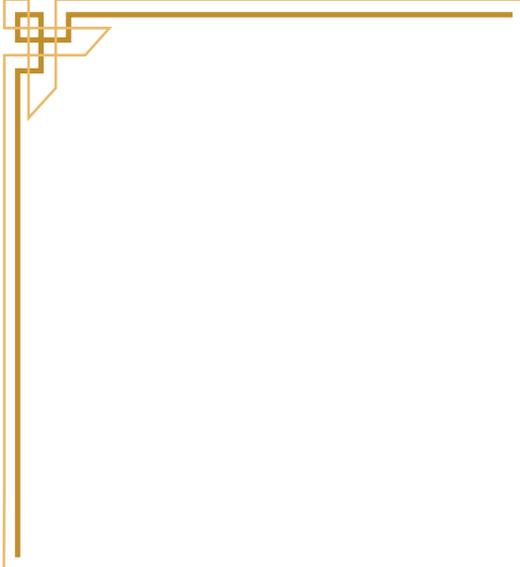
SETTING: Social Environment

- Sound insulation & noise levels
- Comfort around any other people you're voyaging with
 - Clear the air of any issues in advance!
- Pet care
- If possible, have a "sober sitter" to assist with any emergent challenges
 - Recommended reading: [Manual of Psychedelic Support](#)

NERD ALERT!

Check out [the first meta-analysis of set & setting's impact on the](#)

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[experience of psilocybin users!](#)

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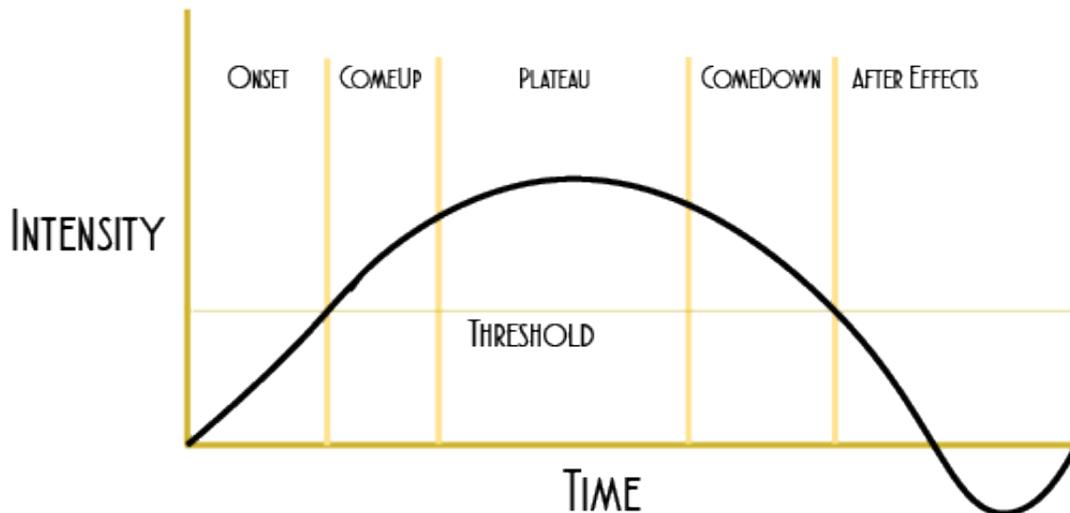
Pharmacokinetics

- ❖ The pharmacokinetics of a substance describe how that substance acts on your body over time.



Know The 5 Elements of Pharmacokinetics:

- Onset: The period of time between when you take a drug and when you begin to feel an effect.
- Comeup: The period of time between beginning to feel an effect and when the effect reaches maximum intensity.
- Plateau: The period of time where the drug effect is at maximum intensity.
- Comedown: The period of time between when the maximum effect begins to decrease and when you no longer feel high.
- Aftershocks: The period of time between no longer feeling high



and residual effects like insomnia/hangovers going away.

