20. Interview with Participant 20

**Interview recorded:** 21/02/2021 (NZDT)

**Length:** 2:55:10

**Spoken duration of interview:** Participant (73%), Interviewer (27%)

**Age (years):** Participant (27), Interviewer (30)

**Gender:** Participant (female), Interviewer (male)

**Residence at time of recording:** Participant (Germany), Interviewer (New Zealand)

**Original nationality:** Participant (United States)

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**Interviewer** 00:00

So, the final thing before we start is just to clarify when I'm asking you about your psychedelic use, what drugs that we'd like you to consider psychedelics, and for the purposes of this interview, what drugs that we'd like you to exclude out of the psychedelic box.

**Participant** 00:18

Okay.

**Interviewer** 00:19

So, the psychedelics we'd like you to include the typical classical psychedelics such as LSD, psilocybin, DMT, and mescaline, and peyote de San Pedro. Also, if you, you can include Iboga, or Ayahuasca if you've used any of those, and any of those drugs if you've used analogues of them, so 1p-LSD, 5-MeO-DMT to 2C-B or something like this, then those are all psychedelics you know, for me, I'm just talking about those experiences kind of as amorphous psychedelic thing, that's fine. The four main drugs that I've come up with that I think is worth mentioning to exclude is cannabis. So, not typically considered a psychedelic, but on very high doses can have some psychedelic like effects. MDMA would like to exclude that, ketamine and also salvia.

**Participant** 01:18

Okay.

**Interviewer** 01:19

So, I know ketamine is considered a dissociative and I and I think salvia is two that are deliriant. I'm not 100% on that one.

**Participant** 01:29

Yeah, it's an opioid agonist and yeah, I don’t know, anyways.

**Interviewer** 01:34

Does funny stuff to your brain.

**Participant** 01:37

Yeah.

**Q1. Interviewer** 01:39

So yes, those four, they're the ones that, I think, the most common, potentially they get mixed in with it. So, those ones I'd like you to keep out. So, but any other drugs that I haven't mentioned, that aren't considered psychedelics, you can also exclude those, but I bring those four up just as sort of just to mention them. So, that's all the preamble. So, the first question starts nice and broad and it is, why do you use psychedelics?

**Participant** 02:13

Okay, I think that's changed over time. The first time I used it actually was because I kept hearing about it from people who meditate, because I meditate and I would hear every once in a while, that psychedelics completely changed my meditation practice, or that they had a great benefit on my life and I was not really open to it the first time I heard that I, I'd never used drugs or been interested in drugs, really but I think I slowly opened up to it, the more I kept hearing that from people who, who were meditating and so I just wanted to have that experience and see what it was like for first time I used psychedelics and then I came up with more reasons later. I mainly use them for self-exploration or to work on some problem that I've been having recently that I feel stuck on. I also just, I do find it enjoyable, even though it's, can be very intense.

**Interviewer** 03:23

In terms of solving problems, what do you? Is that, personal issues are more like, project work sort of problems?

**Participant** 03:33

Yeah, more personal problems. Like for example, one time I took LSD because I was struggling with some anxiety, and I had tried some other things, and they hadn't really worked, and I felt like psychedelics could help me work on that issue.

**Q2. Interviewer** 03:57

Okay, so you sort of answered the second question, which is, have the reasons why you use psychedelics changed over time? Can you maybe describe a little bit about what the, I don't know if you kind of mentioned it before, but the original reasons for them and what it evolved into?

**Participant** 04:15

Yeah, well, the original reason was that I was, I was intensely curious about this experience and I wanted, I had a pretty open minded reason, I think I was curious and I wanted to see what it could do for me what it could offer and now I think it's evolved into a couple different reasons. I tend to use them to clean out my brain so to speak, kind of like when you run a C clean up on your computer, because it's getting a little buggy. I feel like that's an effect that I get pretty much every time and I feel like the best version of myself after psychedelic experience and I really value that state of mind and I'm seeking that when I do them and then I may have a specific intention for each particular trip as well.

**Interviewer** 05:36

And do you use it at all, you're saying before that you, that they're enjoyable do you use it in a sort of recreational sense at all?

**Participant** 05:44

I wouldn't say I use them for fun. Maybe the occasional microdose just could be said, I use it for fun, but not the big doses. It's kind of a side effect that it can also be fun but it's not the main reason.

**Q3. Interviewer** 06:06

So how did you first start using psychedelics?

**Participant** 06:10

Let's see. I was 24 and I was at a party. I think someone's birthday party and a friend of mine mentioned that he had some LSD and I think we'd had some conversations before about being open to it and he asked me and a couple of my other friends, because he'd done it before quite a few times, he asked if we wanted to have our first experience and he offered to trip sit us and I just took the opportunity because I've been kind of interested in it for a while.

**Interviewer** 06:38

and what was your first experience like?

**Participant** 06:53

It was LSD, yeah it was LSD. So, it was perfect. It was a perfect day. We had planned quite a bit beforehand. So, it wasn't a spontaneous thing. We were pretty prepared. We scouted out a really beautiful spot by a lake outside. It was high summer and we found like this secluded spot where nobody could really bother us. I was with two trip sitters who were pretty experienced and who were friends, and two other people who were taking LSD as well. To be honest, I'm not entirely sure about the dose. We had what my friend said, were strong tabs, and I took half of one. Based on the effects, I would have said it was maybe about 80 micrograms but I'm I can't really be sure I definitely was tripping and yeah, my main memories from that experience, just spontaneously were just a complete sense of peace. I didn't have to worry about anything. I've never felt such a complete sense of being at peace and, of course, it was a beautiful setting and I just was happy to lie there and do nothing for probably about 10 hours \*laughs\*

**Interviewer** 07:57

Sounds alright.

**Participant** 07:57

Yeah.

**Interviewer** 08:03

And after that experience, did you, did you seek out psychedelics after that? Was it like wetting the appetite or sort of how did that?

**Participant** 08:35

Yeah, you could say it wet the appetite. I mean, it was a while before I did it again, because it was so intense. It was not something I wanted to do the next week, you know but I, I was just astonished at how I felt like the best version of myself for a month maybe after that and I didn't even really know much about integration or how to work with these experiences. It just affected me in the best way for a while and then, of course, eventually, I wanted to do it again, because I felt like I, like you know, the effects wore off and I was no longer best version of me anymore. Three months later and so I wanted to have that experience again, eventually.

**Interviewer** 09:18

Do you find now when you use, do you get the same level of feeling the best version yourself later? Like after the trip is over?

**Participant** 09:30

Yeah, I do. I think you know, there's probably nothing quite like the first time. I think maybe now I have to work a little harder to keep it up. Maybe it doesn't last quite as long but it's still there. For sure.

**Interviewer** 09:43

Okay. So, and did you did you say does it last as long like, like the original one month? How long would you say?

**Participant** 09:55

Yeah, it also depends on how you define this this afterglow effect right? So,

**Interviewer** 10:01

however you define it.

**Participant** 10:03

Yeah, good. Okay, so this afterglow where I just feel like the best version of myself, I'd say it varies, it lasts between one week and one month usually. Yeah, now that I think about it, it can, maybe it is a bit shorter now but it's also no longer the main thing that I'm looking for in these trips and experiences. Often, there are other effects that I feel last longer.

**Q4. Interviewer** 10:38

What aspects of psychedelics do you find most meaningful or valuable?

**Participant** 10:43

Umm, let me think, it's, cause, it's very hard to put that into words. I think, for me, at least, they have a way of zeroing in on one particular aspect of your life and giving you a really valuable insight about it. So, for me, or maybe one or two valuable insights for me, every trip is about something slightly different and it's putting a microscope up to a different aspect of my life and helping me improve that thing and so it may not be that my entire life gets better after a psychedelic experience, but this one thing definitely gets better and it's a different thing each time. It's like helping me, how do I say that, helping me improve things about my life one step at a time, I guess. I also think that, you know, this, this feeling like the best version of myself, it, I think what's really happening there is I find it very easy to act in harmony with my long-term values, rather than short term pleasures. Like, for example, I struggle a little bit with like screen addiction, I, I find it very easy to like, grab my phone and scroll through it all the time. In a psychedelic afterglow, I'm just not interested in that at all. I'm doing other things and going outside, I'm meeting with friends, reading books, doing things that I actually feel are good for me, instead of more compulsive things that I know were not good for me.

**Interviewer** 13:04

Is there any effect any other aspects that you find meaningful, or the most meaningful or valuable?

**Participant** 13:19

Yeah, I think that about sums it up. I mean, you could go into more detail with both of those things but I think that's what it really boils down to for me. It's like, they turn me into my ideal version of who I am and not who I actually am \*laughs\* scrolling through my damn phone or yeah.

**Q5. Interviewer** 13:55

Cool. What aspects of psychedelics do you find most challenging or difficult?

**Participant** 14:05

Yeah, well, I mean, they, they throw your brain your mind into absolute chaos and so you have to be comfortable giving up control over your mind and that's, that's to be honest, that's not something that comes super easy to me. I've I have strategies now to help me do it but sometimes it can just, it can be a little scary to completely lose control like that. It's usually worth it, but \*chuckles\*

**Interviewer** 14:47

Is there any other aspects that you find difficult or challenging?

**Participant** 14:54

Yeah, sometimes the unpredictability, a little bit like. For example, you might find yourself dealing with a problem that you didn't even know existed and that can be very overwhelming during a trip, for example, if it just kind of comes out of nowhere and for me at least I find it very nerve wracking to try and do it without a trip sitter. So, there's some constraints on when I can take psychedelics because I like to have a near perfect setting, and someone to watch out for me and there's also certain environments, like for example, I don't like to do it indoors, because I often start to feel a little bit, I guess, maybe a little bit claustrophobic to be between four walls. I don't have this at any other time but for some reason on psychedelics, I'm more likely to start to get anxious if I'm inside, and then if I'm outside, I feel way better. So, there's just, yeah just some constraints on the circumstances in which they can be safely used, for me at least.

**Interviewer** 16:11

Have you ever done them alone?

**Participant** 16:14

Umm, not big doses, no. No, I've done mini doses, like and micro doses, of course, also and so I but I think I've never alone done more than like 20 micrograms of LSD.

**Interviewer** 16:28

Okay and just to get a, because I haven't looked through the questionnaire, sort of how much have, like, how many times have you done it? What's your typical kind of dosage? And maybe also, what was the highest you've been up to?

**Participant** 16:45

Yeah, so I have taken a full hallucinogenic dose, I think five times. I've done LSD and analogues of LSD and mushrooms, actually truffles, the legal truffles that you can get in Amsterdam.

**Interviewer** 17:01

Oh, I know those.

**Participant** 17:02

Yeah \*laughs\* but then I actually rather like to take mini doses sometimes. So, I actually don't know how many times I've done that mini and micro doses.

**Interviewer** 17:11

And what would you consider a mini dose?

**Participant** 17:13

So mini, if a micro dose is sub threshold, like where you barely feel it or can't feel it, then a mini dose is one that gets you a little bit high but I would also say it's not hallucinogenic. At least not when you have your eyes open. If you have your eyes closed, sometimes you get little effects but so for LSD, for example, for me, a mini dose is between 10 and maybe 30. Like it kind of like this museum level dose, right, where you're functional enough that you could go to a museum, but you're still high.

**Interviewer** 17:47

It makes museum more interesting.

**Participant** 17:48

Yeah, for sure.

**Interviewer** 17:55

And in terms of the hallucinogenic doses, what, what is the typical range? And have you, have you got one where it's a very high or your highest?

**Participant** 18:04

No, the highest I've ever done is 150. I will also say I'm quite, I seem to be quite sensitive to it. So, compared with other people, I know I get generally stronger effects at the same dose. So, for me, 150 was already an nearly reality ending dose. I typically, I take about 100 [mcg] of LSD.

**Q6. Interviewer** 18:34

So the next couple of questions are going to be looking at how or asking about how psychedelics have affected your life and basically, if that's the first question, it starts quite broad, so you can just kind of go where it feels natural to answer that question and then I have a couple of sort of follow up questions that are going to drill down into some specific areas of your life, that if you don't cover them, or if I just re ask them, to see if there's more to give, then we'll jump into those. So, the next I think seven questions are going to be related to that. So, the question is, in what ways have psychedelics affected your life?

**Participant** 19:18

Okay, so I will say that every single trip I've had has had some kind of positive effect ultimately, even if it didn't show up right away. In general, I feel like I'm, I'm better able to deal with my own emotions, particularly negative emotions, particularly fear and anxiety. I have closer relationships, in particular with my family, but also with friends and I find it a bit easier to relate to people in general. I feel like I have a better sense of purpose and of my own values after having done them, it's hard to tell which of these effects would have come anyway, just with age or introspection, but at least those are the effects psychedelics appear to have had. It has deepened my meditation practice, also and I think just given me a better sense of appreciation for life and living in general, I know that sounds super cliche, but it's definitely true.

**Interviewer** 20:30

Nothing wrong with cliches.

**Participant** 20:44

Yeah and also a deeper sense of appreciation for art and music to lots of little effects. Actually, I think more about

**Interviewer** 21:04

And do these do these effects last beyond the afterglow, period?

**Participant** 21:14

I always feel like I have the option to extend this afterglow period, so to speak, like, if I wanted to, I could take LSD and I'd have a nice afterglow for a couple of weeks, and then basically return to baseline but I always have the option to sort of work with the experience and try and try and integrate it, that would be the key word. So, I usually try to do this in really concrete ways. Like, for example, I had a trip once where it was all about my relationship with my dad and I knew afterward in order to integrate this trip, I need to go have a talk with him about some things and try and break down some of the barriers that are in our relationship and I did that as a part of integration and so now, I have a better relationship with him partially as a result of the trip, but also because of what I did with the trip, I could have forgotten about that trip and just not done it and then nothing would have changed but it sort of shows me what some things I could do that would be good for me and then I had the option to do them or not. There was also one trip that I would say has, has had some emotional effects that just never went away. This is actually the most recent one, I took psychedelics with the intention of dealing with some anxiety that I had felt had gotten out of control and I really just I felt like it recalibrated my brain, and I felt like a well-tuned piano afterward, where the anxiety was just put back in its proper place. You know, sometimes you have to feel anxiety or fear, and it's natural but for me, it was an overdrive and I felt like everything was just retuned emotionally so that now I only have anxiety or fear when it's appropriate and that that has lasted ever since that trip that never went away.

