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Psychonauts

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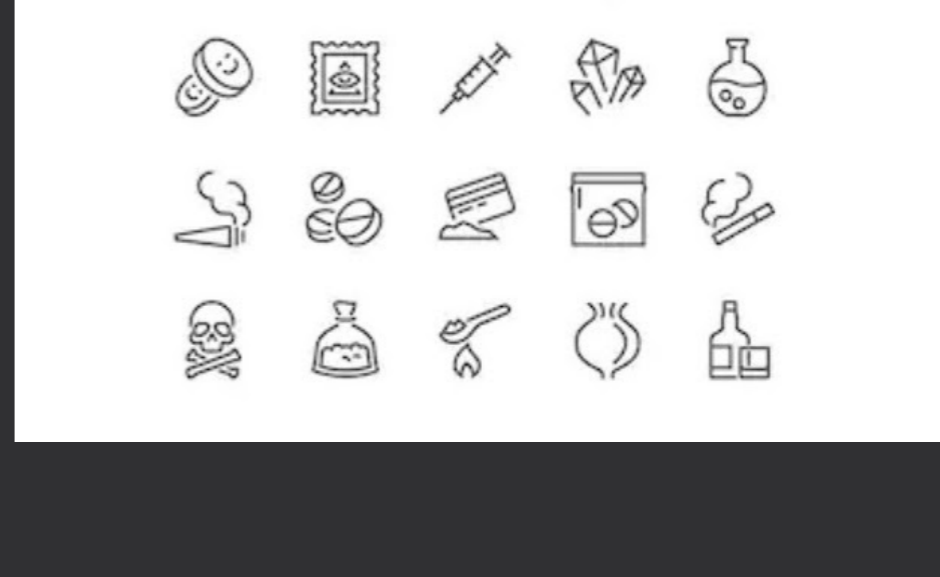


Psychonauts

“Evidence shows that psychedelics, when used in conjunction with proper psychotherapy, are incredibly effective in treating mental health conditions.”
- Roman Levy, *Field Trip Psychedelics*

What does Drug(s) mean?

It is worth it to take a moment to consider the value of the word and what it means.



It's a terribly vague term, that is used for everything from illicit illegal drugs, to over the counter prescription drugs, to an event that happens to someone, or as slang for one thing or another. It's blank and generic and yet it is 'culturally context-specific' (Coomber, 2013).

- “There are no drugs in nature” ... the concept of drugs is not a scientific concept, but is rather instituted on the basis of moral or political evaluations” (qtd. In Coomber, 2013).

Hypothesis

Society criminalizes drugs in order to maintain conformity and structure. Government utilizes a fear-based platform that halts scientific progress and by extension the development of our neuroscience industry surrounding psychedelics.



The War on Drugs

The War on Drugs was conceived and started in President Nixon's era. This was a time frame filled with war and deep protest surrounding it, it was also during a time of religious and sexual exploration for many of the youth in America. Tensions were high, to say the least (see what I did there?).



John Ehrlichman

White House Domestic Affairs Advisor from 1969-1973.

“We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did”

The Nixon government capitalized on the public fear and unrest during the Vietnam war to criminalize outspoken minorities. This “War on Drugs” shifted the public's tide for decades, it instigated misinformation, distrust, fear of the unknown, but most importantly the end to life-saving research being done with psychoactive drugs.

- “In 1970, the US government criminalized all uses of psychedelics, and they began shutting down all psychedelic research, and this ban spread all over the world and lasted for decades...” (Doblin, 2019).

They associated drugs with sub and countercultures of the time to criminalize the people who were disagreeing with them. This set in motion the imprisonment of millions of Americans for generations because Nixon did not like being contradicted.

