

**RMPDS 18th Annual  
Scientific Meeting**

# Addressing Psychedelic Adverse Events

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*NEST Harm Reduction*

*SHINE Collective*



# Agenda

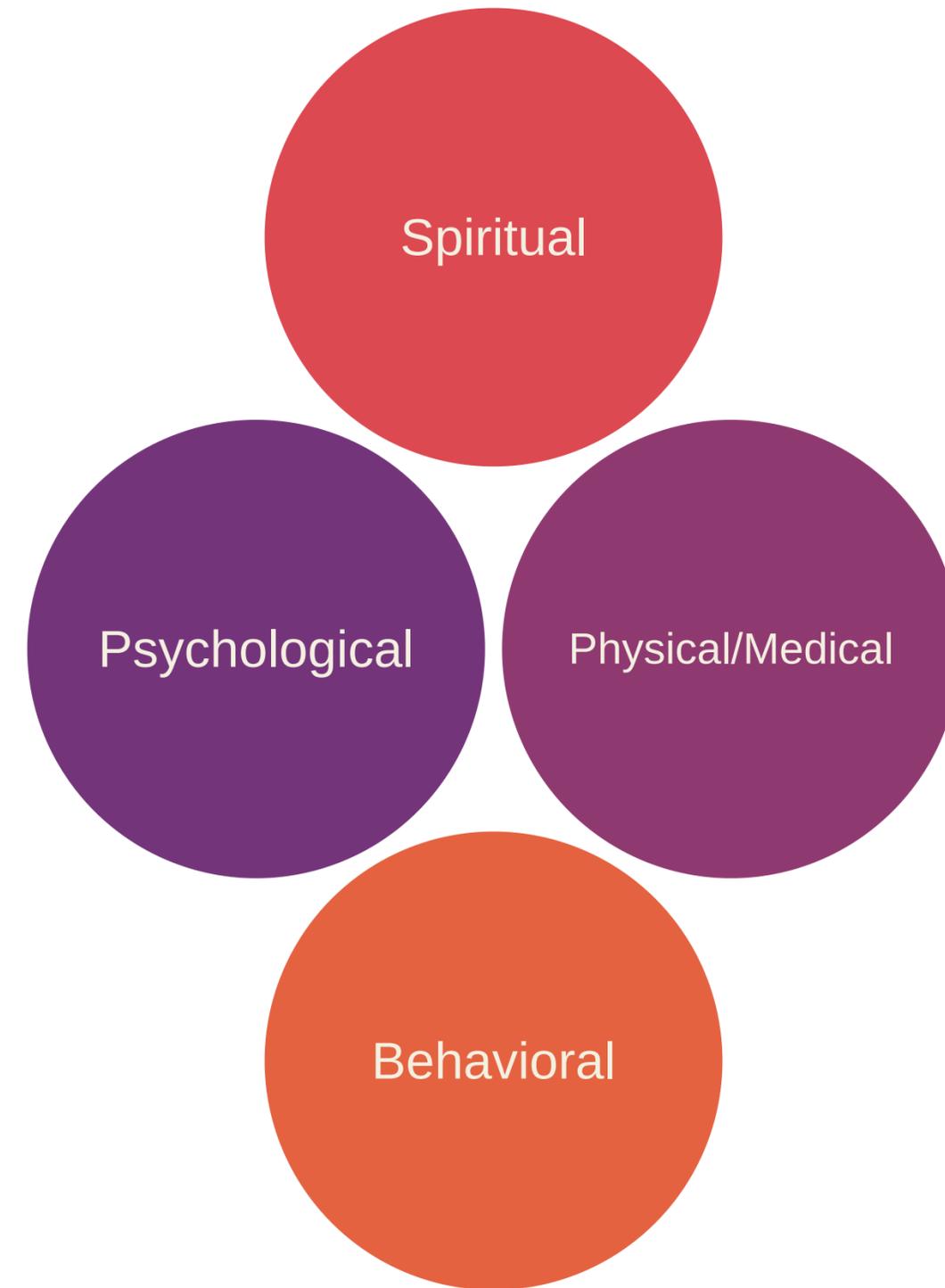
- Psychedelic Use Matrix
- Factors Impacting Outcomes
- High Risk Populations
- Potential Harms
- Addressing Facilitator Misconduct
- Suggestions for Improving Safety
- New SPSI Measure Published!