**Interviewer** 23:12

How recent was this?

**Participant** 23:13

This one was November of last year. So, it was about three and a half months ago. We'll see if it continues to not go away. So, far, it's lasted three and a half months.

**Interviewer** 23:31

Do you mind talking a little bit about what the anxiety was?

**Participant** 23:37

Yeah, so

**Interviewer** 23:38

Yeah, sorry.

**Participant** 23:40

Sure. Yeah. It's actually a bit of a complicated subject, because it was the aftermath of a bad trip combined with a few other unpleasant life circumstances. So, in order to talk about this trip, I have to talk about the one before that.

**Interviewer** 23:54

Okay. Yep.

**Participant** 23:57

So, I had yeah, I had a, I would even call it a bad trip, even though I ended up grateful for it in the end, I have no problem with the term bad trip, in which I felt essentially, like I had no hold on sanity. I felt like I was just completely losing my mind and I was trapped in this awful state of mind, and there was no way I could get out of it and then a couple of rather unpleasant life circumstances happened soon after that trip. I was really not sure what was going to be next in my life. I was finishing my master's degree, but I didn't have anything lined up after and I was just kind of, it was the first time in my life I ever didn't know what was next and I think the combination of that, and this bad trip was really I would say it made me blow out at my weakest point psychologically and I started to get these funny symptoms of anxiety. I would even call them flashbacks, in a sense because I started to feel like I was maybe losing my mind I was having all of a sudden dissociative episodes and derealization and these very physical symptoms of anxiety where I would just wake up feeling nauseous and nervous almost every day and I did a lot without psychedelics to work through those symptoms and I managed to basically fix the life circumstances that I thought were contributing to them without taking any psychedelics or any other drugs at all to be honest and, but after that, after I'd kind of gotten my life together, I felt like the ghost of that anxiety was still around, and I couldn't quite get rid of it and that's the point at which I took LSD to try and exercise the ghost so to speak. Yeah. So, it was I don't really even know how to characterise this anxiety. Like, it wasn't purely the aftermath of a bad trip but I also think it wouldn't have happened if it weren't for that bad trip, you know what I mean?

**Interviewer** 26:04

Mhmm.

**Participant** 26:06

But, yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer** 26:12

Sorry, had you had anxiety, similar to that before the trip?

**Participant** 26:17

Never.

**Interviewer** 26:21

What about, so you said that you were sort of had maybe a inflection point where you're finishing your master's and your future was open, essentially, and you didn't know what you were doing And that was the first time in your life where you had an experience where you just got to the point where, like, I'm just checking that that's what you had?

**Participant** 26:45

Yeah.

**Interviewer** 26:46

Is it, yeah, that makes sense because I'm trying to I was thinking, if there's a way to ask whether you think you would have experienced the same level of anxiety had you just faced that without having that trip, but you did say, you think it's sort of a combination of both.

**Participant** 27:02

I think it's a combination and so it's a bit hard. I don't think I'll ever know for sure to what extent the bad trip contributed to that. The reason I think it did was because these derealization episodes that I had, reminded me of how I felt while I was undergoing this bad trip and so the experience was a bit similar, that I would even call it a flashback but these flashbacks didn't start to happen until two months after the bad trip was over. So, that makes me wonder, you know, that that's quite a long time to start having after effects and immediately after this bad trip, I actually felt really strong and I had a positive after glow. So, it's very hard for me to tease out the causality there but what maybe I think that this bad trip was traumatising, in a way and this unresolved trauma then reappeared after two months, perhaps because I don't know that I really dealt with it. I was very caught up in this, this idea that I feel strong after the bad trip, and I was so relieved that I would feel strong and not, you know, shattered but maybe I just didn't ever confront these feelings of insanity because I was caught up in the good effects.

**Interviewer** 28:19

Well, it sounds somewhat like a coping mechanism, maybe for something that happened.

**Participant** 28:24

Maybe and that I mean, there's another element to this as well, that during these episodes of derealisation, I actually started to get intrusive memories. The first time it happened, it was a memory from the bad trip but every time after that it was something from when I was a teenager. So, I almost feel like this bad trip, opened some sort of emotional floodgate, maybe for stuff that I just had never dealt with and that's why I'm actually ultimately grateful for that trip is because it helped me to emotionally process some things that maybe I would not have been able to process and I actually feel like that whole experience, you know, the bad trip, the aftermath, and the learning to cope with it and get better actually kind of made me into an adult. Like I always felt like a kid in an adult's body before that, but now I feel like a real functioning adult human \*laughs\*.

**Interviewer** 29:19

\*laughs\* well done.

**Participant** 29:20

Yeah.

**Interviewer** 29:23

Were the intrusive memories, particularly bad in terms of the content?

**Participant** 29:30

No, I, I would say they were just very emotional. When I was a teenager, I felt really lonely. I felt I had a bad relationship with my parents, not because of any real abuse or anything like that, but because we just didn't understand each other very well and I was angry at them all the time. I thought maybe they didn't like me very much, which was not true but you know, it was real to me at the time and I felt like I just we experienced the anger and the frustration and the despair all over again and I actually felt like I was you know, 15 years old, it's very hard to remember how it felt to be you 10 years ago, but I felt like I actually re-experienced it. So, that was pretty bizarre.

**Interviewer** 30:14

And these derealization experiences, is that associated, is that the thing of having the intrusive memories or was this a different type of experience?

**Participant** 30:24

They would happen at the same time. So, what would usually happen, I called them episodes, because I didn't know what else to call them, I would start to feel nervous, it usually seemed to come out of the blue, could happen anywhere, almost at any time and then all of a sudden, there would be some kind of shift in my state of mind, and I would suddenly start to feel like half convinced that the world isn't real. The world didn't seem right to me, it didn't look right, it seemed kind of yeah, just unreal and I felt disconnected from it and sometimes also from myself, I would start to feel like I was watching myself, do things or walk around without really controlling the movements. So, I will say I never had like a diagnosis or anything from a psychologist because I was in the middle of a couple of moves during this time and so I didn't, you know, I couldn't go to a psychologist and get long term treatment and I felt like I was coping more or less okay by myself but that's why I call it derealisation, because it seems to fit the definition and then, what I learned to do in the middle of these episodes was that if I tried to resist it, or if I got scared, it would go on all day, it just wouldn't stop but if I really laid down and just essentially meditated, or tried to ask my mind what's going on, it would offer up these memories and then I would feel those emotions again, process it, have some kind of emotional release, and then the whole episode would be over in half an hour, instead of going on all day. So, I think it was pretty clearly not just the bad trip. One factor of many.

**Interviewer** 32:09

Well it's interesting, sort of, just that end bit where you're saying, instead of resisting the derealization experience, you had to go with it. Is seems like an exact analogy of what people sort of coach people to do in a psychedelic trip, let go accept go in.

**Participant** 32:31

Precisely.

**Interviewer** 32:32

Resistance is only you know, going to wear you out.

**Participant** 32:35

Yeah, that's where I got the idea to do that. You know, I thought well, okay, if I'm, if I think this is really a flashback, maybe I should treat it like a bad trip and try and let go and then the first time I did that it worked like a charm.

**Interviewer** 32:51

The human mind is an interesting thing.

**Participant** 32:54

Yeah.

**Interviewer** 32:57

In terms of dissociation did you, when you're talking about sort of having a lack of feeling of control over your actions. Was this still in first person perspective? So, were you like the idea of you looking out from where your head is and you sort of felt like or saw as if you're from there? Or was it?

**Participant** 33:17

That's funny, because, to be honest, I'm not sure because my memories are in third person. So, like, I'm behind myself but I think the experience itself while I was experiencing, it was probably in first person, I'm just not really sure. I mean, a lot of memories are in third person as well, like even when you're not having a dissociative episode, but it's hard for me to tell.

**Interviewer** 33:57

And so, this, these flashbacks, dissociation derealization experiences, what was the duration between the use and sort of resolution of this?

**Participant** 34:12

Okay, so the timeline is I had the bad trip about two months later, I had the first big derealization episode. The worst acute symptoms lasted for about two weeks and I was actually visiting my family in the US at the time and then when I came back to Germany, some of the symptoms actually went away. Especially the really physical symptoms of anxiety where I would wake up feeling like I had butterflies in my stomach or like I wanted to vomit. That went away but then I continued to have the episodes maybe once or twice a week for a couple of months and then I developed some coping strategies to help them get better and they were better for another couple of months and then after I had kind of a relapse, where it was bad again for maybe another month, then I really managed to actually get my life together and fix all of the environmental or lifestyle causes that I thought were contributing to it and then I was left with this kind of ghost of an anxiety disorder where I just had this diffuse feeling that there was something out there in the world that was really bad and could come get me at any time or maybe it wasn't out in the world, maybe it was in my own mind. Like I was kind of afraid of my own mind for a while. Just almost all the time and it wasn't very, it was really mild. It wasn't extreme. It wasn't really bothering me but it was also kind of stopping me from being as happy as I've been before. I'd always been a pretty happy person and so I missed that and that's, that lasted for maybe a couple of months and then I took the LSD and got better. So, I think,

**Interviewer** 35:58

Sorry, go ahead.

**Participant** 36:00

Yeah, just going back to your I'll try to give you an actual, real answer to the question. From the time that I took LSD to the time I had, like, the last episode of derealization, would have been about seven months.

**Interviewer** 36:23

That's a long time.

**Participant** 36:24

Mm hmm. Yeah. I mean, it was the frequency was not always, you know, very often.

**Interviewer** 36:36

And in terms of the, the duration, so you're saying sort of maybe one to two per week and you eventually figured out that going with it, rather than against it sort of made them last a lot less time? Was that, what was the typical duration over those, I guess, at some point after you found the coping mechanism, or the way to go through them, at that point, they're reduced significantly in terms of the length?

**Participant** 37:08

Yeah absolutely, then it would be half an hour.

**Interviewer** 37:11

Okay and how long did it take you to figure that out?

**Participant** 37:16

Oh, from the first episode, until I figured that out, it might have been six weeks. I definitely figured out early on that an emotional release would end the episode. So, basically, if I could make myself cry, then it would be over but I didn't. Yeah, I didn't quite realise that I needed to let go and allow these funny memories to show up.

**Interviewer** 37:54

Okay. Right, so question here we are. That was good. Thank you for the detail.

**Participant** 38:04

Yeah, of course.

**Q6a. Interviewer** 38:08

Has your personality or identity been shaped by your psychedelic use?

**Participant** 38:14

Yeah, I think so. I can talk about personality first, I think those shifts are probably not as dramatic. I think I've maybe become a little more open but I was always pretty open. So, it's hard to tell, maybe also a little more extroverted and less neurotic but they also made me temporarily more neurotic. So, I think it's a net zero there.

**Interviewer** 38:40

\*laughs\*

**Participant** 38:40

\*laughs\* But I would say I feel now I'm way more confident in my ability to deal with adversity. I think I was one of these people who nothing bad ever really happened to me just little bumps in the road and then I this bad trip was the first and the aftermath was the first really nasty thing that had ever happened to me and because I got through that, I feel like almost I could get through pretty much anything. You know, if I can handle a time period where my own sanity is even in question, then I as long as I have my sanity, I can handle anything else I feel. So, I think it's made me more resilient for sure I you know, daily stressors just don't really bother me much anymore. They kind of bounce right off.

**Interviewer** 39:31

Are you still, have you managed to accept the idea of going insane? Essentially losing sanity or is that still something that would freak you out?

**Participant** 39:48

I think it would still freak me out just because I could tell how quickly you can go from a normal person to really not thinking straight in a way that might even be dangerous to you. That was something I experienced during these dissociative episodes. So, I know in this trip that I felt healed me of the anxiety problem, I felt a little bit like I could start to re-experience the sensation of going insane, but be okay with it and that was actually very powerful. So, I think maybe I'm more resilient to small perturbations in my state of mind but if I were to really lose it again, I'm sure it would be just as bad as before, because you know, you're not in your right state of mind, you maybe don't have your normal coping mechanisms but if I were to have like a dissociative episode again, I think I could handle that pretty well and maybe even a bad trip but who knows? I don't want to say that because it's like, careful what you wish for \*laughs\*.

**Interviewer** 40:48

Yeah, yeah. You know, the psychedelics can give you a good old hyperdimensional bitch slap.

**Participant** 40:58

Yeah, exactly \*laughs\*.

**Interviewer** 41:17

One thing you mentioned earlier on, was the sense that psychedelics make your experience quite chaotic and I think there was a positive spin to that, that you said later on, but I don't remember what it was linked to with my notes but the question that comes to mind is when you mentioned, so at least you sort of affirmative there. This chaotic state, is, in my mind, it links into this idea of going insane. So, I wonder, in what sense is the chaotic state, part of the good experience of psychedelics, but is not like but at the same time, and going, losing your sanity is not a good experience. Like what are you able to draw the boundaries of what aspects you mean by chaotic and where you draw the line between like too much chaos?

**Participant** 42:19

I actually don't see chaos as positive or negative. I think it's how we react to it, that makes it positive and negative. So, for example, this bad trip was definitely chaotic. It was like chaos plus fear. I think we, most people probably have a natural fear of chaos and that's not even anything to be ashamed of. It is scary but if you can manage to surrender to it and trust that you will return to normal and that you'll probably deep in that chaos, find something valuable, then it can be a very good state of mind because I usually do find something valuable in the end. That's kind of what that's kind of how I think about psychedelics on a fundamental level actually, is it's a descent into chaos, to find some kind of order that that you've never known before. It's like similar to this analogy of that. I don't know if you know, Rosiland Watts, Rosalind Watts, but she has this analogy of diving deep into the ocean to pick out a pearl. I think, you know, this chaos order way I think of it. It's just another way of saying that. For me, psychedelics always caused absolute chaos at the beginning, and I just have to let it course through my mind, and then eventually something will come up. That makes a lot of sense.

**Interviewer** 43:41

The analogy for me, the descent into chaos to create order seems very reminiscent of I don't know if you've heard from Jordan Peterson talks about this a lot.

**Participant** 43:51

Yes, that is why I got that damn analogy from I was really thinking of him when I came up with that on psychedelics.

**Interviewer** 43:59

Fair enough. I was like, I was like, I don't know. It could be just coincidence but I was like, it sounds very similar.

