2. Interview with Participant 2

**Interview recorded:** 02/12/2020 (NZDT)

**Length:** 3:19:57 (interview 2h50min)

**Spoken duration of interview:** Participant (66%), Interviewer (34%)

**Age (years):** Participant (61), Interviewer (29)

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

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

**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

psychedelics, trip, experience, question, psilocybin, feel, sense, suicidal ideation, bit, thinking, process, die, changed, day, dose, understand, describe, people, idea, life

**Q1. Interviewer** 00:03

Yeah, okay and if at any time you need to pause to go use your bathroom or anything like that, just let me know, we don't have to like to sit here the whole time if it gets uncomfortable. So, then I guess I'll just start running through the questions and sometimes I'll read the, I've just got the question sheet here. So, sometimes I'll read through it. Exactly and sometimes I'll elaborate a little bit if I think, depending on how the conversation is going, that needs a bit more explanation as to as to what I kind of trying to get at with a question. So, the first question is quite broad. Why do you use psychedelics?

**Participant** 00:47

I use psychedelics to gain some relief from emotional pain and the secondary consequences is physical pain as well. I suffer with a bit of osteoarthritis in my hands and that's been a pleasant side effect that I didn't expect to receive, but it's, it's principally for relief from emotional pain.

**Interviewer** 01:18

Could you maybe describe a little bit about how that happens, the release or the relief from emotional pain through your use?

**Participant** 01:34

I think because of certain traumatic events that have happened in my life I'm constantly in a state of heightened anxiety and hyper vigilance, paranoia, and it's an it's an emotional feeling that's constantly present of unease. It's difficult to actually put, you know, a description on to emotional pain, what that feels like. It's very different to physical pain, but it's to me just as powerful and it's present with me 24 seven. So, I forgot what the question was but is it, why do I use Psychedelics Is it?

**Interviewer** 02:52

So originally it was sort of why do you use Psychedelics and you described emotional relief from emotional pain and a little bit of relief from osteoarthritis in your wrists I believe, and then I sort of followed that up with how does that relieve the emotional pain

**Participant** 03:12

Right. So, in the same way, I suppose that many other substances for example, alcohol or cocaine may offer some respite some temporary relief. It I suppose, what I can say is it brings a calming effect to my whole body physically and emotionally and for a much longer time than other substances would have and with far fewer negative side effects. So, it reduces my anxiety considerably. It reduces my paranoia considerably. It facilitates better interpersonal relationships, you know, both at work and in the private sphere. So, yeah, you know, psilocybin as a, as a drug for me works very well and, you know, for those reasons, that's why I take it.

**Interviewer** 04:38

is that, is this in both, say, macro doses where you're, it's quite obvious the experience or is this micro dosing or both, or neither?

**Participant** 04:55

I have I have done four macro doses, and they're not something I do lightly. So, I think what I would say too is it's more the micro dosing that, that I do three days on three days off when I'm working. Since I've been on furlough, I haven't actually microdosed much at all. I've just done it for the last three days.

**Interviewer** 05:29

And have you in terms of larger dose trips? What's what does that look like for you? How many, maybe just an idea of like, sort of how many have done and a little bit what? Maybe the noticeable difference are differences between that and a micro doses for you?

**Participant** 05:49

Okay, so the first dose I did was nine and a half grams. Which was, you know, what Terence McKenna would describe as a heroic dose.

**Interviewer** 06:03

I think a little more. \*both laugh\*

**Participant** 06:07

Yeah but, you know, I just followed my instincts on that, and it was dry. It was nine and a half grams dry and it, I mean, do you want me to go into details or just a general kind of, you know, synopsis of what that event was like?

**Interviewer** 06:30

Well, later on, there's some questions that are going to ask more specifically about memorable and life changing experiences, and also potentially challenging and negative ones. So, if you'd like to speak it to directly now, that's fine. If you just want to do general, that's up to you but we'll sort of probably come back to this later on as well.