*Psychedelic Users in the US are growing rapidly regardless of legal access*



# Aspects of Psychedelic Growth

Although a client might be seeking to change one aspect of self, Psychedelics combine and blur a variety of aspects of self growth



# Psychedelic Matrix

A multitude of factors that contribute to an individual's experience of an "expanded state"

1. Preparation & Intention
2. Substance
  - a. Dosing
  - b. Adulteration
3. Set
  - a. Internal & Personal
4. Setting
  - a. Location
  - b. Facilitator
  - c. Participants
5. Aftercare & Support



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# Stages of Psychedelic Care

## CONTEMPLATION

Psychedelic Discernment

What substance?

What setting?

Legality?

Facilitator Selection

## PREPARATION

Rapport Building

Evaluation of Methodology

Informed Consent

Estimated Cost

Personal Prep Work

(dietary guidelines)

## TREATMENT

Length of Treatment

Substance

Dosage

Setting

Facilitation

Location

## AFTERCARE

Integration

Short/Long Term Care

Community Involvement

Lifestyle Changes

Feedback

At each stage, there should be an evaluation of care and an opportunity for reciprocal evaluation and feedback

# High Risk Populations

## CHILDREN/ MINORS

- Is the treatment appropriate for the age of the minor?
- What are the risks of consent and parental permission that is needed?

## TRAUMA SURVIVORS

- What is the support system offered?
- Informed consent around risks and potential for adverse reactions

## FACILITATOR

- Is the facilitator trained to work with this specific population?
- Evaluation of set/setting matrix

## CONTRAINDICATED MEDICATIONS

- Is there a medical risk that needs to be addressed?
- Is there support for a change in medication or titration off contraindicated meds?

ALL clients are at risk for manipulation/coercion because psychedelics induce highly suggestible states



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# Psychedelic Addiction Risk

**Due to natural, rapid tolerance to classic psychedelics (LSD, Psilocybin) there a low risk for habitual use of a single substance.**

**Psychedelic Substance Use Disorder presents as habitual poly-substance use, often coupled with non-classic psychedelics (Ketamine, Nitrous Oxide) which can be habit-forming and have a high-risk of addiction potential.**

# Challenging Experiences

**7%**

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of patients report  
SAE/increase in suicidality  
in clinical trials

**1/3**

---

report extended difficulties  
after 1 year (608 surveyed  
about challenging  
experiences)

**39%**

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report that challenging  
experiences are in the top  
5 most difficult  
experiences of their life

Evans, J. et al, Extended difficulties following the use of psychedelic drugs: A mixed methods study\_(2023).

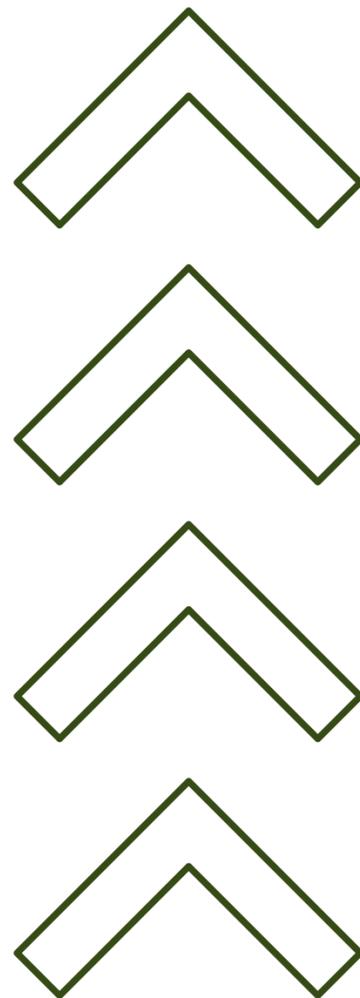


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# Adverse Reactions & Challenging Experiences

## Emotional Dysregulation

Heightened anxiety/worry (26%)  
Difficulty sleeping (9%)  
Social paranoia (13%)  
Inability to emotionally regulate (76%)



## Perceptual Changes

Self perception (58%)  
Cognitive changes (52%)  
Sensory shifts (26%)

## Visual Distortion

Visual perception changes (12%)  
Light Sensitivity  
HPPD

## Spiritual Difficulties

Existential Crisis (17%)  
Changes in Spiritual beliefs (26%)

Evans, J. et al, [Extended difficulties following the use of psychedelic drugs: A mixed methods study \(2023\)](#)

# Types of Psychedelic Harms/Abuse in Client Experience



## PHYSICAL

- Injuries & Accidents
- Adverse Reactions
- HPPD



## PSYCHOLOGICAL

- Perception
- Emotional
- Cognitive



## SPIRITUAL

- Derealization/Existential
- Delusions/Magical Thinking
- Spiritual Bypassing & Ego Inflation