**Participant** 44:06

No, it's not a coincidence, no. Yeah, I think I just finished his book. The last time I had a trip and so I could tell it really influenced my thinking and the way that that experience seemed to me, this chaos versus order.

**Interviewer** 44:22

It was a good analogy.

**Participant** 44:24

Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer** 44:27

So where, then, where does insanity fall along this line of chaos? Is that just an intense version of chaos or what is it just chaos plus fear?

**Participant** 44:38

I think what really disturbed me was that I had no grip on reality whatsoever and I wanted to have a grip on it. So, it was like, I my reaction to the chaos was that I didn't want it I was resisting and that caused this feeling of insanity. I was I was judging the experience, so to speak but yeah, it's maybe it's not so easy to draw the boundary there.

**Interviewer** 45:09

So, would you, have you had similar chaotic type experiences in the positive sense?

**Participant** 45:18

Mhmm yeah, I mean, the trip after that, I felt like I was having an experience in which I realised I was born from chaos, and therefore had no reason to fear it because chaos can produce consciousness or something like that. I don't know if that really makes sense but it was something that I experienced as very positive at the time.

**Interviewer** 45:39

Well, the what comes to mind is some simply like the, on a physical level, the quantum randomness of reality is relatively chaotic.

**Participant** 45:51

It seems like there's a certain level of chaos that's required for conscious experience as well.

**Interviewer** 45:57

Mhmm. So, would just to sort of summarise that, would you say that the what made the trip, a bad trip, was the fact that you were experiencing an intense chaotic state, but you didn't want it essentially.

**Participant** 46:27

I was resisting, yeah, resistance, yeah. I mean, I could maybe it would make more sense if I tell you a bit more about how the bad trip started because it didn't, you know, it started off fine. It started off as a good trip but then, for some reason, I got up to go to the bathroom and it occurred to me that a lot of people say you shouldn't look in the mirror while in psychedelics. So, some idiot in my brain was like, let's look in the mirror and see if that's really true and so I did and I felt like, just in that moment, my sanity was shattered. I, I felt like I saw some sort of evil version of myself in the mirror, and I just reacted really strong to it and then I went back to go lay down in bed where I'd been tripping and I just couldn't get this little worm of insanity out of my head and the more that I resisted it, the more it grew and grew and grew until it took over the entire experience. So, it started with a little moment of resistance and that just amplified over time.

**Interviewer** 47:04

And this was in the presence of a trip sitter?

**Participant** 47:33

No, I was with my, that was probably a mistake. I was with my boyfriend and he was also on LSD and he was kind of off in his own world and I didn't want to tell him that I was not doing well, because I didn't want to affect his experience and so it took me a while to say anything. Probably took me half an hour to tell him, Hey, I'm not doing so good and by that time, I was already fully in the hole, so to speak. I think if I'd had a trip sitter, you know, if I'd had someone there, who I could have told right away, maybe they would have been able to stop that train but by the time I said something, it was already, like there was no stopping.

**Interviewer** 48:12

The momentum.

**Participant** 48:13

Yeah, exactly.

**Interviewer** 48:14

And how did that so when you did speak to your boyfriend at that moment, was he helpful in that or did it did it just transfer and you both sort of started going?

**Participant** 48:24

No, he was really good, actually because he had had a bad trip, the last time we'd done psychedelics, and he was kind of reprocessing that and he's told me later that helping me to feel better was actually part of his healing experience. So, it ended up being kind of nice for him but yeah, he was really good. He just like was, you know, holding my hand and trying to reassure me, and I was in these funny thought loops, you know, and so he would just tell me over and over again, that it's going to be okay and I think that was that it was really helpful. Way better than being alone.

**Interviewer** 48:58

Yes, the thought loops are not particularly enjoyable sometimes.

**Participant** 49:02

No, they're a bitch.

**Interviewer** 49:05

Especially when they go on for infinity.

**Participant** 49:07

Yeah, yeah \*laughs\*.

**Q6b. Interviewer** 49:08

\*laughs\* Has your psychedelic use altered any of your long-term goals or life purpose?

**Participant** 49:20

I mean, for me, that's quite a special case, because I decided I wanted to study the damn things after I took them the first time.

**Interviewer** 49:27

So that, that's a yes.

**Participant** 49:29

Yeah, that's yes \*laughs\*.

**Interviewer** 49:30

\*laughs\* Okay. Of a significant level.

**Participant** 49:34

Of a very significant level, they have determined my career trajectory \*laughs\*. Yeah, I think what they really did is they made me more interested in examining my values in the first place. Maybe that's not something I would have done, or not something I would have done as soon in my life without psychedelics. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 50:08

And is it the Is it the examination of the values, which has caused or if you can say caused the change and or direction that you're taking now? or What did you was the direction picked and the values examined later?

**Participant** 50:29

can say again?

**Interviewer** 50:30

So, the idea is, so, the question is has any of your long-term goals or life purpose being affected or altered by your psychedelic use? And yes, it has, you're now studying them, and it's your potential future career and you sort of said that, through examining one of the things that motivated do was to examine your values, which you might not have done otherwise.

**Participant** 50:57

Ok I think, yeah, so I think those two things are actually kind of separate, because the reason that I decided I wanted to study psychedelics was because it has to do with the reason I wanted to study science in the first place, which is that I love listening to enthusiastic scientists talk about their research, and I, I wanted to find a topic that for me, made me as enthusiastic as say, Carl Sagan, when he's talking about space and it took me a while to come around to the idea of actually trying to make a career out of this because at first I thought na like, it's not very stable, everyone's going to think I'm loony but I just couldn't deny the fact that it really roused my curiosity, and was absolutely fascinating to me and I think it made me more. The psychedelic experiences in general made me more willing to follow my own values and principles, it made me more secure in them. So, you know, I decided to take the leap and try and study psychedelics because I knew, I almost felt like I would be betraying myself if I didn't, because I knew this is the thing that fascinates me, I have to follow it and yeah, I think that that's actually now that I think about it a good way to put it, like it made me more, I thought about my own values and principles more, which makes me more secure in them. Like, I feel like I know what I value and I know the right way that I feel I have to act in different situations. Whereas before, I may not have even really thought about it that much.

**Interviewer** 52:58

Just sort of thinking about that, and sort of what we mentioned a little while ago with the chaos and order thing. It is there, how much do you think you're reading of Jordan Peterson's book and stuff is sort of been integrated into your, your, your sort of consideration of your values?

**Participant** 53:18

Very much so because then I didn't just read that book. I digested that book, I took notes on it, like it was a class and well, part of the reason for that is I picked up that book, while I was in this dissociative episode phase, that the subtitle caught my eye antidote to chaos and I thought, fuck, I need that. So, I actually, you know, that book, and actually, Jordan Peterson in general, was one of the things that really helped me get through that period, just not only the book, but the talks and stuff that helped me kind of get my shit together. It wasn't the only thing, but it definitely had an impact.

**Interviewer** 53:52

Okay. Yeah, this is I think, as we sort of mentioned before, the difficulty of attributing what, to what causes and how they inter mix, and then it's like, at some point, it's like, well, it's just my life.

**Participant** 54:08

Yeah \*laughs\*. Yeah. For sure.

**Q6c. Interviewer** 54:14

Have psychedelics caused you to seriously question your own beliefs?

**Participant** 54:23

Yes, I would say so. What kind, like, just any beliefs or more like religious beliefs, or?

**Interviewer** 54:30

You can hold off on the religious ones, because I got a question a little bit later about them. This one that overlaps a lot. This is I could have worded it better but yes. Are there any beliefs that you would put outside the spiritual religious box that you've seriously considered due to this?

**Participant** 54:45

Um, yeah. So, I think talking about the bad trip, again, would be the one that particularly did that. I also returned a little bit to normal because the beliefs that I was questioning I think it wasn't necessarily healthy, what was going on right after the bad trip. So, the belief that I feel like question was, firstly, this idea that sanity is stable. I questioned the belief that sanity is stable and that felt very, huh, destabilising and not healthy. I think it also questioned, it made me question in general, the belief that things pretty much always go well, for me. It gave me a better or it gave me a better consciousness of how things can go wrong. Like, because, like I said, I was always one of these people who everything pretty much went my way except for a few bumps in the road and so I got used to that, and therefore didn't really have very many coping mechanisms for problems but it really gave me a sense that, yes, things can absolutely go wrong, and you should be prepared for that to happen and I think in the beginning, that was very scary but now it's evolved into a more healthy version of that belief.

**Interviewer** 56:09

And is that part of what you were saying before? That feeling of becoming an adult now?

**Participant** 56:15

Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. I think I would say I just am not as naive. That's a pretty good summary.

**Interviewer** 56:25

Well it makes sense, like if everything goes your way, you don't have experiences to suggest otherwise.

**Participant** 56:32

Yeah, I mean, I'm not like, I don't have any contempt for that period of my life or anything. It was great, it rocked.

**Interviewer** 56:37

\*laughs\*

**Participant** 56:37

\*laughs\* But, you know, eventually, I guess the real-world slaps you in the face one way or another.

**Interviewer** 56:46

Well you seem to be doing all right now so

**Participant** 56:48

Yeah, I mean, I think of it as like, just the cost of existence and I love being alive and so I'll pay up, no question.

**Interviewer** 56:55

Oh, that's a good way to think about it.

**Participant** 56:58

Yeah.

**Q6d. Interviewer** 57:02

Has your understanding of yourself changed due to your psychedelic experiences?

**Participant** 57:08

Yeah, I think the way I relate to myself has changed, for sure. You know, the movie inside out? I don't know if you’ve seen it.

**Interviewer** 57:17

Yeah.

**Participant** 57:17

About the little girl and she has like a little emotions in her head. I feel like I relate to myself in a slightly dissociative way like that. Especially as a consequence of the most recent trip in which I felt like I was actually having a conversation with different aspects of myself, like, for example, emotions, I had a conversation with my sense of fear but I, I could extend that to anything that's in my head, whether it's an emotion, or me at a certain age, or whatever, or a particular thinking process and I think that's also exacerbated by meditation practice, because it kind of facilitates the sense of detachment where you just watch your thoughts and emotions fly by but that was definitely amplified by psychedelic experiences. So, I would say I have like a, I don't know, healthy detachment from all aspects of my identity and emotional experience. Maybe you could put it that way. I'm constantly talking to myself in my head.

**Interviewer** 58:21

Aren't we all?

**Participant** 58:22

In the healthiest of possible ways \*laughs\*.

**Interviewer** 58:24

\*laughs\* So do you now, when you talk to yourself, you talk to yourself as if it's say two people having a conversation.

**Participant** 58:46

No, the way I think of it is, particularly in meditation, that's the time of day that I set aside for this is I, I think of it like this going to sound super arrogant, like a queen holding court. Like I'm the queen and all of this, not actually not in an arrogant way, right because the Queen doesn't see everything and she's not all powerful, and a revolt could get her murdered but I kind of think of it as holding court like I say, Okay, this, I'm meditating this is the time of day, I have to listen to everything that's boiling in my head, if there's anything that needs to come to the surface and be heard, all are welcome and yeah, that's how I think of it. I think it can also get a bit unhealthy. Like, for example, you shouldn't feel like you have to listen to every emotion at every point of day. Sometimes that could really make you not a functional person but I set aside a particular time of day to deal with them.

**Interviewer** 59:45

Is it something that you had done previously in your meditation was this something?

**Participant** 59:51

Not like that, not like that. That's something that really did come from, directly from a psychedelic experience. I felt like I was sitting at a table with all of the little you know, on psychedelics, it seems like people in my head, but I think what it was representing different emotions or different states of mind, different types of thinking and all that it also helps me deal with emotions in the moment. Like for example, if I start to feel fear or panic, it, I have a certain detachment from it, so, it doesn't have to take over. Like, if I'm in a stressful situation, I can still function pretty well.

**Q6e. Interviewer** 1:00:45

Has your psychedelic use affected your use of other drugs?

**Participant** 1:00:54

Maybe slightly, so I I've never been somebody who's really into other drugs, I pretty much exclusively use psychedelics when it comes to like illicit substances, at least, I think it's made me slightly more open to trying certain things like MDMA, for example or ketamine, which I haven't tried but I would like to.

**Interviewer** 1:01:19

Have you tried to MDMA?

**Participant** 1:01:20

I have tried MDMA but then in I would still, you know, I'm still never going to do cocaine, for example but I think it's also affected my perceptions of drugs and drug users, like, I'm completely uninterested in judging somebody for their drug use, for example and I think also most drugs, even the ones I really wouldn't do are less dangerous than a lot of people think they are.

**Interviewer** 1:01:52

And before did you have judgement towards people who use drugs?

**Participant** 1:01:58

I had misconceptions for sure and part of it's hard to tell, like what of this is due to psychedelics, and what of this is due to the fact that I studied drugs, and now I know a bit more of the scientific research behind different drugs. So, yeah, it's very hard to tease out the different causes because I use psychedelics and because I studied them, I also know a lot of high functioning drug users. So, that obviously affects my perceptions. Um, yeah, but I mean, as to the original question, I think it's slightly made me more open to doing certain like softer drugs, but that's about it.

**Interviewer** 1:02:39

What about cannabis?

**Participant** 1:02:42

Yeah, I don't think it's affected my cannabis use because I don’t, I don't really do cannabis. My brain has never liked it. I cannot manage to smoke cannabis without having a bad reaction. So, I just quit trying after a while.

**Interviewer** 1:03:03

Just one quick follow up and at what what's the bad reaction?

**Participant** 1:03:07

Paranoia makes me paranoid. So, it either does nothing or just makes me feel really dull or it makes me paranoid. I've had actually what I would even call a really bad trip off cannabis before because I was being an idiot in Amsterdam, but

**Interviewer** 1:03:21

Well when you're in Rome.

**Participant** 1:03:23

Yeah. Yeah, there's probably a way I could smoke it that would have a good effect but like, it's just so hard to find for me. My brain just doesn't like it. Not worth the effort.

**Interviewer** 1:03:48

Yeah, that from my understanding that might be more related to the THC content then CBD.

**Participant** 1:03:55

Yeah, yes because CBD tends to kind of modulate the effects of THC makes it less intense yeah.

**Q7. Interviewer** 1:04:06

Have your psychedelic experiences affected your relationships with significant others?

**Participant** 1:04:13

Yeah, for sure. I think it's made me a more loving partner in general. I've been also with the same person since I started taking psychedelics, we've been together a really long time.

