



**The Third Wave**

# Psychedelics for Mental Health

# Hello!

## Welcome to The Third Wave.

This resource has been designed to guide you through the most important research being done on psychedelics and mental health, and to make you aware of the safe and responsible use of psychedelics.

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**DISCLAIMER:** No one at The Third Wave is a mental health professional. The information provided here is not medical advice. We are not telling you to take psychedelics to treat any mental health conditions. This is a curated information package designed to educate and inform. **And, please, if you have a family history of psychosis, do NOT use psychedelics - ever (even microdosing).**

# Research into Psychedelics and Mental Health Conditions

After the second wave of psychedelics, the golden era of the 60s and 70s, research into psychedelics mostly dried up as a result of prohibition. Now, in the coming Third Wave of psychedelics, we're seeing a dramatic increase in the number of published studies concerning psychedelic drugs. A significant number of these studies deal with issues of mental health.

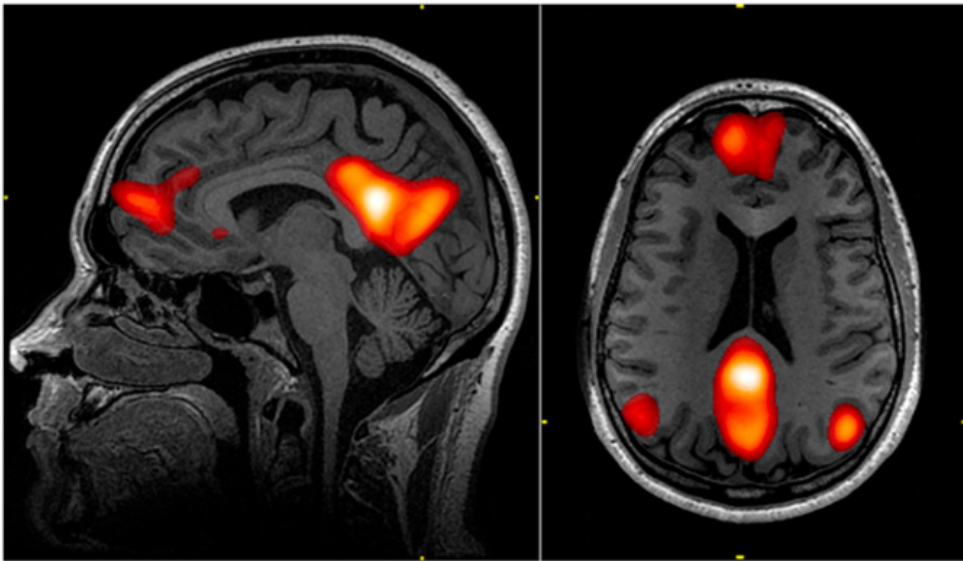
Many useful studies were performed in the 60s and 70s, although often without perfect scientific design. Modern studies are generally well designed, and although researching Schedule I drugs is incredibly prohibitive and expensive, we've seen some very promising results from modern psychedelic research.

Here we've compiled some of the most important research into psychedelics and mental health.

# Psychedelics and the DMN: Depression, Anxiety and OCD

One of the most famous recent studies into psychedelics examined the [effects LSD had on the brains of volunteers](#), using high-resolution brain imaging. One of the findings of this study was that LSD (and by extension, other classic psychedelics like psilocybin) have a dramatic effect on the default mode network, or DMN. This is a system in the brain that is responsible for self-reflection, holding an important role in our everyday consciousness.

