I want to know what it is when you spontaneously trip without dropping tabs or anything. I've never had any drugs except marijuana. It is weird. I know that tripping is an induced psychosis, so am I psychotic or what? I was seeing a shrink and will be going back into treatment next semester. I think substance use is boring and a complete copout on life. I've made a lot of discoveries without needing to trip. Why does this happen? Tell me what you know.

Signed,
Gandhi admirer

Answer

Dear Gandhi admirer,

There are so many possible causes of what you're experiencing, it's really difficult to pin down one solid explanation. But we can explore some possibilities here. For one, marijuana has been known to produce spontaneous tripping, but usually only in those already vulnerable to psychotic disorders. Certain doses of other drugs such as antihistamines, antidepressants, antibiotics, tranquilizers, and steroids, can also prompt hallucinations. And non-drug-induced mind-altering moments might be due, beyond a healthy, productive imagination, to such conditions as post-traumatic stress and the early onset of psychosis.

Are you experiencing hallucinations where you see or hear things that are not there? Or are they illusions, where you misperceive what is in front of you? Do they take auditory form? Visual? Both? The DSM-IV attributes the onset of hallucinations to negative stress. In a majority of people, the amount of stress one must experience before having a hallucination is extremely high. In people prone to mental illness, the threshold is much lower. When evaluating whether someone is prone to mental illness, professionals may ask about family history, check your vital signs (blood pressure, pulse, temperature), and conduct oral and written tests to help determine what condition if any (like depression, mania, schizophrenia, post-traumatic shock disorder) could be causing these troubling trips.

Coming from a radically different perspective, one article maintains that not all auditory hallucinations are negative or a sign of mental illness. The author refers to Gandhi as an example of a man who followed "inner voices" to make a difficult decision, and relied on this voice as a form of guidance, high consciousness, and spirituality. In determining whether you
might be a Ghandi-emulator as well as a Ghandi-admirer, it might be helpful to ask yourself certain questions such as: Does your tripping interfere with your ability to perform the normal tasks of your life like completing your schoolwork, performing at work, or having good relationships? If so, getting help might be a good idea. It’s great that you have a therapist you plan on continuing to work with. Columbia students can also make an appointment with Counseling and Psychological Services [3] by calling x4-2878, or with Primary Care Medical Services [4] by calling x4-2284 or logging into Open Communicator [5].

Again, only a health care provider can diagnose whether your trips are an effect of a drug you have taken in the past, a tendency toward mental illness, or an active imagination. The next time you see your therapist might be a great time to start in figuring just where your symptoms have their roots, and what you want to do about them.

Alice!
Category:
LSD, PCP, & Other Hallucinogens [6]

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