**Interviewer** 1:04:31

And what about in relation to friends or family?

**Participant** 1:04:36

Family for sure. Yeah, I never had a very close relationship with my parents, for example, but also with most people in my family and the reasons for that are somewhat of a personal mystery to me. I actually don't know why that is. It started very, very early and there's no obvious trauma or abuse or anything that could explain it. We just kind of weren't on the same wavelength but I had this psychedelic experience actually, in which I felt like I returned, I went down into the depths of my mind and down there, I found my six year old self and she knew what it was like to love her parents and be loved back and that was something I realised I hadn't actually felt since I was six and that was a really powerful experience and it, that was the one that also catalysed me to go talk to my dad, for example about and basically tell him, you know, I don't know what happened. I don't know why we weren't close when I was a kid, but you didn't do anything wrong and going forward, I want to have a relationship with you. I think it's also helped me be more conscious of the fact that my parents are just people. I mean, I think everybody has this realisation at some point in their young adulthood, that your parents are just people, but I've had psychedelic experiences in which I felt like I like I was my mother, for example, at age 24, or whatever it was, I had this kind of realisation like, Oh, she was probably a lot like me, you know, when she was my age, and I think it kind of had a way of humanising my parents for me a little bit.

**Interviewer** 1:06:25

Can you elaborate a little bit more on that?

**Participant** 1:06:28

Um, well, I think I had, until I moved out of my parents’ house to go, you know, seek my fortune, whatever be an adult go to college, I had a very antagonistic relationship with my parents and we never had this this loving relationship. We just had disagreements all the time, we were fighting all the time, about religion, about family, stuff like that, it was pretty. Even if we weren't constantly fighting, there was this constant malaise, I would say, and I just didn't like them very much, and thought they didn't like me and so I think psychedelics kind of helped me break out of this mindset, and helped me realise, you know, I can, I don't have to relate to my parents as a child anymore, because I'm not I can relate to them as just people.

**Q8. Interviewer** 1:07:26

Have psychedelics changed how you think and feel about yourself?

**Participant** 1:07:31

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. I think we've covered some of this already. Definitely this sort of the way I relate to the different mental states in my head, for sure. I think it's also made me a little more willing to be kind to myself and take care of my own needs because I'm, you know, in many ways, I would say I'm a typical academic, like, I'm someone who's always pushed herself to be the best in school or in now in work and I think psychedelic experiences have given me some of the ability to step out of that mindset sometimes because if you're in that mindset all the time, it's just going to stress you out and be really unhealthy. So, I think it's made me more able to express different sides of myself, I think that would be a good summary. Not just academic performance, side by side.

**Interviewer** 1:08:45

Has anything surprising come up in regards to expressing different sides of yourself?

**Participant** 1:08:51

Hmm. I, I, this is not something that's ever come up in the middle of a trip. No, it's something that comes tends to show up in the afterglow, like I feel like I'm just more able to be different versions of myself in different situations. Like I'm more able to be a good girlfriend when I'm with my partner, and then a good PhD student at work and then maybe, I don't know, even an artist at home with my pen and paper. I just, whereas normally when I'm not in an afterglow, I tend to find it very difficult to get out of work mode actually. Just makes it more easy for me to express different side, sides of myself. I’m going to grab a glass of water while you're taking notes.

**Q9. Interviewer** 1:09:59

Sure, no problems. So, this is a similar question. I think you probably like, unless there's anything else you want to add to it, it's just to try and come at it from a different angle, kind of literally, which is has, have psychedelics change how you view yourself?

**Participant** 1:10:43

Yeah, I think I think I covered that pretty much I don't know that I have anything to add. Maybe a good summary would be that I, I feel like my identity is more fluid. Like that it has also to do with this being able to express different parts of yourself at different times but I see my identity is not one concrete thing that never changes but as like, actually, the analogy that I like is genes, like maybe I have different mental genes that are expressed at different times, or different personality genes, so to speak, like building blocks that are expressed at different times.

**Interviewer** 1:11:27

You're methylating your genome, going for the epigenetic things.

**Participant** 1:11:32

Yeah \*laughs\*.

**Interviewer** 1:11:37

Very, very likely that's kind of what's going on when you stop situations. On comes the partner gene where you're nicer. Yeah. When you get the PhD land, your brain your brain changes. Oh, no, now we need \*schhooo\*

**Participant** 1:11:52

Yeah.

**Interviewer** 1:11:56

Time will tell scientists will let us know if this is what's going on.

**Participant** 1:12:00

Yeah.

**Q10. Interviewer** 1:12:03

Have psychedelics provided insights into how to live life well?

**Participant** 1:12:11

Yeah, for sure. It's, again, difficult to tease out what's down to the psychedelic experience, the acute experience, and then what is this integration period afterward because I often feel like, you know, the, the insights that I get in the trip itself are kind of proto-insights, so to speak, and I have to work with them more afterward in order to get the full benefit and usually, then there are more insights that come in this afterglow period, when I'm working with the experience.

**Interviewer** 1:13:02

Can you go into a little detail as to, if you've, if you've had any particular insights that you feel are worth sharing that you know, just for your personal life, not some sort of general like oh everyone should be happy or something but for you,

**Participant** 1:13:20

All is love.

**Interviewer** 1:13:20

Yeah, all is love, it's like very helpful when you're not getting a pay check. Yeah but yeah, is there is there any particular insights that you can specifically identify that have made a difference in your life?

**Participant** 1:13:36

Yeah. So, I would talk again, about this trip in which I felt like I encountered my six year old self and was, there were also a few other memories that came up in which I was working on the relationship with my parents and I felt like the major insight from that trip was that, this can sound totally benign, but like that there were some things that happened when I was a kid that led to this muddy or antagonistic relationship with my parents, and I didn't know what they were and the analogy that I came up with was that there like dirt that gets on your shoe or mud that gets on your shoe. Like when you come home, you don't examine every little rock or bit of dirt and ask yourself where the hell did this come from? How dare this piece of dirt be there and get angry about it, you just clean off your damn shoe and so I felt like that was an insight into how useless it is to hold grudges, especially if you don't really remember why. It's better to just clean off your damn shoe and think about what you want going forward with this relationship and so that's something I definitely apply to other relationships too. I think I find it easier to let things go. I don't hold grudges against people at all I either. You know, I find it easier to decide to forgive people or if it's something so bad that I can't forgive them, then I need to rethink the relationship and not continue it while being angry at them all the time.

**Interviewer** 1:15:18

And was prior to your psychedelic use, did you, were you the type of person or did you hold grudges? Was that something more, you were, part of who you were?

**Participant** 1:15:30

Yeah, I don't know grudge is a strong word, I would say I had very antagonistic feelings toward most of my family. For just because of conflicts we had growing up, and I just didn't, I wasn't really willing, or I didn't see the value in trying to get over it. I was just perfectly happy to not like them for the rest of my life \*laughs\*. Yeah and as far as other people, not really I, you know, I didn't have anybody else around who I was holding a grudge against, or who I've continued to be friends with, even though I hated them or anything like that. It was mainly about family, for me that trip, but I definitely see how that insight can be applied to other relationships. Especially when it comes to like forgiving things and letting things go.

**Interviewer** 1:16:35

Yes, I think I don't know if I have a good quote for it but I know sort of sayings basically, like, the only person who is harmed by resentment is yourself.

**Participant** 1:16:46

Yeah, precisely.

**Q11. Interviewer** 1:16:51

Have psychedelics shaped your worldview?

**Participant** 1:16:58

That's a good question, let me think. Actually, I'm not really sure that they have. I think what they have maybe done is made me more open and less judgmental of other people who have different worldviews than mine. Like, for example, I'm not religious and before psychedelic use, I would have said that religion is just totally stupid and nonsense. Now, even though I'm still not religious, I feel like I get it. I get why people are and I don't think it's totally stupid. Even though I also think it's not true \*laughs\*.

**Interviewer** 1:17:40

Just in general, it's all not true \*laughs\*. It being the singular religion.

**Participant** 1:17:47

\*laughs\* Yeah \*laughs\*. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 1:17:50

But na, yeah. just teasing.

**Participant** 1:17:53

Yeah, I know.

**Q12. Interviewer** 1:18:09

Have psychedelics changed your relationship with nature?

**Participant** 1:18:15

Yeah, you know, I think they have. What I noticed right away even after the first trip is that they give me a better appreciation for the beauty of nature and I can't prove it. I'm not even entirely sure that it's true but I swear to God ever since the first trip that I had, trees look more vivid to me. Like the green looks more vivid. At least that's an effect I noticed for a really long time after the first trip because I was outside and I remembered looking at the trees and all of the yeah swirly, hallucinogenic, LSD movements that they were doing and I thought it was so beautiful and ever since when I look at trees, I kind of think of that at least a little bit. Although I will say this is purely like an emotional or cognitive change, I don't know that I've become more environmentally conscious in my behaviour at all but I definitely am more appreciative of the beauty of nature and I get more out of being in nature.

**Interviewer** 1:19:39

Does that and not in an environmental sense, you know, like dealing with pollution or something but has it changed your interactions with nature? For example, getting outside and inside forests or to natural landscapes more often or spending more time there?

**Participant** 1:20:00

That's a good question I, I would tend to say no, because I've always been someone who really enjoyed being outside and I continued to be that way after psychedelics. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 1:20:18

So, we're changing the angle, the questions now we're moving into or the focus really then the angle, we're moving into how you use psychedelics. So, some of the nuts and bolts of how you prepare yourself, what do you do. Just all the stuff around set and setting really and that's for the next 11 questions but this one's usually quite a short segment, because it's quite straightforward for the most part.

**Participant** 1:20:48

Yeah.

**Q13. Interviewer** 1:20:50

So, first question is, how do you prepare yourself for a psychedelic trip?

**Participant** 1:20:56

Well, I generally prepare for at least a couple of weeks in advance. If I have it all been slacking on my meditation practice, I make sure that I stop that and go back to really doing a full half hour every day. When it comes to the day of the trip itself, I usually also make sure I meditate in the morning, I have a light breakfast, no coffee, because I always do it in the morning, I usually take LSD, so like it'll last all day and then I make I set an intention for the trip, usually, even though half the time it ends up not mattering, I think it's a good thing to have and it helps me sort of direct the chaos. If at any point, I have the opportunity to do that. I also always make myself a little care package. Usually I have a playlist with some music that I think would be good to listen to a stuffed animal. In case that's necessary. Some personally meaningful objects that I might find comfort in, in case things get a little dicey and then I, especially after the one experience in which I didn't have a trip sitter and had a terrible time, I always find a trip sitter, whether it's my boyfriend or somebody else, and then I prepare the space, I really prefer to do it outside. So, I'll scout out a space outside, if I'm going to do that. Make sure it's somewhere relatively secluded, but also beautiful or if I am going to do it inside, then I prepare the space so that it's aesthetically pleasing and comfortable. I always at least do it somewhere where I can open a window if I start to not like being inside. Oh, and I always prepare like a few snacks and drinks because I will forget to eat and feel awful at the tail end if I don't have the food right in front of me.

**Interviewer** 1:23:23

In terms of the trip sitter, is it difficult to find somebody who is willing to be the trip sitter or is it quite easy?

**Participant** 1:23:35

Usually my boyfriend is willing. Yeah, we don't take it together, actually, because we have very different preferences about setting. So, that's quite easy but there were some times when I was living in a different city from him and then it was not super difficult but I was also less secure with the person like I wanted to make sure that you are really willing to sit here for 12 hours and not leave. You know, I wanted to make sure that they were actually up for it but I was also working at the [organisation], so it was not too hard to find somebody.

**Interviewer** 1:24:10

Fair enough.

**Participant** 1:24:11

Yeah.

**Interviewer** 1:24:11

And we'll take that one out.

**Participant** 1:24:13

Yeah, I guess.

**Interviewer** 1:24:14

Getting a little getting a little triangulation going on. Like PhD student, [organisation].

**Participant** 1:24:22

I knew a lot of people who were really into psychedelics and so it wasn't that hard. There we go.

**Q14. Interviewer** 1:24:38

Well, you've spoken to this, but I don't know if you've spoken exactly to the why of it. So, the question is, where do you normally take psychedelics and why do you take them there?

**Participant** 1:24:48

Yeah, I so my preference is to be outside. If that is not possible, then I like to be in a room with lots of windows and light and the possibility of opening the windows. The reason for that I actually don't fully understand myself, I just noticed that in previous experiences when I'm indoors, there's something in my mind that just doesn't like that or feels a little bit trapped, it's it feels like the door to hell is always slightly open when I'm inside, and I cannot fully relax into it or let go. It also doesn't happen every time I've inside, you know, I've had good trips inside as well but it just seems like there's more potential for anxious reactions when I'm indoors. So, I prefer to do it outside in, in beautiful nature. I also, like the most important thing to me, though, actually, is that it's a private area, like, if I'm outside, I find somewhere pretty secluded, where nobody's going to bother us and if I don't have anywhere private than I'll just do it inside, if it means that I can have the privacy.

**Interviewer** 1:25:53

So, in terms of scouting out places outdoors, and them needing to be private. What sort of locations are you, are you choosing? Like, are you living in a city where you go to a local park and hide in the bush somewhere or like what level of space and privacy is it sort of out in the great wilderness sort of experience where you've driven a couple of hours away?

**Participant** 1:26:17

Something in between, so I've, I've never done it, like in a city park, because it's just like too crowded but I've gone to like a national park or a nature preserve where there's a lot of space and, you know, maybe there's going to be people around, but the likelihood that they come up to you in your little spot is really, really slim. So, you know, I don't mind seeing people walking around in the background or whatever, that doesn't bother me, I just, I just don't want to interact with them and then of course, I would always have a trip sitter or when I'm outside even more so than when I'm inside just to kind of be a buffer against anybody who might be wanting to talk to us for whatever reason, like I don't know, their dog likes the way we smell and runs up to us or something like this. Yeah, so I'm, I, you know, I've always actually done it, not necessarily on purpose, but I've always done it next to a body of water, like a lake or something. Where I'm looking across the lake, and usually, I usually in a national park or something like that, nature reserve. In Switzerland, it's really not hard to find things like that.

**Interviewer** 1:27:25

No, it's not as it. Just walk outside. You're like, Oh, mountains.

**Participant** 1:27:34

Yeah.

**Interviewer** 1:27:34

Crystal, clear ice lake. No people for miles.