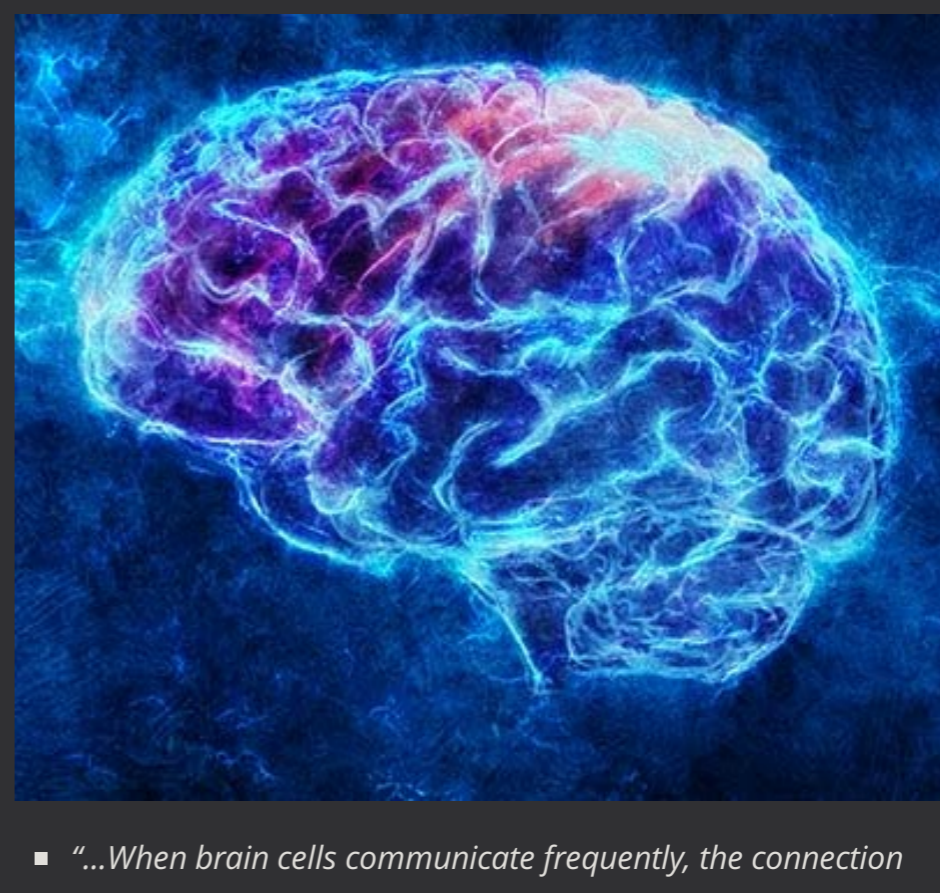


Socialization Creating Restraints

While socialization happens throughout life children are particularly impressionable due to their enhanced ability to create connections and neural pathways in the brain (Graham & Forstadt, 2001). Society encourages individualism and creativity, but the opposite is also true. Uniformity is valued and reinforced everyday, children are held to the same testing standards, we seat them in rows in classrooms, there are expectations for the appropriate behavior, we even extend this process by creating a visual representation of acceptability such as school uniforms. This uniformity keeps things clean, neat, and pretty for our world but this is what creates restraints in the brain.

The Brain & Psychedelics

- “The brain is an instrument for focusing the mind...The brain creates what the mind thinks it's doing” (David Nutt, 2017). The brain takes in data and recreates the images or events it thinks you are seeing or remembering. With this in mind consider someone with a mental challenge, an age-related illness, or a temporary condition such as depression, it is fair to then say that they are seeing a physically different world than you are. Colors may be dimmed, edges may blur, shadows become more or less prevalent, etc (David Nutt, 2017). A person in the midst of a deep depression may see more of the world's gray than it's color, which can contribute to the continuation of their challenge.
- The brain teaches itself how to function and when this process goes awry you get related problems such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), addiction, anxiety, and depression (David Nutt, 2017). These are all results of your brain inadequately handling restraints.



- “...When brain cells communicate frequently, the connection between them strengthens and the messages that travel the same pathway in the brain over and over begin to transmit faster and faster” (Hani, 2017). Depression becomes embedded in the brain via these strengthened pathways, psychedelics can temporarily break this connection, allowing the user to deal with the root of their problems.

- Significant research with psychoactive drugs proves their ability to help the mind break through these constraints to deal with afflictions such as depression. Psychedelics also suppress cortisol in the brain so that the patient can reflect on traumatic experiences without the body reacting in a way to protect itself. This experience can give a deeper understanding of traumatic events and allow the patient to move past them.

Conclusion

The term “drug” is a mixed bag that comes with many culturally distinct messages. The 1970's Controlled Substance Act signed into federal law by the Nixon administration has reverberating effects around the world. The purpose of this act was to criminalize specific populations in order to target them for their outspoken objections to the Vietnam War effort, drugs were a vehicle for this purpose. Scientific progress was blanketed and pushed to the side, this led to death, imprisonment, and 50 years of unnecessary violence. Society values uniformity, especially in a time of war which is why steps were taken to control the erupting narrative within the states.