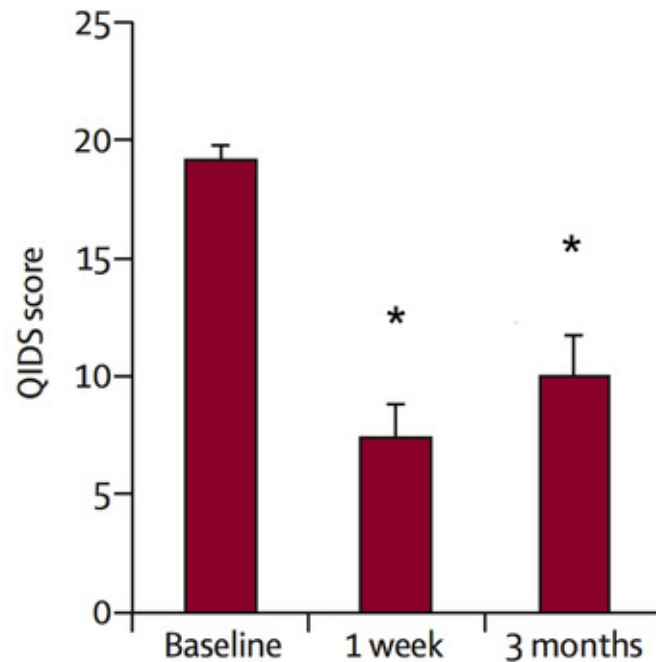
When we take LSD, however, the control of the DMN on consciousness is released, allowing us to break free from typical thought patterns. It's thought that it's this disruption of the DMN that causes typical feelings of 'ego dissolution' when we take high doses of psychedelics.



*The Default Mode Network: from Carhart-Harris et al (2016)*

This finding has important implications for mental health; in disorders such as depression, anxiety and OCD, it's been found that the DMN is overactive, causing repetitive negative thoughts. It's likely that if we can reduce the control of the DMN on consciousness, we can alleviate symptoms of depression as well as control issues related to OCD and anxiety.

Thankfully, we can back up our speculations about depression with specific studies. [A study of 12 patients with severe depression](#) showed that psilocybin-assisted therapy dramatically reduced their depression scores, and this change lasted for at least three months. The participants had gone through two therapy sessions, lasting several hours each, the first with a 10mg dose of psilocybin and the second with a 25mg dose.



*Adapted from Carhart-Harris et al (2016)*

There have been several studies addressing the use of psychedelics to treat end-of-life anxiety in people suffering from terminal illnesses, which you can read about in more detail here. To summarise, [two](#) recent large [studies](#) have shown that doses of psilocybin between 20-30mg (combined with therapy) significantly improved anxiety and depression scores in dozens of patients with terminal illnesses, compared to a placebo.

These reductions in anxiety were even maintained for many months following the therapy sessions. Participants reported feeling more spiritual, and feeling more positive about their situation. Many ranked the psilocybin experiences as among their top most meaningful experiences in their lives.

OCD is another disorder linked to an overactive DMN, and research has linked psychedelics to improvements in OCD symptoms; [a study](#) of nine OCD sufferers found that giving them one dose of psilocybin, as low as 7mg, significantly reduced their negative symptoms.

Unfortunately, these beneficial effects faded after several months, possible because the patients were not given therapy in combination with their dose of psilocybin. Other evidence points towards psychedelics being useful in treating OCD, which you can read more about here.

# Psychedelics for PTSD and Autism

Currently, a huge amount of research is being undertaken into psychedelic-assisted therapy for PTSD, most of it funded by [MAPS](#). It's thought that the effects of the psychedelic drug MDMA could help sufferers revisit past traumas, and work through their emotions, without the typical feelings of fear and pain they associate with those memories.

[Initial results](#) from the MAPS studies show that MDMA-assisted psychotherapy dramatically reduced PTSD symptoms in 20 sufferers, following several sessions. The reduction in PTSD symptoms even lasted several years after the first sessions in most (74%) of the participants. You can read more here about MDMA's use in treating PTSD.

Since MDMA helps people connect with each other, and access their emotions more freely, it's also been suggested that MDMA-assisted therapy could help people with autism.

Currently MAPS are undertaking [a clinical trial](#) to investigate MDMA-assisted therapy and autism, but results are not yet available. All we have to go on at the moment are [anecdotal reports](#) of autistic adults taking psychedelics like LSD and psilocybin, and [finding improvements](#) in the negative aspects of their autism.

# Psychedelics for Addiction

There's a large body of convincing evidence that suggests psychedelics can treat various forms of addiction, from alcoholism to opiate addiction.

[A recent review](#) examined the results of several studies from the 60s and 70s that investigated LSD's effect on alcoholism. The analysis suggests that a single moderate dose of LSD can significantly improve alcohol abstinence in people suffering from alcoholism.

[A pilot study](#) into psilocybin and alcoholism showed that a course of psilocybin treatment (28mg) significantly reduced the drinking habits of 10 alcoholics over six months.