**Participant** 1:27:39

Yeah, it also it has to be somewhere, that's relatively easy to get to. So, like, now, that's not as much of an issue because my boyfriend can just drive us there but in the past, like, I've lived without him places without a car, and it's like, okay, I need to be able to be able to take public transport and it should be relatively simple. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 1:28:02

Okay. So, logistical things that makes sense.

**Participant** 1:28:04

Yeah, yeah.

**Q15. Interviewer** 1:28:11

So, you mentioned that there were some personally significant items that you have with you. So, the question here is, are there any items that are important to have with you when tripping so this isn't just personally significant items, you've definitely mentioned a whole number of them before. So, I don't know if other any other items, let's say that you feel are important to have with you when tripping and you can also talk about if you want to go specific into your personally significant items.

**Participant** 1:28:41

So the most important thing for me is something that can play music because I don't always need music in every minute of the trip, but at some point, I will always want it and also just comfort items, especially for outside so something like a picnic blanket, some blankets, maybe some pillows, that sort of thing and especially also with being outside if you need any kind of protection from the elements that should be there. I always tried to do it on a nice day but then you know, just in case it rains I'll bring an umbrella or something like that. Or actually, a raincoat cause then I feel like a little rain astronaut and I can still

**Interviewer** 1:29:24

A Rastronaut.

**Participant** 1:29:24

Yeah yeah. Yeah, just to ensure comfort and then I do usually bring a stuffed animal because like it feels comforting to like hug a teddy bear or whatever and usually some incense or something that that smells nice that I can burn. I think that just kind of helps me. It's not connected to any beliefs or anything but it helps create a nice just mindset and space and then personally significant items I've brought before are like, like, sometimes pictures, it's different every time it depends a bit on my intention, but like maybe a picture of somebody that I love and wanted to think about, or something that I, yeah something that's just connected with some good memories, you know, that I acquired at some point in my life and a journal, I always bring a journal because I like to write down what happened on the trip during the come down period. Well, it's still a little bit with me, you know.

**Q16. Interviewer** 1:30:54

You've spoken to this, but if there's anything additional to add, the question is how do you prepare the space where you take psychedelics?

**Participant** 1:31:04

Yeah, I think I pretty much said everything I do already.

**Interviewer** 1:31:09

Is there any one thing? Well I'll ask him first, rather than leading in, is there, actually, I guess it's both do you clean up the space?

**Participant** 1:31:20

Oh yes, absolutely. Yeah. So, inside, I definitely tidy up and outside, like, for example, if there if we find a nice picnic spot by the lake and there are a tonne of sticks or rocks or litter, then I also clean that up.

**Interviewer** 1:31:43

And in terms of you saying that you like to have a lot of windows, so I'm assuming curtains are open?

**Participant** 1:31:53

Yeah. I mean, of course, I can always close them. So, I usually start off with them open and maybe the window cracked, because I like the fresh air and the fresh breeze and I you know if this is going to be one of those times where I get anxious inside I don't want to have it right away and then later if I want to close it, I always have the curtains there.

**Q17. Interviewer** 1:32:20

Other any other preparations you make prior to taking a psychedelic that you might not have mentioned so far.

**Participant** 1:32:27

So, if it's a trip sitter, that's not my boyfriend because he knows my routine already, then I'll usually have some kind of conversation with them beforehand about like, if I start to struggle with anxiety, what can they do that would be helpful for me. I also always want to make sure that they're actually up for this like that they'll stay the whole time because one time we had a trip sitter actually leave early and not for me, but for someone else, it had kind of disastrous results. So, yeah, I just make sure that, you know, they know what they're getting into and they really are willing to do this and they're prepared to help me properly if I start to get anxious.

**Q18. Interviewer** 1:33:18

What are you normally doing physically during a psychedelic trip?

**Participant** 1:33:22

Oh, I'm just lying there \*laughs\*. Usually I you know, I, I always feel like I can't do anything else. Like, I don't think I've ever had a trip where I was doing anything but just lying down, tripping my balls off. I feel like the experience pulls me in so hard that I have to close my eyes and lay down and just have had the experience, I can't not do that.

**Interviewer** 1:33:54

Well it's a very short answer then, lying down.

**Participant** 1:33:56

Yeah, I mean, sometimes at the tail end when it starts to wear off and I like to go on a walk outside or I did try tree hugging one time. It was great. I fully recommended it.

**Interviewer** 1:34:13

Pretty sure I've done that.

**Participant** 1:34:15

Yeah. Yeah, during the acute effects, I really do just lie there. Especially during the first like with LSD during the first six hours, when it's really intense.

**Q19. Interviewer** 1:34:33

Is there anything you avoid doing or interacting with during a psychedelic trip?

**Participant** 1:34:38

Strangers, I don't interact with them. I prefer not to. I mean, I because I'm just lying there. I'm avoiding doing pretty much everything.

**Interviewer** 1:34:55

This is a somewhat of a common answer.

**Participant** 1:34:57

Yeah, I mean, I wouldn't ever like try and force myself to, I don't know, take care of any responsibilities or anything like that, like I, In fact, I make sure I've taken care of all of my responsibilities that might be weighing on my mind before I trip so that it's not distracting me. Oh, I also I make rules for myself about like certain, possibly dangerous activities that I wouldn't do. Like, for example, even though I may be tripping on a lake, I tell myself no swimming. Absolutely no going in the water until you really feel it start to wear off and then you would only go with a trip sitter. No wandering off by yourself. Basically, anything, any rules you would set for like a two-year-old, I set for myself.

**Interviewer** 1:35:43

Make sense. One thing to ask them, because you sort of came back to it as this you take care of the responsibilities. So, the day of the trip, is there is the day set out for the entirety is free and available for this experience?

**Participant** 1:36:12

Absolutely and usually the day after, too. Yeah, I never trip on a day when I have any responsibilities at all.

**Q20. Interviewer** 1:36:36

Is there anything special you do after a psychedelic trip?

**Participant** 1:36:43

You know, what's funny is I usually watch a movie and this is not something that I intend to do, necessarily, but I often feel like watching a movie and it's often something very, I guess you could say, archetypical, maybe like, something like Lord of the Rings, or maybe a Disney movie, these movie with a story that's really stood the test of time and I just often get the urge to watch a movie like that. I don't know why and then I always journal for sure and make sure I get enough sleep and I usually draw something too, the only time in my life I ever feel like I can draw us right after psychedelics.

**Interviewer** 1:37:38

And in terms of the sleep. Is it difficult to go to sleep after a psychedelic trip? Is it normal? How does that go?

**Participant** 1:37:47

So Well, I usually take LSD that's kind of my psychedelic of choice and it depends on how early I took it. So, if I didn't take it till noon, I am going to be up till four in the morning, whether I like it or not. I usually can't sleep until about 16 hours after I took it and so I don't try and force myself to go to sleep. Before my brain is ready. I just make sure that I have enough of a buffer the next morning that even if I go to bed at four, I can sleep a full eight hours. Then once I get to sleep, it's usually it's usually completely dreamless and normal duration, I would say.

**Q21. Interviewer** 1:38:39

Are there any helpful techniques you use to navigate difficult or challenging moments during a psychedelic trip?

**Participant** 1:38:46

Meditation, yeah, just focusing on the breath because it's usually constant. So, it's kind of a point of order in the chaos, you could say and then I usually have some kind of, I guess you could call it a mantra or something I say to myself, which is comforting, like I usually decide that also before I start the experience, and I'll reach out to the trip sitter as well and have them hold my hand or something. If it starts to get really challenging. I often find that just telling them that I'm starting to struggle is already very helpful because I feel secure that somebody knows what's going on and I also try my best to go toward the thing that I'm struggling with, to invite it in and get curious about it instead of trying to resist. At least I do that now after that awful trip.

**Interviewer** 1:39:50

Before that bad trip, had you had trips where you had challenging or very difficult experiences? So, was there no need to, accept it because it just was good?

**Participant** 1:40:06

Yeah, I mean, the one time I took magic truffles, I vomited right at the beginning. So, that sucked but that kind of resolved on its own and I felt like maybe I was going to start to have a bad trip, but then I vomited and slowly felt better. So, I didn't really have to do anything. I'd never had a I mean, before that bad trip, but I've never had to have a coping mechanism for that really.

**Q22. Interviewer** 1:40:41

Could you describe any type of integration or self-reflect reflective practices that you engage in to make sense of your psychedelic experiences?

**Participant** 1:40:50

How long do you have?

**Interviewer** 1:40:53

Well, I have as much time as needed. So, don't worry about that.

**Participant** 1:40:57

So, meditation again, I usually meditate a lot more after a psychedelic experience, just because I get more out of it right after a psychedelic experience.

**Interviewer** 1:41:09

Right after you mean like during the come down?

**Participant** 1:41:12

In the afterglow, in the afterglow, period. Also journaling and creative expression of all kinds, whether it's drawing things or writing something, writing a song, or whatever, that no one else will ever see but me because it's probably terrible, but it means something to me. I definitely do a lot of journaling because it helps me to process the experience. I also try and look for really concrete things that I can use to integrate like, like actual behaviours, for example, like habits, I'm going to stop or someone I need to talk to about something specific or new things that I want to start doing. Yeah, actually that sums it up, I also went to an integration course one time, and that was really helpful, to be able to talk to other people.

**Interviewer** 1:42:13

Was that through the [organisation]?

**Participant** 1:42:15

Yeah.

**Interviewer** 1:42:19

Cool. Um, in terms are you do you normally journal outside of psychedelic use?

**Participant** 1:42:26

Yeah, I have a meditation journal, but I don't write in it every day. I think I journal a lot more, right. After psychedelics. I usually also adapt my meditation in some way based on the trip. Like, for example, this holding court meditation that I talked about is new or sometimes I've added just a particular type, like meditating to music, for example, I had one trip where music was particularly influencing my state of mind and so then I started meditating to music to try and get back to the state that I was in, under the influence of psychedelics.

**Interviewer** 1:43:17

And how did that go?

**Participant** 1:43:19

Actually, better than I thought, like, I mean, that the state I was in was that I felt like I was one with the music, you know, how it goes but I found that you really can induce an altered state of mind of some kind by just lying down putting on music and completely giving it your entire attention. It's like meditation, except it's not your breath. It's the music.

**Interviewer** 1:43:42

Is that an effort, sorry, an effortful action?

**Participant** 1:43:48

In the beginning, yeah, but then you reach kind of a flow state where it's easier and happens naturally and it's harder to come out of it.

**Interviewer** 1:44:00

Just out of my own pure curiosity, the integration course, what was, do you have any takeaways that you from going to that course?

**Participant** 1:44:11

Yeah, um, so I, I was able to access the course, some months after a psychedelic experience I would have it was actually the bad one again. So, I would have liked to be able to go right away but I think it really helped me crystallise some of the things I've been thinking about after that experience, and express them in different ways and it was also really helpful to be able to talk to other people who had had something similar because I was not the only one who was there after kind of a bad trip and I think the main insight that I had from that course would be that I felt like I could start to really believe that everything was okay again, and I didn't have to constantly be on the lookout for something to go wrong.

**Interviewer** 1:45:04

in yourself or in life?

**Participant** 1:45:06

Just generally, yeah in life, because I was kind of always in this mindset of like, you know, I'm not naive anymore, I have to be conscious of the fact that something can always go wrong and that can happen to an unhealthy extent. Yeah. So, I felt like the activities we did in the course helped me kind of relax and accept that sometimes, you know, sometimes things can go completely well, and that's fine.

**Interviewer** 1:45:36

\*laughs\* Well, okay.

**Participant** 1:45:39

It's not something you would think would be a revolution to most people, but to me at the time, it was.

**Interviewer** 1:45:46

Yes. It's like breaking news. Things that are ok are OK but I definitely see that the point like you, you getting into a state of hyper vigilance is, like, there's a degree to which, you know, there's a balance, really, but you got to be aware to some degree, but it's a cost trade off really, at the end of the day.

**Participant** 1:46:11

Yeah. You don't to have to always look for something to go wrong, you know, you can accept that things might be okay.

**Interviewer** 1:46:19

Yes, well, it takes a lot of cognitive resources and energy just to be in that state of, not even necessarily anxiety, but heightened arousal, constantly kind of trying to take in all the potentialities of negative circumstances that could play themselves out. Whereas you can also just not and still manage your way through it all.

**Participant** 1:46:46

Exactly, and most the time, you're going to be worrying about something that will never actually happen.

**Interviewer** 1:46:53

The joys of life.

**Participant** 1:46:54

Yeah \*laughs\*.

**Q23. Interviewer** 1:46:59

Yes, okay. Mm hmm. You know, I think, I don't know if there's anything to add to this, I'll just say it out but if you feel like you've, you don't have anything to add, we'll just move on. The question is, are there any noticeable changes in how you think or feel in the days or weeks following psychedelic use? So definitely spoken to that but I wonder if Is there any other things that come to mind?

**Participant** 1:47:26

Yeah, I also in addition to feeling like the best version of myself, I'd see more possibilities in the world in general, I think. It becomes more obvious to me that I am a, that I'm like an actor, an actor in the world and I can do pretty much anything I want with various consequences but I think I'm kind of broken of some of the patterns of behaviour that I have, like, for example, most of most weekdays, I take the train to work, work for eight hours, and then take the train home but after a psychedelic experience, I might after work, think you know what, I don't have to go home, I can go do pretty much anything right now. I can go to the river, I can go shopping, I can call a friend, there's just more possibilities that come to mind or if I have a problem I'm trying to solve, I see more possibilities of solving it as well. Like, for example, I'm one of these people who like I don't really like to bother people or talk to other human beings if I don't have to. I know that sounds kind of crazy but like,

**Interviewer** 1:48:39

Not really but, it's funny. A lot of humans say this. I don't like to talk to other humans.

**Participant** 1:48:45

Yeah or it's like, like, I don't like to call customer support or whatever, if I have a problem with my computer or stuff like that but if there's, for example, an interpersonal conflict and normally, I would think it's, it's not really a good idea to go talk to this person about it, or maybe I could do that but it's highly irregular and people don't usually do that. So, I'm not going to do it. I don't think that way in the afterglow, I see it as a real possibility. I'm trying to think of like a specific example.

**Interviewer** 1:49:29

Would you say then, in that case, your it seems like there's two things you're saying there. One, you're more willing to reach out for help.

**Participant** 1:49:38

Hmmm, yeah.