**Participant** 06:53

So, you know, my first trip was mystical. beyond words, I certainly couldn't find any words that could adequately described that, you know, the experience in a way that a non-user could understand. It was a very positive experience from every aspect, and I've done probably three other trips, large trips, at much lower doses. I think the second one was about four and a half, five dried grams and the other two were probably about three. So, I've been reducing the dosage and on the on the macro doses you know, there are visual hallucinations and aural A U R A L hallucinations.

**Interviewer** 08:19

What sorry, what by aural, what does that mean?

**Participant** 08:23

I was trying to how do you say, you know, hearing things

**Interviewer** 08:27

Oh yes. I would probably use auditory hallucinations.

**Participant** 08:33

Auditory right. Yeah. Sorry, yeah. Auditory hallucinations, visual hallucinations and aspects of heightened anxiety, heightened pleasure. A whole gamut of emotions can take place in the macro dose and the micro doses it's taken me quite a long time to get a handle on that. I finally ground up all of my dried herb into a powder and I bought the gel capsules in size two. So, I can accurately you know, on a day to day basis, measure out a dose that I think will not have any consequences for me, for example, at work, you know, I mean, the other day at home I took a little bit of a cap, you know, like a quarter cap and I started tripping quite hard. You know, and if I was at work, that would be just inappropriate. So, in this way, I kind of standardised the dose now, and I, when I take the size two gel cap, I don't have any kind of struggling to find the word, but I don't have any kind of tripping experiences at all with it.

**Interviewer** 10:26

Do you feel that you can operate in the normal sort of sober society without any sort of interference that you might get with higher doses?

**Participant** 10:40

Yeah, on the micro dose, because I've standardised it, I feel far more comfortable taking a tablet at work and be able to function, as you say, in a sober way, without any negative side effects, or, you know, me having a stupid grin on my face for no reason.

**Interviewer** 11:01

And I know there's a few ongoing online studies that are asking people about their microdosing experiences. Are you participating in those at all?

**Participant** 11:18

No, no, not at all.

**Interviewer** 11:20

Okay, because I, there are some, I think, by the Imperial College London where they have one where you can sort of prospectively sort of provide your data about the different micro dosing experiences you've had, and the positive or negative benefits or harms that it's done to you and that way, they can sort of start to say, it's not only say, retrospective, thinking back, but also like, here, I was in the situation, and they follow you along as you give data and they can sort of make a forward projection as well, potentially.

**Participant** 11:57

And that's at Imperial College, is it?

**Interviewer** 11:59

they, it's an online thing. It's, I believe, it's run by Imperial College, and they it's just voluntary and you can do it online and I think it's potentially a way for people to see their own information as well because they're looking at trying to give back like, sort of visual representations of your data so that you can use that to inform your own use as well a bit more sort of like systematically so that the more data you give, the more you can sort of look at what your analyse your own data back and use that. I can probably find you a link to where they are hosting that if you're interested later on?

**Participant** 12:38

I would be yeah.

**Q2. Interviewer** 12:39

Okay, cool. I'll just note that down. Okay. So, the next question is have the reasons why you use psychedelics changed over time? And if so, how have they changed?

**Participant** 13:16

The short answer to that is no. There are my reasons remain the same. To deal with emotional pain and manage mental health. Yeah.

**Q3. Interviewer** 13:27

Okay and how did you first start using psychedelics?

**Participant** 13:37

I grew my own Is that what you're trying to find out?

**Interviewer** 13:42

Partly Yes, like what was the you sort of described your first trip on the nine and a half grams but also maybe a little bit like how did you find out about them? Maybe what kind of got you're interested in them sort of how did that how did what led you into it?