Various observational studies and surveys suggest that the psychedelic brew ayahuasca reduces alcohol use and other addictive behaviours, which we summarise in this article.

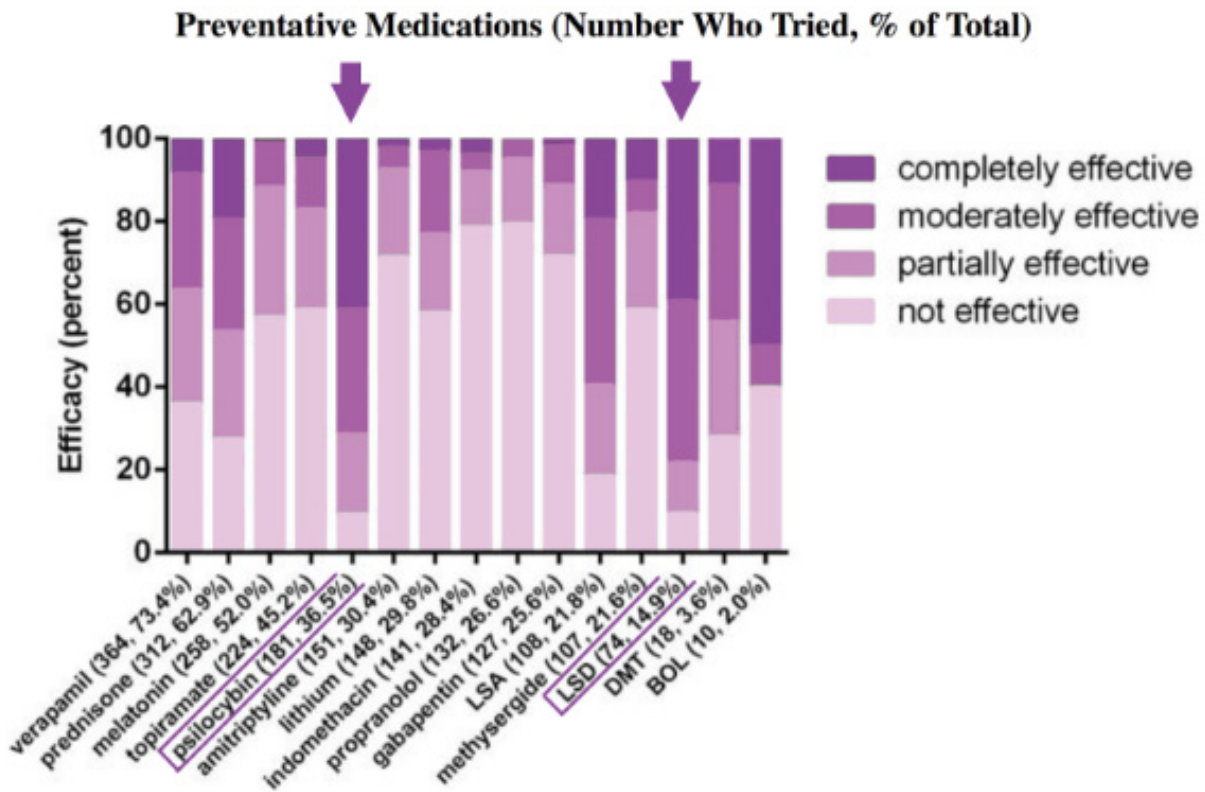
[An excellent pilot study](#) showed that psilocybin could be used to treat tobacco addiction; treatment with psilocybin (30mg in combination with psychotherapy) improved abstinence in 15 heavy smokers. After 16 months, most smokers were still abstinent, which is more impressive than most treatments of tobacco addiction.

The traditional psychedelic ibogaine has been used by many people to assist with withdrawal symptoms. Although there is no concrete evidence that ibogaine can help people with addiction, [two observational studies](#) funded by MAPS have shown that ibogaine significantly reduces withdrawal symptoms in addicts. *NOTE: ibogaine can cause heart failure in people with prior heart conditions.*

# Psychedelics for Cluster Headaches

Although not technically mental health, cluster headaches are an excruciating form of headache that can push people to suicide.