- Knowing the pharmacokinetics of a substance helps you anticipate and plan for:
 - How long it will take for the substance to kick in
 - How long until you're as high as you're going to be
 - When it's safe to redose, if that's a thing you plan to do
 - When you'll start coming down
 - When you'll be able to go to sleep afterwards
 - When you'll be sober enough to operate motor vehicles or navigate hazardous environments.

Routes of Administration (ROA)

- The ROA you choose will determine both the pharmacokinetics and the dose of a compound you take, so identifying your ROA is the first place to start when you are doing research and making a plan to take a psychedelic.
 - Tables with information on dosing ranges and pharmacokinetics for specific substances at different ROA can be found on the individual pages for specific substances on databases like [Erowid](#) and [PsychonautWiki](#)
 - Each ROA can be uniquely impacted by different drugs in ways that can cause acute and/or chronic damage.
- ❖ Common ROA in order from slowest to fastest onset (and highest margin of safety to lowest):
- Oral Administration (swallowing)

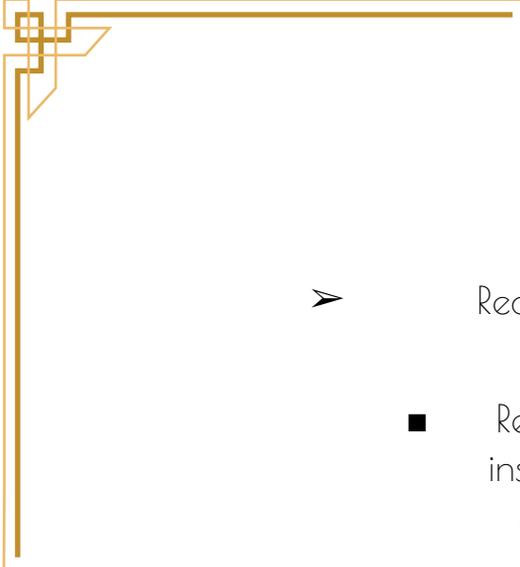
- Highest safety margin of all ROA due to the large number of filtering mechanisms in your digestive tract which exist to protect you from food-borne pathogens etc.
- Oral administration typically has the widest range of possible onset times (15 minutes- 3 hours, making it the hardest ROA to anticipate.
- Taking psychedelics orally tends to have a more gradual onset/comeup and longer duration
- [A complex variety of GI factors](#) influence the way orally administered drugs are absorbed into your bloodstream.
 - This makes the efficiency of oral dosing harder to predict
 - The more food in your stomach, the slower the onset will be. Empty stomach = faster onset.
- Common pitfall with oral administration: “The Pot Brownie Trap.”
 - This problem results from people getting impatient with the long onset time of a substance they’ve consumed orally, leading people to redose before the full effect of the first dose has kicked in. In our experience, this is one of the most common causes of accidental overdose for this ROA.
 - To mitigate this issue, Outsource Your Brain and Set A Timer. If it hasn’t been at least two hours on an empty stomach or three hours on a full stomach, wait to redose.

- Damage to the lining of the digestive tract is possible for some substances at high doses with repeated use, including ayahuasca and MDMA.



Sublingual Administration (Under the Tongue)

- Sublingual administration has a higher safety profile than smoking, snorting, and injecting due to slower onset, the filtering properties of the mucus membranes under your tongue, and the likelihood that you'll swallow at least part of what's under your tongue and absorb it orally.
- Sublingual administration can have a faster onset (15-60 minutes) and shorter duration than oral administration
 - Your Technique Matters: The longer you hold a compound under your tongue without swallowing, the faster it will be absorbed.
 - At minimum, you need to hold a substance under your tongue for 30 seconds in order to get a faster onset than if you took it orally. Holding for 1-2 minutes will improve absorption further.
 - ◆ If you jump the gun and swallow too soon, you're really just doing oral administration.
- Sublingual administration is commonly used in conjunction with or as a substitute for oral administration when a faster onset is called for.
- Gross flavor of many compounds is a common drawback
- Some psychedelic compounds are caustic and can damage sensitive gum tissue