Psychedelics have therapeutic properties that are not broadly known, instead, the government spreads propaganda to its citizens throughout their lives. This environment has created restraints on the brain that are carried into adulthood. These constraints block the path to dealing with traumatic events or mental challenges in a healthy productive manner. Scientists knew then and now that there were positive effects on the mind from supervised therapy. So with all of this knowledge, technology, and research, why is society still so afraid of these compounds? Why does continuing a racially and war-driven fear from half a century ago dictate the lives of today? “Conformity also carries with it the power to make human beings ignore their own consciences” (JILLIAN, 2019). Society clings to uniformity and psychedelic drugs currently reside outside of it. The American government does not institute drug laws based on science, they make them based on fear and hate.



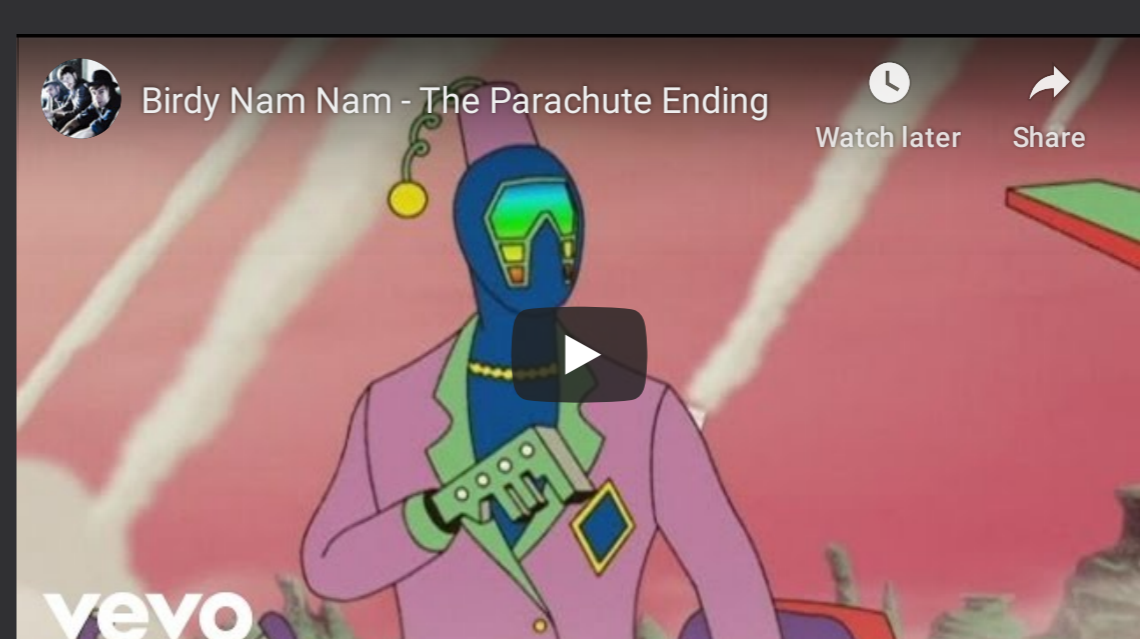
David Nutt explains what psychedelics can do for the mind.



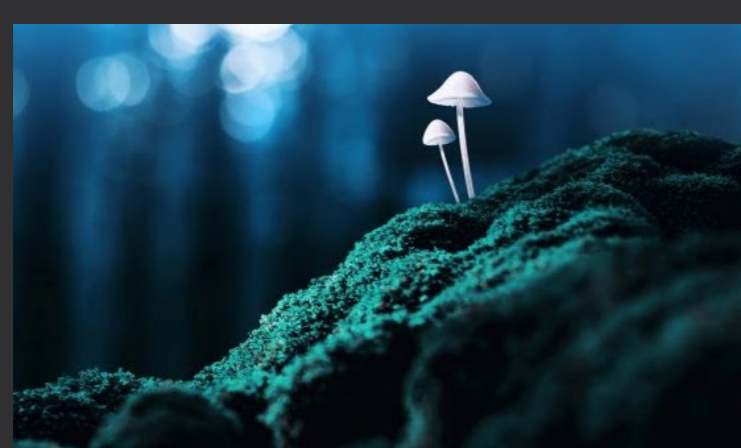
Rick Dolbin- The healing effect of psychedelics on trauma and mental illness.



Adam Conover looks at the history of the Drug War.



Psychedelic music video, revered for a good time while tripping on LSD.



Be Safe

Psychedelics have been approved for phase three testing (human trials) by the FDA, however, they are still illegal under the 1970 Controlled Substance Act. I do not endorse the purchase or use of psychedelics outside of legal trials.

This being said, if you choose to partake in a psychedelic experience please use extreme caution. Below are some references for educational information about these controlled substances and their effects.

<https://tripsafe.org/>

<https://compasspathways.com>