**Interviewer** 1:49:39

I'm don't know if that's correct.

**Participant** 1:49:41

Maybe not necessarily help, but I'm more willing to explore possibilities for solving problems that I would not normally consider and that may actually be pretty effective. I mean, it can be amazing how much you can accomplish with just a conversation with somebody you know, if you reach out to them.

**Interviewer** 1:50:13

And so, in that, yeah, I see how that sort of covers both. So, in that case, there in an interpersonal conflict issue, the abnormal thing to do might be go and talk to that person directly about that problem and that's not the thing to do but you like, but you can.

**Participant** 1:50:30

Yeah, exactly. That's, that's not the thing to do but there's actually no real reason why you shouldn't do it. It's just kind of a convention that you don't do that.

**Interviewer** 1:50:42

So, would a reasonable summary of that be that it disrupts normal habits of behaviour? To some degree.

**Participant** 1:50:55

I don't know if disrupt, I think that I see more possibilities and more possible solutions is a good summary. It doesn't generally disrupt most of my habits unless I want it to.

**Q24. Interviewer** 1:51:25

How has your psychedelic, sorry, how, has how you use psychedelics changed over time?

**Participant** 1:51:34

Yeah, actually. Now I take far more small doses than I used to when I first started using them, I find that sometimes you can actually reach very useful insight or emotional breakthrough with a non-hallucinogenic dose and it's maybe a bit maybe the breakthrough is less intense, but it's also safer, because you're never in danger of not being able to handle your state of mind.

**Interviewer** 1:52:04

So, would do you use psychedelics is this sort of problem solver?

**Participant** 1:52:11

Not in like a work productivity sense but maybe I use them specifically to break beliefs that I think need to be broken, for example, or to clean up my brain, so to speak, give it run a little C clean up on it. Like, I just sometimes start to feel like there's, um, I guess a lot of dirt in my gears. I don't even know how to describe how I tell when that's the case but I just feel like my brain needs a good, deep clean but as far as the small doses, I will sometimes use them for specific things. Like, for example, I've noticed lately that I've become a little bit callous in interpersonal relationships, and it's actually not such a good thing. So, I'm going to take a small dose and examine why that is and try and tap into my sense of empathy a little more. So, it's mainly like personal stuff. It's not like work problems or anything like that. So, far. That may change.

**Interviewer** 1:53:18

Well, often work problems are interpersonal.

**Participant** 1:53:21

Yeah, they can be.

**Q25. Interviewer** 1:53:29

So that's all the use questions. We're moving on to going to be asking about some specific psychedelic experiences you've had one of the questions asks about a challenging or negative psychedelic experience. So, we've definitely talked about that. So, I don't know. necessarily, if there is any, if you want to give it like a more narrative style, like what was happening, maybe if there was particular content that was disturbing or causing issues, or if you're just like to leave the description, as you've already left and say that's sufficient. So, that's, that's one of the questions. The other one is can you describe your most memorable or life changing psychedelic experience. So, not, sometimes these are the same. Some people say the most challenging is also the most life changing. You can also consider it somewhat leaning towards positive as well if you want to add that in there. So, if you've had a very positive experience, you can include that in that. So, those are the two questions in terms of experiences but before we get to those, there's one question that I want to ask, which is what do you think is the core psychedelic experience?

**Participant** 1:54:46

Oh, man, I have no idea how to answer that the core psychedelic experience. For me, oh for me, okay. Well they're always very meaningful in one way or another. There is usually some kind of emotional release or insight. Insight is pretty much always part of it. I always feel at least somewhat, like my ego boundaries are starting to dissolve, not necessarily complete ego dissolution, but at least a little bit, I, you know, what it feels like is I have these different aspects of my identity that I was talking about and I feel like I dissociate from them almost one by one, like normally, they're all in a very tight ball but under psychedelics, they start to float away from each other and be separate and then the absolute maximum of that would be complete ego dissolution, but it can be closer or farther. You know, I, in my last trip, for example, I felt like I was slowly watching different parts of myself float away as the drug took effect and I thought that was okay, because they all needed a vacation \*laughs\*.

**Interviewer** 1:54:52

For you. From you \*laughs\*.

**Participant** 1:56:07

Yeah, from me \*laughs\*. Yeah. It's also, of course, very chaotic and there's an element of randomness to it. Especially at the start and, of course, especially with the high doses, there's always these spectacular visuals. Like, maybe I would sum it up as a very long and meaningful dream. I don't know if that's make sense but.

**Interviewer** 1:57:13

I can definitely see how you get there. So, in that sense, that makes sense. I think. Yeah, I'm not trying to the furrowing of the brow is not like, oh, how do I say this, so it doesn't sound criticism or anything because not at all. I'm just thinking. It definitely makes sense from my point of view but I wonder if there's a way of, how to say, it's a very it's not, I can't articulate it, but there's a feeling like I yeah, I understand, for sure.

**Participant** 1:57:50

Yeah. At least that's how I would describe it to somebody who's never taken psychedelics before.

**Interviewer** 1:57:54

Yeah.

**Participant** 1:57:55

Yeah because I know, there's obvious differences with dreams but it's also very hard to imagine what it's like if you've never done it before.

**Interviewer** 1:58:02

Yes, that's what I was sort of thinking a little bit was a lot of people describe their experiences as dream, like, and so there's, there's very, where I was sort of thinking on like, the making sense part. It's like one it does, yes, it does feel like that but two that also makes sense to people who sort of haven't had direct experience.

**Participant** 1:58:24

Yeah.

**Interviewer** 1:58:26

So, it's like, it makes sense on two levels.

**Participant** 1:58:28

Yeah.

**Q26. Interviewer** 1:58:32

Right. So, can you describe your most challenging or negative psychedelic experience?

**Participant** 1:58:38

Yeah, I yeah, I guess I can just go over it again. So, I was at home with my boyfriend we both took about, I took 100 micrograms of LSD. I don't remember how much he took, but it wasn't much more and I think the intention was that we wanted to kind of explore our relationship or just have this experience of taking psychedelics as a couple. That is not what happened but that was kind of the thought going into it and we were just lying in bed and tripping and for the first hour, maybe hour and a half or two hours, we were kind of both in our own little world having a nice time. I remember lots of rainbow visions, and it didn't seem to make a lot of sense but that's not that unusual for me for the first couple of hours of the trip, it doesn't start to crystallise into sense until later and then at one point I got up to go to the bathroom and was stupid enough to look in the mirror and I just some part of me just reacted really negatively to what I saw there. I can't really explain it but I looked like some kind of evil witch version of myself and that just kind of seemed to shatter my sanity and then I looked away and I could see the after image of myself in the mirror for a few more seconds but then I thought that I seem to stabilise again and I went back to bed and I thought maybe everything will be okay. I guess I just got a glimpse of what a bad trip would be like and I never want to experience that. So, I'm going to try and forget about it and then I noticed that I couldn't quite forget about it and this little, you know, it felt like the good trip was this beautiful rainbow tapestry of psychedelic tripping but then there was this little black thread in it that just wouldn't go away and I started to get afraid of that and I started to think. Wait, am I going to have a bad trip now, I really don't want to have a bad trip, no fuck and the but the more I thought that the bigger this black part got until it took over the whole experience and I remember at some point, I asked my boyfriend, if he could just please remind me that I took a drug and that it will be over and then he did that and he asked if I was fine and I said, I'm not sure I think I'm starting to have a bit of a bad trip and I thought maybe it would help to go outside or look outside because we have the curtains closed, because he really hates having any windows open or the possibility that anybody could see in so I went to open the curtain and kind of stand behind it so that I could look outside, but that he would still have it closed and outside just looked absolutely wrong. It was not what I expected and I realised that it wasn't helping and I think that was the point where it really started to be a completely bad trip that I was just not going to be able to get out of on my own and it also didn't help that it was starting to get dark it was oh, I think it was like November and about 6pm. So, the sun was going down and I really did not like that I wanted more light. So, I went and turned on the light in my room but that didn't help either, because it was really cold light and it was still not very bright and just everything I did didn't help and even made it worse and so then that's when I told my boyfriend, I'm not doing good and I think I just ended up on the floor by the window trying to get some fresh air with the curtain closed so that he could have it closed but I opened it for the fresh air and that helped a bit and then I was just kind of waiting for it to stop and he was holding me but I also couldn't look at his face because faces looked really fucked up to me. So, I had my eyes closed and was trying not to look at him and then that's when it occurred to me to kind of start meditating, and I tried to focus on my breath. I couldn't really keep the focus on my breath. I kept losing it, and just spiralling into insanity and then finding my breath again and spiralling and I was in that loop for maybe half an hour, it felt like a really long time but I think it helped enough that it stopped me from spiralling really far down into the bad trip. I think this exercise of trying to focus on the breath, at least helped and after doing it for a while, maybe an hour or so, I felt like I actually reached a point where I could be okay with how awful I felt and I still didn't feel good at all but I felt neutral and it was like this meditative equanimity that people talk about where, no matter what's going on, you feel it, you know, it's okay and so that that was the point when I think I started to kind of come out of it and I started to like, joke about myself or make fun of myself and then I knew that I'm going to be okay, because like my sense of humour is coming back online. So, that felt better and then once I kind of got away from this really nasty portion of the trip, I could see how it started off really good and pleasant and then it had this bad part, but both were part of the trip and I could sort of hold them both in my mind and be okay with both of them being there and then I felt, you know, I had some kind of continuing negative feelings or paranoia, as the drugs wore off, but it was nothing I couldn't handle and I ended up feeling really, really strong for being able to get through that and then the next day, I had like a positive afterglow, like I usually get. So, I thought it was over.

**Interviewer** 2:04:10

Can you if it's possible, describe or elaborate on this chaotic stuff that was going on. So, you're saying it was part of the experience was awful. That you weren't enjoying it. It was chaotic. You were having some experiences of mind loops. I don't know is it possible, is there, was it a particular content of the experience? Was it a visual sort of thing going on? Was it simply feelings? Like is there any more detail their?

**Participant** 2:04:46

I think it was just feelings because I as I started to notice that it was the trip was slipping into a bad one. I tried to put my finger on what exactly it was I didn't like and I couldn't find anything. It was just bad. I was like I was trying to figure out what is it I'm reacting to. I think I was just so afraid of the possibility of having a bad trip, that that fear maybe got amplified until I couldn't feel anything else except being afraid and of course, I was hallucinating, but I wasn't seeing any particularly disturbing visions or anything. Everything I looked at seemed a bit twisted and wrong. Like looking outside my backyard looked just wrong. I couldn't put my finger on why it was just wrong. There was something wrong with it. My boyfriend's face, same thing but it's like everything was twisted by this this fear and feeling of being insane or paranoid. I felt like I like I couldn't get a foothold on sanity. Almost like absolutely nothing made sense and there was no way out of this awful state of mind.

**Interviewer** 2:06:06

What do you mean by nothing made sense?

**Participant** 2:06:09

Well, I just you know on psychedelics, your thoughts are rushing by so fast that often you feel like it that the speed is too much for you to keep up. It. I just I don't know how to describe it. Except that I couldn't get. I couldn't grasp anything that made sense. So, if I would try to, like, for example, do a grounding exercise, you know, like, name something you see you name something in hear, like it's supposed to calm me down. I anything I would grasp that would immediately in my hallucination, start to spiral into this awful fractal pattern and then disappear. So, anything I grasp that would disappear and the next thing I grasp disappears. It's really, really hard to describe but

**Interviewer** 2:07:08

So, there was so there was a sense of being unable to hold a coherent thought for any period of time. That would, right, yeah, give a sense of stability, or?

**Participant** 2:07:17

Exactly. So, there was no sense of stability. The only thing that even halfway worked was focusing on my breath, but even that would disappear and then I would find it again would disappear. It would be like trying to climb a rock, but everything you grab on to just falls off, and then you'd have nothing in your hand anymore.

**Interviewer** 2:07:36

Mm hmm. That's a good analogy do. You mentioned also a sense of being paranoid. What was going on there?

**Participant** 2:07:49

Um, so with that, I mean, just the sense that something is wrong, something is not right but I don't know what it is. Like. I was in my apartment and I remember looking down the hallway and thinking, this is a very bad place for me to be right now. I shouldn't be here and I couldn't have told you why but it just looked dark and something was wrong. Even though I couldn't have told you what it was.

**Interviewer** 2:08:24

Okay, no, thank you, I think and so what. No, no, I think you. Is there anything you'd like to add to that?

**Participant** 2:08:38

I think I just about covered it. Yeah, I mean, it was it was it was kind of incredible how also, this negative part of the trip, also wore off, and the come down was relatively pleasant. With just a couple more moments of, you know, paranoia or feeling bad but once I, you know, with LSD, it would have been like six to eight hours after I took it. I started to regain my sense of sanity and identity and then I felt actually really good. So, that was a bit strange.

**Q27. Interviewer** 2:09:20

So, the next question is, can you describe your most memorable or life changing psychedelic experience?

**Participant** 2:09:27

That's very hard to pick one actually.

**Interviewer** 2:09:31

You're allowed to do multiple if you like, like I just set it at one.

**Participant** 2:09:37

I mean, I could pick the bad trip, but it wasn't just the trip itself, but also the aftermath. That I felt, you know, made me an adult. So, maybe I won't pick that one. Just because it's not clear what was the trip and what was other stuff. I mean, as far as most life changing, actually, that would just have to be the first one, because that's the trip that gave me the idea to study psychedelics and that's probably the most obvious change in my life from taking them but it also gave me It showed me that it's possible for the brain to be in such a different state than it's normally in and that was, you know, a revelation for me and it made me want to explore this territory further and so it was the catalyst for all of my other trips after that and this sense of absolute peace that I felt on that first trip is something that I ever since feel like I can access again, if I need it. That's never really gone away.

**Interviewer** 2:10:59

And that peace I think you said originally lasted for about a month afterwards.

**Participant** 2:11:04

Yeah. I mean, not. So, the afterglow in general. So, not just this sense of being at peace and not worrying about things, but also just feeling like the best version of myself, you know.

**Interviewer** 2:11:23

Was there anything about the first trip in terms of the content? So visual, emotional, cognitive, that came up that you think is worth adding in?

**Participant** 2:11:37

Yeah, it's a lot of emotional content. It's a bit difficult to describe, but I can try.

**Interviewer** 2:11:48

Please.