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- Rectal/Suppository Administration (Boofing/Plugging)
 - Rectal administration is sometimes used as an alternative to insufflation when people wish to reduce the negative impact of spraying powder and/or sharp crystals on their sinus tissue.
 - Rectal administration is also used as an alternative to oral administration to reduce nausea and shorten onset time.
 - 15-30 minute average onset time, typically faster than sublingual administration due to more complete absorption through mucus membranes in the rectum.
 - Few acute or chronic issues associated with use
 - MANY techniques for boofing are readily available via an Internet search
 - Have gloves & sterilization equipment for proper hygiene
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 - [Recommended plugging technique from TripSit.me](#)
 - [Lube Shooters](#) are a great way to dose precisely

- Insufflation (Snorting)
 - Fast onset via absorption through the sinuses (1-5 minutes)

- Absorption will vary depending on particulate size
 - ◆ Ensure powder is as finely powdered as possible to increase bioavailability and reduce damage to sinuses
- The fast onset time of insufflation makes it easier to Start Low and Go Slow by snorting a small amount, waiting 15 minutes to see where it gets you, and taking more if desired
- Long-term damage to sinuses is possible with extended use of insufflated compounds - even if you don't feel it at the time

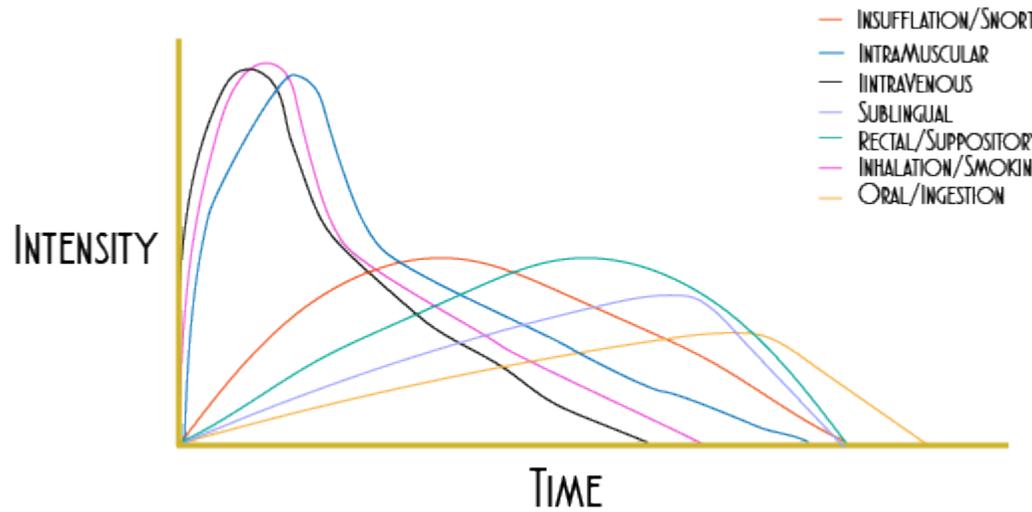


Inhalation (Smoking)

- One of the shortest onset times (as little 20-60 seconds)
 - "Rushing" during onset more common with this ROA
- Slightly shorter duration than other ROA
- Your smoking technique affects absorption
 - The longer you hold a hit, the more your lungs are able to absorb
 - If you don't "chase" a hit all the way into your lungs by inhaling a small amount of air at the end, some amount of the smoke/vapor will hang out in your throat, where it can't be absorbed.
- Smoking has fewer acute issues but more long-term issues than many other routes of administration
 - Asthma and other respiratory issues can be aggravated by using this ROA
 - Other forms of lung damage are possible from

temperature & particulates

- Smoking anything Increases risk factors for COVID-19 severity and other respiratory illnesses
- Disease transmission is possible if sharing pipes or vaping equipment



