Trying psychedelics [1]

Dear Alice,

I have two concerns:

My boyfriend claims psychedelics open your mind to new ideas/perspectives and help you experience the "spiritual world." I maintain that anything you see or think is just a result from a brain overloaded on chemicals. However, I am beginning to feel closed-minded, and I would like to have your opinion on psychedelics? are they beneficial if used for a one-time experience, and will they immediately/permanently alter the way I view the world and myself? Given that I have doubts, should I even try anything this mind-altering? I have read your answers pertaining to short-/long-term effects, but I wanted to know if there was any actual evidence of the beneficial effects.

?Psychedelically concerned

Answer

Dear Psychedelically concerned,

LSD ("acid"), mushrooms ("shrooms"), and other members of the psychedelic family, sometimes called "club drugs," are powerful, mind-altering, and yes, often mind-expanding drugs. Ecstasy ("X" or "E") is a stimulant that can also have psychedelic effects. LSD and X are synthesized drugs, so out-of-body sensations associated with LSD and loving, touchy-feeliness associated with X are indeed chemically induced. Both LSD and X mimic hallucinogens that naturally occur in 'shrooms.

While some studies are looking into ways that monitored, small-dose psychedelic use might be beneficial in the field of medicine, there are no known health benefits for recreational users. People are often drawn to psychedelics because of the spiritual awakening or mind expansion they hope to experience. Many people describe feeling heightened emotions or senses while they are on psychedelic trips. However, psychedelic drugs are not proven either to stimulate creativity or to increase sexual arousal.

Effects of psychedelic drugs depend largely on a person's mood, expectations, and level of experience with the drug. The environment in which these drugs are taken also play a role in their effect; noisy, stressful settings, such as raves, are often more exaggerated with sensory overload, being more troublesome for users than quieter, peaceful settings. For first-timers, especially those who are unsure about trying these kinds of drugs, their sense of doubt can
magnify into extreme anxiety. It's strongly advised that people known to have signs of depression, schizophrenia, or paranoia not try or use psychedelics, because the drugs are likely to aggravate any present symptoms.

A bad trip can lead to harmful situations. Many injuries and deaths associated with hallucinogens are not caused by chemical reactions in the body, but rather because the person panics and gets violent or out of control. Another concern is overheating. Because psychedelics increase body temperature, which is exacerbated by hot, crowded situations, in extreme circumstances, a person could have liver, kidney, or cardiovascular system failure. People can also become dehydrated, and this might cause them to drink toxic amounts of water, which can be fatal (a.k.a. water intoxication). Long-term effects, such as memory impairment and flashbacks, are associated with chronic use of psychedelics. Generally, people who find their psychedelic trips troubling find them more trouble than they're worth.

As for you, these external pressures and internal doubts are reasons to think about alternative suggestions to explore your mind? "natural highs," such as meditation, yoga, tai-chi [2], exploring Tantra or mystical aspects of religion, or experiencing active pursuits, such as rock climbing, sky diving, etc.

People take all kinds of risks, and you can choose yours.

Alice!
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