**Participant** 2:11:49

I've, ever since I can remember, I've always had occasionally this strange feeling of longing for something and I don't really know what it is I'm longing for. It's just a sense of longing and I can't describe it in any other way and during that first trip, I felt like, Oh, this is what I've been longing for. This whole time. I felt like I was recognising it or returning to something that I had forgotten and yet, I could not imagine how I could have forgotten something like this. That was just a very profound experience and very difficult to describe in any other, less abstract way.

**Interviewer** 2:12:49

Do you think, thinking back on it, the sense of longing was for psychedelics and the trips or was it something that just fell into place? Rather than that being the particular object of longing?

**Participant** 2:13:05

That's a very good question. The funny thing is, I haven't felt it since that psychedelic experience and it could have been, yeah, I don't know. I would tend to say just, you know, as a scientist, that no, I wasn't longing for the psychedelic experience, because I didn't know what that was but maybe it was some something that was intimately tied up with this experience, for example, the sense of peace, or the sense that everything is all right or even a sense that there's some part of my mind that is always looking out for me, and always caring about me, because I also felt that during this first experience, so it was probably something specific about the experience, rather than psychedelics in general that I was feeling connected to.

**Interviewer** 2:14:01

And what would the other expressions or aspects of yourself say?

**Participant** 2:14:09

\*laughs\*

**Interviewer** 2:14:09

Not just the materialist scientist?

**Participant** 2:14:11

Yeah, I mean, of course, I, I differentiate in my personal beliefs between what I think is true, and what I hope is true. So, the scientist is talking about what I think is true but there is a part of me that kind of hopes that there is some kind of life after death or even some kind of mystical being looking out for humankind and I think I did have a period in my life when I was religious and during that period, I interpreted this longing as longing for God or longing for closeness to God and I don't really know what to do with that thought but I suppose there's a part of me that hopes that there really is something else after death and maybe something beautiful and perhaps this, you know, during this experience, I felt a sense of peace and I felt a sense that there was some part of my mind that was looking out for me and that always had my best interests at heart and perhaps even that loved me and maybe I was just longing for connection to that, I don't know. I think also in that moment, I didn't care to put it into words, it didn't matter what I call it, you know, it was enough that I was able to feel it at all. Even if I can't describe it to someone else.

**Interviewer** 2:15:47

Two questions I have with what you're just saying. One, you said a part of your mind that loved you and I just want clarification by a part of mind, do you mean, sort of within the limits of normal considerations, what the mind is being a sort of.

**Participant** 2:16:07

Yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:16:08

Connected to the brain. Okay. So, not mind at large?

**Participant** 2:16:11

No, not mind at large. I mean, I, that's how I interpreted I'm also aware of the fact that it's a very weird thing and the mind is mysterious, and I don't really know what it is, but

**Interviewer** 2:16:21

Nobody does.

**Participant** 2:16:22

Yeah, that's my interpretation is that it's part of a, but it's not supernatural at all.

**Interviewer** 2:16:30

And just the other question is this idea that you said, You felt longing And that we sort of question a little bit about that and it's maybe not particularly that psychedelics in themselves, but the experiences that you had on that and it seems to be related around the sense of peace, and also the sense of something in you, or you love yourself. Was there was this sense of loving yourself not there before this?

**Participant** 2:17:02

Um, I think it was, I think it was there, I sort of had the experience that it was eternal but perhaps I wasn't very connected to it, or it wasn't very well expressed. You know, maybe I was, I think at the time I was doing my master's degree, I was pushing myself pretty hard and worrying a lot about like performance in class and perhaps not connecting so well, to this sense that I can love myself.

**Interviewer** 2:17:36

So was that in its you mentioned, eternalness. Is that a sort of like unconditional love?

**Participant** 2:17:42

Yeah. Yeah, I would call it exactly that and no more no less. That's what it seems like. It wouldn't even require that I believe in it or that I love it back. It seemed completely unconditional.

**Interviewer** 2:18:00

Which, which I think makes sense. With the follow up. Where you are saying if you're pushing yourself hard to complete a Master's, there is a sense of self judgement.

**Participant** 2:18:13

Yeah, for sure. Like you're not doing enough.

**Interviewer** 2:18:23

Good thank you. Very fine answers. A+

**Participant** 2:18:29

\*laughs\* Except now I no longer care about getting an A+

**Interviewer** 2:18:35

Oh, boo, I'll give you a little certificate as well if you like?

**Participant** 2:18:40

Yeah, ok ok, yeah, certificates are nice.

**Interviewer** 2:18:43

\*laughs\* you can put it on the wall.

**Participant** 2:18:44

You know, actually, now that I think of it that might be an answer to like a previous question about how it's changed my view of myself or identity, I think, because, you know, I would still say I'm kind of a typical academic very oriented toward performance and, and grades and stuff, but I think my psychedelic experiences have helped me realise that I can be something else and that your worth is not measured by your grades or, or your even your career achievements. That said, my grades did not drop after I took psychedelics like I still tried but I think if I had gotten a less than perfect score on something, or you know, I have gotten a less than perfect score on something since then it just doesn't matter to me as much. It's not. I don't consider it as much of a measure of my worth.

**Interviewer** 2:19:37

As you, as you did before?

**Participant** 2:19:38

Yeah, I mean, and as I did before, and that was pretty big for me actually, because I've always been like a straight A student and stuff and I, I hung much of my identity and self-worth on that and now, it's still important to me to do well, but like I measure my worth by other things.

**Interviewer** 2:19:58

What do you measure your wroth by now?

**Participant** 2:20:03

More by values and principles. So, like, how much I care about the truth and being truthful with myself and with other people. How I am in relationships with other people, whether I'm being a good partner or a good friend, being supportive and I do measure it in part with performance, I suppose you could say my PhD, but it's not about grades. It's about whether I really am. How would I say it? Whether I'm so to speak, doing this duty toward my research project, like, Am I really trying to do my best at this project, regardless of what the outcome is, or whether I get this certificate or that excellent grade?

**Interviewer** 2:20:53

You don't get grades with PhDs anymore, I think, do you?

**Participant** 2:20:59

Um, well, you get grades for like classes that you take. I mean, no, not for the whole PhD but like, for example, I have the option to take classes and there are grades for those, but I care about not the grade itself but whether I got the knowledge that I came to get. Whether it helps me with my studies.

**Interviewer** 2:21:16

Well, that an analogy that comes to mind for me is people who value money for money's sake, rather than the things that it buys you. Like the value is in the, once you get rid of the thing that you get.

**Participant** 2:21:30

Yeah, that makes sense.

**Interviewer** 2:21:32

And the grade is supposed to be some sort of abstract representation of your acquisition of knowledge. Not just necessarily gaming the system to get the top mark.

**Participant** 2:21:44

Yeah.

**Q28. Interviewer** 2:21:53

So, one question that I had particularly interested in, is around ego death, or ego dissolution. So, the question as it's formulated, and it's pretty, I haven't, I haven't changed it, but it's kind of poorly worded, is, if you have ever experienced ego death, could you describe what it was like?

**Participant** 2:22:14

Yeah, I have had a brief experience of it, I would say. So, that was on this trip in which I was dealing with family issues and meeting my six-year-old self and what the ego death felt like for me was that it felt like, especially death of the narrative self. Like, my sort of autobiography, up until that point, I felt like I was way down in the depths of my mind and above me, were all these like, fractal patterns and they, they're almost like waves on the ocean, you know, over each other overlaid over each other and I saw my, my narrative self in particular, like all of the autobiographical memories, and the stories that I tell about myself, I saw it sort of like, like a setting sun behind all of those fractals just kind of winked out and then for a moment, I was nobody and then I felt like my consciousness got rerouted on to a new narrative self, in which I knew what it felt like to be loved. So, it was really just a momentary thing and it essentially felt like my certain aspects of my childhood were slightly rewritten. Like my consciousness was transferred to a different story of who I am and there was a moment when I wasn't there.

**Interviewer** 2:24:05

Do you are you able to remember or differentiate the different stories that you told yourself? Or maybe like, there's a lot of stories, of course.

**Participant** 2:24:21

Yeah yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:24:23

Is there is there something that stands out to you as a story that you used to tell yourself that is no longer the case?

**Participant** 2:24:30

Yeah, so the one that was changed was primarily to do with how much I thought my parents loved me when I was a kid. So, when I was growing up, especially teenager, I really believed they just didn't like me and I felt like I had the insight like, or the realisation that that probably wasn't true and of course, it felt real to me at the time and it affected me at the time but it wasn't actually true and I felt like I could now see the parts of my own memories in which my parents showed that they loved me and those memories had been somehow buried or, or I just didn't see that before. So, it was like, I felt like the memories actually almost changed or new aspects of them were brought to light but it's also very difficult. Like after this experience, I wasn't entirely sure what was, so to speak an original memory and what wasn't. It is very hard to tease that out and I'm pretty sure I know but like, I can't be completely certain.

**Interviewer** 2:25:31

So, sort of the idea of fake memories almost, or just slightly different?

**Participant** 2:25:36

Not, not entirely fake memories, but like that. For example, I, I did not use to remember that on a camping trip. When I was 15. My dad did something that really showed me that he loved me and when I was 15, I didn't interpret it that way but now I see how it is very easily interpreted that way. I just had a blind spot there and I'm not sure if I really didn't know at all that he was showing me that he loved me or if somehow I kind of did know, but didn't want to know, I just not sure but it felt like the to this ego death experience. It felt like the consciousness of being loved was reinserted back into my old memories.

**Interviewer** 2:26:28

That's a powerful thing.

**Participant** 2:26:29

Yeah, it is. I was bawling \*laughs\*.

**Interviewer** 2:26:34

Tears of happiness?

**Participant** 2:26:36

Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:26:47

Are there other any other standout changes in terms of the stories or the narratives that you sort of define you or defined who you were?

**Participant** 2:26:58

As a result of that experience, I don't think so. It was really just about feeling loved as a kid, basically.

**Interviewer** 2:27:05

Okay. So, that that stemmed. So, that particular insight stemmed from the brief ego dissolution experience.

**Participant** 2:27:15

Yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:27:17

Can you I don't know. Would you be able to give me the story of what led to that so that you met you talking about your mate your six-year-old? Are you able to give maybe a bit more like chronological series of what happened in that experience?

**Participant** 2:27:32

I'm not sure my memories are very well chronologically ordered there. So, I, on that trip, I remember pretty early on, I had this sensation of meeting my six year old self, I felt like I was way deep down in my mind, I really had my eyes closed and I had the sense of being far down from my eyeballs, which were way up there and I was pretty much 99% out of contact with reality. Like I, I probably could have mustered myself if there'd been a fire, but I was pretty much gone and I remember being really surprised to see my six year old self down there, I was like, What are you doing down here who left you all the way down and I came to understand that she had been left down there, while another version of her, which is me, grew up, almost without her and then I think, I'm not sure how soon after that, this happened, but I re-experienced a memory from a bit later, when I was about 15, in which, my, I was on a camping trip with my dad, and he, I was in my tent, and I was upset about something I don't remember what and he was trying to make up with me and he said, through the door to the tent, that he loved me very much, even if he didn't always understand what was going on with me and he just wanted to express that he loved me very much and in the moment, I remember feeling really angry at that, that he said that. I didn't want to accept that he loved me and I felt really guilty to because I didn't feel that I loved him back and I was just crying out of anger and guilt and so I had this, this memory came up while I was on LSD and I felt that I retrospectively 10 years later could accept that he loved me and I had this emotional release in which I was accepting it and then I think the ego death happened, maybe right after that. I'm not sure it's to be honest. I'm really not sure about the order of things. I think ego death was the final culmination of this experience and then there's like a jumble of memories before that. There's almost like a dream like shifting between scenery, you know.

**Interviewer** 2:30:10

I think that's good. The only follow up question I potentially have is just asking around your sense of having a body during those moments. Was there. So, you sort of defined for a brief moment, the narrative self of you, blacked out behind the fractal horizon, on the waves. Sounds pretty awesome, to be honest.

**Participant** 2:30:34

Beautiful way of putting it \*laughs\*.

**Interviewer** 2:30:35

\*laughs\* but was there a sense of in that moment of being an embodied person having some sort of physical form?

**Participant** 2:30:45

I don't think it was really paying attention to it but I definitely felt like I was part of the couch for most of that trip. You know, of course, I could get up and move around if I really wanted to, but I was pretty much melted into the couch.

**Interviewer** 2:30:59

Couch melting, I shall add that in. So, I'm just letting you know, we're up to now we've got about six questions to go.

**Participant** 2:31:15

That's ok, I have time.

**Q29. Interviewer** 2:31:15

So cool. So, the next question is, have your experiences with psychedelics affected your spiritual or religious beliefs?

**Participant** 2:31:31

Um, I think yeah, it's also, how do you define spiritual beliefs? I know that's a tricky question.

**Interviewer** 2:31:41

Yeah, I just throw it back on you and go, whatever you think spiritual is. It's like you want me to define spiritual? Oh man, that's a PhD.

**Participant** 2:31:50

Yeah, definitely no change in religious beliefs. Although, like I said, I feel more understanding for people who do have them. As far as spirituality, if you define spirituality as something like trying to figure out how to live a good life, then for sure there's been a change but there's certainly no change in metaphysical or woo woo type beliefs. I still don't subscribe to any of those.

**Interviewer** 2:32:25

You have zero woo woo beliefs?

**Participant** 2:32:28

At least I think so. I mean, it really helps to be able to differentiate between belief and hope.

**Interviewer** 2:32:35

Ok, alright, so you've got woo woo hopes \*laughs\*?

**Participant** 2:32:39

Maybe I have some woo woo hopes \*laughs\*.

**Interviewer** 2:32:42

Fair enough, I think a lot of us do.

**Participant** 2:32:45

Yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:33:01

Yeah, I think just personally in terms of like, how to live a good life. I would say that, that can fall under spiritual, but also, for me, I almost see there was like a philosophical inquiry.

**Participant** 2:33:12

Yeah or self-knowledge and self-exploration. Maybe, maybe. Yeah, that's also falling under this umbrella of spirituality sometimes and that's certainly changed. I've built more I guess you could say spiritual type practices into my life, like, more diverse forms of meditation. Like before psychedelics, I did mindfulness meditation, but now I also do some others and I also seek out more experiences of awe I suppose you could say, and some people would file that under spirituality as well. Especially because you don't really know where else to put it.

