FIVE Common Mistakes People Make When Using Plant and Psychedelic Medicines

*Psychedelics and plant medicines can lead to incredibly powerful transformations when used properly. To get the most from the medicines, it’s best to avoid these common pitfalls.*

1. Selecting the wrong medicine

The various plant and psychedelic medicines have some overlapping features with each other, but each has unique properties that make it well-suited for certain types of discovery and healing.

For example, some of the medicines are great at increasing compassion and empathy, others have dissociative properties that can help us face our egos, and some have no psychoactive properties, but can still lead to incredible healing by acting on a molecular level.

Because of this, it’s best to know what your goal is prior to delving into plant medicines. It may be to work through prior traumas, increase mental clarity, boost creativity, or address certain physical or mental ailments. After you know your goal, speak with experts or do your own research ([plantmedicine.org](http://plantmedicine.org) is here to help!) to find the medicines best suited for achieving that goal.

2. Entering the ceremony without an intention

This one builds on the aforementioned goal you are hoping to achieve through medicine work. It’s worth noting that one need not have a very specific goal. In fact, often the simple goal of remaining open to receive is a great one for plant and psychedelic medicines, as the medicines will often show you what you need to see.

Goal or no goal, it is commonly advised to set an intention going into medicine work. Intentions can be anywhere from staying curious and being open to surrendering and trusting. Having an intention can set the stage and lay a framework that can be valuable both while you are in the experience and also when evaluating it afterward.

3. Starting the journey with a turbulent mindset

You may have heard that set and setting are huge factors in psychedelic experiences. Set refers to the mindset one has going into the journey. Entering a ceremony with a mind that’s at peace is more likely to lead to a productive journey, whereas going in with stressed or fearful mindset may lead to a more challenging experience.

You can stack the deck in your favor by doing the work ahead of time to ensure that you are in the best mindset possible when going into the experience. Avoiding conflict and stressful situations, minimizing social media and other distractions, and spending time journaling or in meditation can all help prepare your mindset to get the most out of your medicine work.
4. Taking the substance in the wrong setting

The counterpart to set is setting, which is the physical environment in which the medicine is administered. Taking psychedelics at a concert is going to result in a significantly different experience than doing them in a calm, therapeutic, ceremonial setting. If your goal is to use these substances as medicines, it is best to take them in a setting that is going to foster the experience you desire.

Some benefit from doing the medicines one-on-one with a therapist present, others feel as though the collective conscious experienced in a group setting is helpful. Either way, having a comfortable place to sit or lie down, with appropriate music, minimal distractions, and personal necessities close-by can all foster the chance at having a truly transformative experience.

5. Failing to have a plan for integration

Integration has been referred to as psychedelic aftercare, because it is imperative that following a psychedelic experience there is a conscious effort to integrate what the medicines revealed. Integration involves developing a plan for how to incorporate any lessons learned from the experience into our daily lives.

Integration coaches and therapists can help you tailor this process to your specific journey and needs; however, there are several activities that you can do on your own to help facilitate the process. Journaling, spending time alone and in nature, meditating, and easing back into your normal routine are all helpful to both make the transition smoother and to get the most psychological and physiological benefit from the experience.

Hope that was helpful as you explore the world of plant and psychedelic medicines! If you have any questions or want more information, head to plantmedicine.org for a full list of resources.