Dosing

- The Dose Makes The Poison.
- A “hit” is not a standard unit of measurement. The experience you had on a certain number of “hits” in the past is not a guideline for future decisions unless you were able to measure and quantify the dose.
- More Is Not Always Better: Aim for the Minimum Effective Dose which you anticipate will deliver on your intention and facilitate the kind of experience you desire with as few side effects as possible.
- Remember: Your Biology May Vary. Someone you know having a particular experience on a given dose does not mean that you are guaranteed the same experience at that dose.
- Start Low, Go Slow. When trying a new substance, a new batch, or a new combination, it’s better to be disappointed than totally fucked.
- When in doubt, go for the lowest dose that’s likely to help you deliver on your intention and take notes for next time. You can always take more next time.

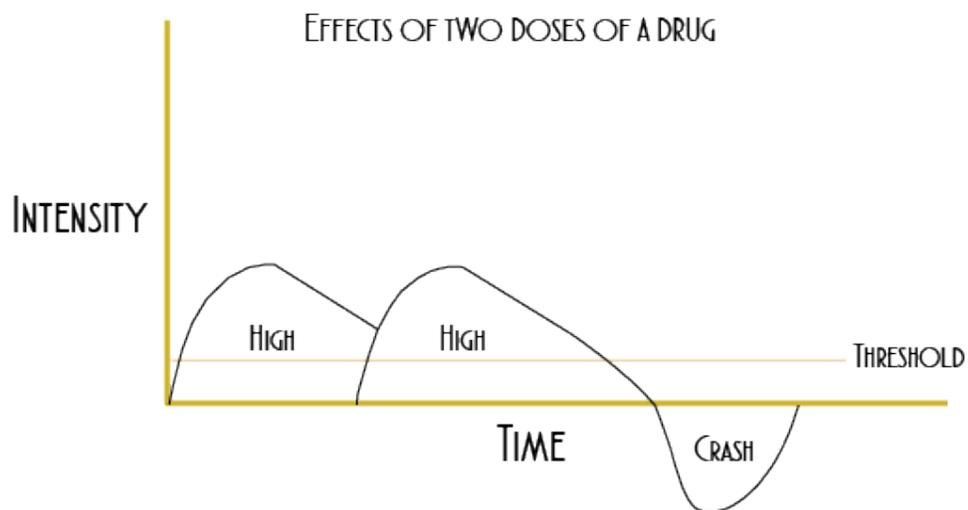
Drug Combinations & Interactions

- Combining drugs is common. It’s also one of the easiest ways to accidentally make yourself sick, have an unintentionally intentional
- To research drug interactions and screen for harmful combinations, we recommend using online resources like the [Drugs.com Interactions Checker](#).
- Rule of Three: After three substances, it’s exponentially harder to track the number of variables at play, so if you’re going to combine substances, keeping it to 2 at a time dramatically improves your ability to anticipate and track interactions.
 - Remember that psychedelics can also potentially interact with nootropics, prescription and over-the-counter

medications (especially psychiatric medications), teas, herbal supplements, and some foods (ex. grapefruit!)

Redosing

- Redosing adds to, but does not reset, the duration of your experience.
- From a clinical perspective, it takes 4-5 half-lives for the drugs you took to be completely eliminated from your body, so if you're redosing before that amount of time has passed, remaining drugs and metabolites from your first dose will still be in your system and will impact your experience.
- It is therefore harder to predict the effect a redose will have on your body.
- Measuring psychedelics while on psychedelics can be dicey and occasionally leads to dangerous mistakes. Measure and pack your re-doses in advance of getting high to ensure accuracy and reduce the urge to redose compulsively.



In Summary

Key Takeaways: When you're trying a compound for the first time, managing and tracking these variables is the best way to ensure safety in the face of an uncertain response and provides clues for how you might want to do things differently the next time.

If you are taking a familiar substance and trying a new ROA or dosage, that's a cue to cross-check all 3 variables, see what the new values are and determine if those new values align with your current situation and intention.