**Interviewer** 2:34:06

I would just on one of the things where a while back, you mentioned the idea of archetypes. I forget exactly in what context, I might almost think that archetypal stuff falls and spiritualness like it's happening up in that sphere of kind of highly interpretable level of thought, I guess or feelings.

**Participant** 2:34:34

Yeah, I think I said I like to watch movies with archetypical type stories.

**Interviewer** 2:34:38

Yeah.

**Participant** 2:34:38

Hero's Journey story or something.

**Interviewer** 2:34:40

Yeah and I think, you just made me think when it was like, can you please define spiritual like god damn, yes. I would like to. I'll have to just shelve that the brains. I can. I can't really, I don't hear the thoughts, but I definitely can feel the revs going up.

**Participant** 2:35:12

Yeah, yeah, I know what you mean.

**Q30. Interviewer** 2:35:15

The heads getting hotter, it’s like what's going on? Have psychedelics changed how you think or feel about death or the process of dying?

**Participant** 2:35:26

Yeah, especially this ego death experience did it just made me less afraid of it, for some time, to be honest, I'm not sure that that was a permanent change. I still really don't want to die but I think I felt more peaceful about it, at least for a few months after this ego death experience because it started to feel like something familiar. Like, oh, I've died before. It's no big deal.

**Interviewer** 2:35:57

Sounds like a bit of a woo woo belief.

**Participant** 2:35:59

Yeah, maybe. Okay \*laughs\*. Maybe that's just how I hope I would feel if confronted with actual imminent death. To be honest, I think I would still shit my pants just like everybody else.

**Interviewer** 2:36:19

Quite literally. I've heard that's supposedly very common, because yeah, all the muscle tension disappears.

**Participant** 2:36:29

Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:36:31

If you're going to die go toilet first.

**Participant** 2:36:31

Takes all the romance out of it.

**Interviewer** 2:36:33

Yeah, doesn't it just, die of dignity \*makes pooping sounds\*.

**Participant** 2:36:39

\*laughs\* Yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:36:42

The lies we like to tell ourselves.

**Participant** 2:36:44

Yeah.

**Q31. Interviewer** 2:36:47

Yes, well, here, here is that secular question for the spiritual, religious and you kind of said you didn't, but I wonder. I'll just ask it anyway, have psychedelics changed any fundamental beliefs about the nature of reality?

**Participant** 2:37:02

No, I don't think so. I don't really think psychedelics can give you insights into the nature of reality. At least it doesn't seem that way to me. I mean, they're very mysterious and there's a lot we don't understand about them but as it is now, I wouldn't try and take away any insights like that from them.

**Interviewer** 2:37:21

Okay, so just what comes to mind for me? And you seem like the person who be good person asked us, I'll throw it out and see how, what you think of it. So, you're saying that psychedelics haven't made you question fundamental beliefs about reality, because you don't think they tap into that aspect?

**Participant** 2:37:42

Right.

**Interviewer** 2:37:43

So that suggests to me that you are making a differentiation between your perception of reality and some form of objective external reality that exists that is sort of independent of conscious perception.

**Participant** 2:37:58

Right.

**Interviewer** 2:37:59

So yeah, I'm just wondering what, in terms of the non-woo woo beliefs when you when you consider sort of the base level nature of reality, what's your sort of underlying metaphysical framework?

**Participant** 2:38:20

Yeah, I mean, it's, this is going to get very complicated. So, I, I think psychedelics can potentially teach people things about conscious experience but I am kind of assuming that my conscious experience is based on some kind of physical reality outside of me, that would still be there if I were not conscious but you can't really measure that without consciousness. So, of course, I know, we could be in the matrix, but it just seems like the simplest explanation is that there is some kind of real physical reality that we are all perceiving more or less in the same way.

**Interviewer** 2:39:20

Fair enough. It does seem quite reasonable.

**Participant** 2:39:24

Just seems like the simplest explanation. I mean, I'm, I wouldn't say it's a particularly rigid belief, like I would be open to other ideas open to maybe changing it, but so far, it just seems like the simplest explanation for things because if you were in the matrix, then you'd have to explain how you got in the matrix.

**Interviewer** 2:39:47

Well you still need to explain it in this metaphysical framework as well, so I think I don't think you get your free miracle either.

**Participant** 2:39:54

Yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:40:07

Is that in terms of your psychedelic experiences, does content related to the nature of reality come up at or is it more focused around personal insight?

**Participant** 2:40:24

Yeah you know, the tragedy is that while I was having this ego death experience, I was sure I was having some kind of insight into the nature of consciousness. I remember thinking that I was having an insight into the nature of consciousness, but I cannot for the life of me remember what it was?

**Interviewer** 2:40:43

Lovely.

**Participant** 2:40:44

That's the only time I've ever felt something like that happen. Usually, it's concerned with personal emotional breakthroughs or, yeah, my own values or experiences. I think also the very first time I took LSD, I had a similar experience where I felt like, there was an insight into consciousness to be had and it was coming, but I would have had to take more drugs in order to get there and so I thought, Okay, next time.

**Interviewer** 2:41:17

Yeah.

**Participant** 2:41:34

I also don't know if I would trust such an insight. I mean, I probably would not go around proselytising it to other people, even if I did have one.

**Interviewer** 2:41:45

That's I think a reasonable position to hold.

**Participant** 2:41:47

Yeah. Like it would be a cool experience that I had, maybe it would make me wonder about some things, but I don't know that I would really share it.

**Interviewer** 2:41:58

It's interesting, because I've had a few conversations with people that tell me stories about basically impossible events that happened while tripping, and that the only explanation is that they had to rearrange their understanding of how the natural laws of how things operate to accommodate that experience.

**Participant** 2:42:23

Uh huh. Okay.

**Interviewer** 2:42:24

So, yeah, it's not. I guess it depends on what happens really.

**Participant** 2:42:30

Yeah. Yeah, I mean, I tend to think if I can hallucinate visually, if I can hallucinate sounds, I can probably also hallucinate this sense of certainty, or sense of meaning or sense of something being absolutely true. You know, just because I felt like that doesn't mean that it was, I want to say real, but of course, what is real? It doesn't mean it corresponds to anything that anybody else would experience. You know, could be a hallucination of truth.

**Interviewer** 2:43:08

Yeah, well, that asks very deep questions about what do you mean by truth?

**Participant** 2:43:13

Yeah. I mean, that it would never be corroborated by anybody else, but me. That's what I mean.

**Interviewer** 2:43:21

Then you go talk to the people like, well, we spoke with telepathy, you're like, Okay, what do you do with that?

**Participant** 2:43:26

Yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:43:27

And they're really sure about it. So, how do you? Anyways, that's a tangent, which is super interesting, but probably not worth going down.

**Participant** 2:43:38

Yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:43:39

Well, maybe, they're fun tangents. I like thinking about those things.

**Participant** 2:43:45

Yeah. Yeah, a lot of the times it feels like you can't even really reach a definite conclusion to so it's just fun thought experiment, but I can't really go anywhere.

**Q32. Interviewer** 2:43:58

Have psychedelics changed your outlook on life?

**Participant** 2:44:03

Yeah, for sure. I think for certain they've made me less naive, but also more appreciative of how lucky I am to exist at all and more willing to endure some suffering in order to keep that let's say.

**Q33. Interviewer** 2:44:50

If psychedelics have a role or roles to play in society, what do you think it is or are, they are?

**Participant** 2:45:00

Yeah, that's a pretty heavy question. I think psychedelics are unpredictable enough in an individual human, introducing them into society, which is far more complex than any individual is just it, I don't think you can predict what effect that's going to have and it's something that occasionally keeps me up at night, actually, I will say I think they probably have in some kind of niche in mental health care. They seem to be really effective at treating depression, anxiety, addiction, at least in some people. So, far in studies, it looks like it's, you know, they've mainly only tested it on people who only have those problems. Not, people who have a bunch of other problems in the real psychiatric population as a lot more complicated but at least they seem to be helpful for some people. It could be also that they have a role to play in spirituality or even religion, for some people that could be positive in the end, although I think it could also go the other way. Maybe they also have a role to play in personal growth. I definitely don't think they're going to bring the world together or help us solve the environmental crisis, though. I mean, I already see people have such diverse beliefs about what these drugs are, and what they can and cannot do. There's already splits in the community. So, I don't think they're going to bring everyone together necessarily plus I mean, people can totally have an experience that seems very profound at the time and then return to baseline, you know, even if everybody had some kind of ecological insight that we have to protect the planet, because they took psychedelics that doesn't necessarily translate into behaviour. I think it's very, it's very hard to get that to translate into behaviour but in general, I think yeah, the two things I would definitely say is I think they have some kind of niche in mental health care, even though you have to be careful and as with any large changes in society, I think if they were to become more widespread, there would be some unpredictable effects. Might be very good might also not be, I don't know.

**Interviewer** 2:47:15

Most likely a mix.

**Participant** 2:47:17

Yeah, most likely a mix. I mean, they people certainly can use them for dark purposes, you would say to exploit people or I think particularly, yeah, young, psychologically vulnerable people would be easy to manipulate with psychedelics if you really wanted to, and there are psychos in this world that you know, there's I think they would start a couple of cults, if they were more widespread in society whatever other good they may do, I think they would definitely start a couple of cults.

**Interviewer** 2:47:52

Oh, that's just that's just guaranteed.

**Participant** 2:47:56

Yeah, that's just guaranteed.

**Interviewer** 2:47:58

Anything any experience this powerful, you know, that a powerful are going to inevitably create some sort of worship culty type practice.

**Participant** 2:48:11

I think this is maybe one of my hopes, though, like I, I don't, I feel like it would be naive to really believe that psychedelics could have some sort of huge positive effect on society but I kind of hope they might.

**Interviewer** 2:48:24

Mmmm.

**Participant** 2:48:26

It's a bit naive, but I kind of hope they might I kind of I hope they're like fire. You know, fire can be really dangerous if it's out of control but if you can learn to tame it, then it's a fundamental good in society. We can't not have fire.

**Interviewer** 2:48:45

Don't know about you. I just use my induction stovetop. There's no fire there.

**Participant** 2:48:49

Yeah, okay. Okay. \*laughs\*. Heat.

**Interviewer** 2:48:54

Just electricity for me thanks.

**Participant** 2:48:56

Heat in general.

**Interviewer** 2:48:57

Oh, heat well.

**Participant** 2:48:59

It's a lot less romantic of an analogy, though. So, a lot less elegant.

**Q34. Interviewer** 2:49:11

Well, I'll ask it anyway, have psychedelics shaped your view of humanity's future?

**Participant** 2:49:18

Oh, no, not at all. I don't think Well, okay, maybe. In general, after this more negative experience, I think I've become less naive and more conscious of the fact that things can really go really wrong. So, maybe, I think it's, I at least see the likelihood that humanity could actually go extinct. Whereas before, I would have said that it's not going to happen, we'll figure it out. I don't take that for granted anymore but to be honest, I think even without psychedelics, I probably would have eventually come to that mindset.

**Q35. Interviewer** 2:50:04

What advice would you give to people who are interested in using psychedelics?

**Participant** 2:50:14

In a nutshell, prepare yourself properly. Make sure you have a trip sitter the first time. Someone you really trust and it's also important to consider whether you are at the right point in your life to try psychedelics, I think you know, there's, there's a few people who probably should not take them at all and then for pretty much everybody, there are some points in your life where they may not necessarily have such a good effect if you're in a very psychologically vulnerable state, for example. So, yeah, but I think prepare yourself pretty much sums it up, like, make sure you do your research about set and setting, make sure that you really want to have this experience, and that it's a good time for you to have this experience, at least as much as you can guess that without having done it before and definitely do not neglect safety at all your first time and don't get complacent about safety after you've done it a couple of times, because that can go very wrong.

**Interviewer** 2:51:39

It feels like, Sorry, go ahead.

**Participant** 2:51:42

But I would just say this general advice of trust, let go and be open, I think is one of the most important things that somebody should know, going into it for the first time. Whatever happens, even if it seems a bit scary, it's important to be curious about it and go toward it rather than trying to run away and if you can force yourself to do that in the moment, then. Whatever nasty thing you're encountering probably is not going to turn into a bad trip. I know a lot of newcomers have this kind of terror of having a bad trip and for good reason but if you can just remember to go toward it and force yourself to do that. Then I think the risk of having a really bad experience is pretty much as low as it can get.

**Interviewer** 2:52:26

Okay, so it's in the end of the day, it's the thing that you didn't expect you weren't going to be ready to not be ready for it comes and gets you, out of the dark.

**Participant** 2:52:36

Yeah definitely expect the unexpected.

**Interviewer** 2:52:41

As much as that's helpful. Yeah, I think it's interesting. Some of the advice, because it seems almost like the people who would have done it and would have listened will hear it and the people who are like, let's pop a tab. Let's try it. Yeah, it's like this just going to blow right past the any advice you give them.

**Participant** 2:53:00

Yeah. Don't be stupid is actually good advice that people don't know how to listen to. Yeah, also, don't do it on a whim at a party. If you've never done it before at least, like, if you know what you're doing then. Okay. Go crazy.

**Interviewer** 2:53:22

Well, maybe not crazy.

**Participant** 2:53:25

Yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:53:29

Um well that's it really. Sorry I was just going to say. Okay you and then I'll go.

**Participant** 2:53:37

Completely not important but I would consider somebody who had done it before more competent to decide whether they can just pop one at a party then somebody who'd never done it.

**Q36. Interviewer** 2:53:45

Yeah. Yeah. Fair enough. I was just going to say that's, that's basically it. The last question is essentially, just Are there any final thoughts or comments you would like to mention before we conclude? So that's for anyone who just has something they feel like they would like to add in.

**Participant** 2:54:04

I don't think so just good luck with the study, and I can't wait to read the paper.

**Interviewer** 2:54:09

Yeah. Thank you. One thing that I actually have started asking is, was there any, did you have an expectation? So, the I'll just say that the interviews ended, but was there any expectation of a question or something we might cover that I didn't?

**Participant** 2:54:37

Yeah, I don't know. I suppose if you asked about, like the effects of psychedelics on different aspects of my life, and I guess it's probably a good thing that you kept the questions neutral. I think I expected to ask about like positive and the negative effects, but actually, I think the neutral formulation is good. Leaves it open. So, I don't think there was anything missing. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:55:03

Okay. Cool. I'll just pop this off then.