## BEHAVIORAL

- Interpersonal Harms
- Facilitator Harms
- Changes in state

# Types of Psychedelic Harms/Abuse from Facilitators



## **POOR FACILITATION**

- **Poor matching with facilitator/client**
- **External Stimuli Discomfort (music, temperature, etc)**
- **Facilitator error (inexperienced, rigid)**



## **BLURRED BOUNDARIES**

- **Dual relationships**
- **Transference/Countertransference**
- **Pedestalizing that leads to cult dynamics**



## **MANIPULATION/COERSION**

- **Financial manipulation**
- **Fraud & misrepresentation**
- **Dysregulation & Life Disruption**
- **Lack of supportive container for integration**



## **ASSAULT & ABUSE**

- **Non-consensual touch**
- **Physical Assault**
- **Sexual Abuse/Assault**

# Addressing Facilitator Misconduct

## Issues with Training

- Lack of personal experience, training and support.
- Psychedelic theory vs. experiential training and minimal experiential training

## Professional Repercussions

- Licensed Facilitators face threats of losing their licenses (Inefficient process takes years)
- Underground Facilitators have no governing body

## Working in Isolation

- Working alone and without mentorship or consultation creates blind spots

## Power Dynamics

- Psychedelics amplify suggestibility and open clients up to a higher risk of manipulation and coercion

# Suggestions for Improving Safety



## REPORTING SYSTEMS

- Anonymous Feedback System
- Quarterly/Annual Reviews
- RMPDS Testing



## CONSUMER EDUCATION

- Psychedelic Safety Flags
- Required Clinical Handouts
- Standardized Informed Consent



## CONSULTATION TEAMS

- Banning of Husband/Wife/Partner Teams
- Mentorship Programs
- Required Sabbaticals/Breaks



## HARM REDUCTION

- Drug Testing
- Decriminalization

# Swiss Psychedelic Side Effects Inventory

The SPSI contains 32 side effects and assesses their severity, impact, duration, and treatment-relatedness.

*Abigail E. Calder, Gregor Hasler, Validation of the Swiss Psychedelic Side Effects Inventory: Standardized assessment of adverse effects in studies of psychedelics and MDMA, Journal of Affective Disorders, Volume 365, 2024, Pages 258-264, SSN 0165-0327, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2024.08.091>.  
(<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0165032724013132>)*

SPSI can be completed in 10 -15 minutes and assesses for:

- Severity - mild, moderate, severe
- Impact - very adverse - very beneficial (-2 to +2)
- Causality - unknown to certainly (0 - 4)
- Timing - during, after, or both
- Duration - subsided or ongoing
- Tolerability of dosage - Good, Moderate, Poor



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# Swiss Psychedelic Side Effects Inventory

## Physical Assessment

1. Headache
2. Nausea or Vomiting
3. Bloating or Diarrhea
4. Muscle shaking, tightness or paralysis
5. Racing heartbeat, pressure, pain in chest
6. Fatigue or Tiredness
7. Dizziness or Feeling Faint
8. Feeling hot, cold, or sweaty
9. Appetite Changes



# Swiss Psychedelic Side Effects Inventory

## Cognitive and Emotional Assessment

10. Memory Problems or Blackouts
11. Confusion or Disorientation
12. Difficulty Concentrating or thinking clearly
13. Distressing thoughts or memories that come to mind against your will
14. Feeling anxious, fearful, or panicked
15. Feeling restless or irritable
16. Feeling Sad, mournful or depressed
17. Feeling apathetic or empty inside
18. Feeling lonely, isolated or alienated from others
19. Negative thoughts about yourself
20. Thoughts of wanting to go to sleep and not wake up or taking your own life (SI)

# Swiss Psychedelic Side Effects Inventory

## Perception Assessment

21. Paranoia or feeling like others are watching you
22. Fear of losing your mind or going insane
23. Feeling detached from your surroundings, or as if they are unreal, flat or part of a dream
24. Feeling detached from your body, voice, memories, or thoughts, or as if you are not real
25. Distress related to your understanding of reality or the meaning of life
26. Changes in vision
27. Changes in hearing
28. Sleep difficulties
29. Feeling like some substance effects have returned without taking the substance again
30. Desire to take the substance again soon
31. Feeling so elated, overjoyed, excitable, or impulsive that others became concerned
32. Feeling like your thoughts are being interfered with or controlled



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# Thank You!

# Questions, Comments, Feedback

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