Recently, [a large survey](#) has shown that psilocybin and LSD may be more effective treatments of cluster headaches than typical medications, both at preventing attacks and stopping headaches after they've begun. There's no clinical evidence to back this up yet, but the website [cluster-busters](#) is full of people's accounts of the benefits they've found from psychedelics.



From Schindler et al (2015)



# Using Psychedelics to Treat Mental Health Issues

All the evidence points towards psychedelics being a revolutionary treatment for various mental health issues - but the most promising results come from studies that combine psychedelics with professional therapy.

If sufferers of mental health issues decide to self-medicate, outside of a clinical setting, they may not see the benefits that are being reported from these controlled studies.

Therefore, if people do decide to self-medicate, they should be aware of the risks of psychedelic use, and be familiar with how to get the most out of a psychedelic experience.

# Using Psychedelics at Home

There are two main ways that people can choose to use psychedelics at home, which we'll cover here: microdosing or macrodosing.

Hundreds of anecdotal reports have been collected of people microdosing with LSD and psilocybin to improve depression and anxiety. Microdosing involves taking very small (almost unnoticeable) doses of psychedelics, every few days, for a course of a few weeks.

Usually, the amount consumed to feel a benefit varies from person to person, so most individuals start off small, at a dose of about 5-10ug of LSD or 0.1-0.3g of dried psilocybin mushrooms.

Daily routines are carried out as normal, and often, at the end of the day, individuals reflect on how the microdose affected them. Most people leave at least three days between doses, and try it out for a few weeks before stopping to reflect. You can find our more detailed guides on microdosing [here](#).

Macro dosing is the form of psychedelic use that people are more familiar with - taking a relatively large dose of psychedelics that takes up your entire attention for many hours. This is the riskier form of psychedelic use, as a large dose can send you down negative emotional paths and cause some trauma.

No macrodose is particularly rosy, as high doses of psychedelics always dramatically alter your perception in often unpleasant or unusual ways. The key to using high doses of psychedelics is to prepare yourself for an intense (and possibly unpleasant) experience, and treat it as a 'therapy by fire'.

[Research suggests](#) that the powerful mystical experiences induced by these high doses is partly responsible for their therapeutic effects, so you have to be willing to submit to a potentially life-changing journey to get the most out of the substance.

We've [created a guide](#) to using higher doses of psychedelics, which concentrates on the ways people should prepare for a meaningful and therapeutic psychedelic experience.

# Treatment Centers or Retreats

For people who don't want to take psychedelics at home, there is the option of visiting a treatment centre or going on a psychedelic retreat. Various treatment centres exist in both the US and Canada, as well as in Europe and South America, that offer courses for the treatment of mental health conditions such as addiction.

The most common treatment centres focus on ibogaine treatment of addiction, helping addicts get through withdrawal by using the natural psychedelic in a therapeutic setting. There are around 100 ibogaine treatment centres worldwide, so it's important to choose one that is legitimate and safe - make sure they adhere to the [guidelines for ibogaine treatment](#).

Other treatment options are ayahuasca churches - religious groups that use ayahuasca in their ceremonies. The main options are the [UDV](#) in the US, or [Santo Daime](#) in Brazil. These churches have strict no-alcohol policies, and use ayahuasca in their healing rituals to treat addiction and mental health problems.

If you don't want to be part of a treatment centre or religious group, there are various options for private psychedelic retreats, taking only you or you and a group of friends to places where psychedelics are legal to consume.

**Here at The Third Wave, we can provide advice and guidance on the various options for psychedelic retreats. [Please contact us if this is something you're interested in.](#)**

# What's Next For You?

Now that you have a solid idea of the efficacy of psychedelics in treating mental health issues, we recommend reviewing your options and asking if this is an option for you.

It is important to note that if you have family history of psychosis, you need to avoid psychedelics as they could trigger a schizophrenic break.

If you are interested, however, in learning more, please review the following resources:

- [Our Best Content on Psychedelics](#)
- [How to Get Involved in Psychedelic Community](#)
- [Subscribe to the Psychedelia Podcast: Conversations About The Third Wave](#)

We also offer one-to-one coaching on anything to do with psychedelics; from guidance on how to get started in the psychedelic world, to consultations on how to get the most out of your psychedelic experience. If this is something you're interested in, [please register for a brief call with Paul by going here.](#)

Please stay in touch going forward.

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