**Participant** 13:59

So yeah, I've been thinking about that question myself over the last few days and for the life of me, I cannot pinpoint exactly what spurred my interest but you know, what I would say is I'm one of those type of people that you know, I can spend many hours in the evening just researching about depression and mental health issues and you know, watching YouTube videos and you know, the Beckley foundation is on my in on one of my Facebook channels. So, I can only assume that, you know, whilst I've been researching and reading about mental health issues, which I have a particular interest in, you know, maybe the Beckley foundation page came up psilocybin, you know, new treatment for depression or John Hopkins In the States might have flashed up, you know, psilocybin new cure for, for depression, something like that would have kind of, you know, piqued my interest and once I saw, you know, some hope about curing depression and anxiety, I would have started to research that, you know, more and more deeply to the point where I thought I have to, I have to try this. I tried everything else and it's not helped at all. You know, the studies from john Hopkins from Imperial College. They're all showing a lot of evidence that, a huge amount a huge amount of relief can be had from, from psilocybin and, you know, isn't that what everyone wants when they have pain, whether it's emotional or physical is some relief? So, I think you know, to answer your question, that's how I got into it and I just thought I have to try this and see if it works.

**Interviewer** 16:17

And did you say that it hasn't helped with depression for you?

**Participant** 16:29

One, one thing has happened that I find quite miraculous, and that is prior to taking the psilocybin my suicidal thoughts were getting stronger and stronger and stronger and in the past, I'd had suicidal ideation around overdosing on fentanyl, you know, I was never jumping off a bridge type of guy but then suddenly, the railway tracks became a very attractive option \*breathes deeply, pauses\*. So yeah, the railway tracks became very, just give me a minute \*tears up and deep breathing\*.

**Interviewer** 17:41

That's okay, just take your time.

**Participant** 18:29

Okay \*wipes eyes\*. The ideation around railway tracks became very attractive, and it's, it's *Allure* was becoming very strong. So, using psilocybin for me was an act of desperation, really and what I can tell you is that suicidal ideation stopped immediately after the first dose of psilocybin that I took.

**Interviewer** 19:19

This is a nine and a half gram dose.

**Participant** 19:22

Yeah. So, that ideation stopped completely.

**Interviewer** 19:34

Did that last or was it temporary?

**Participant** 19:37

Yeah. No, no, no, it's still very, still very present.

**Interviewer** 19:52

Thank you. Thank you for sharing that. I just want to sort of add that I volunteer here in New Zealand of a sort of a, what do you call it? A helpline called lifeline. I think you might even have something the same named over in the UK. So, although I don't talk about psychedelics, often with people who call up, I regularly have people who, you know, are talking about very, very difficult situations they're in and, and stuff along those lines. So, just sort of help so you don't feel awkward, like, this guys like uhwahh. It's okay, don't worry about it. Okay, so I'll move on. Is there anything more you want to add to that? Or should I move to the next question?

**Participant** 20:46

No, that's it. That's it.

**Q4. Interviewer** 20:50

So, the next question is, what aspects of psychedelics do you find the most meaningful or valuable?

**Participant** 21:06

For me, just the relief from the emotional pain and, and the relief from the paranoia, and it helps me a great deal in social in social aspects as well, at work. You know, to the point, I think in the past, I saw everyone as a threat. Whereas now I can actually see people as human beings who, you know, maybe struggling with their own stuff as well and, you know, that's helped me to be more open with people and not to just see everybody as a threat.

**Interviewer** 22:01

If I can follow up a little bit on that. Do you have? Do you know why you saw people as a threat?

**Participant** 22:21

Yeah, it's, just bear with me, just bear with. Sorry, this has taken me by surprise a little bit.

**Interviewer** 22:50

That's alright, don't worry about it. You take your time.

**Participant** 22:56

I mean, I see everyone as a threat because of traumatic early life experiences here in the UK and I can look back and I can see how that's shaped who I am today and why I should see everyone as a threat because that's what I experienced from you know, the age of minus nine months, you know, up until the age of about 15 was a an extremely hostile world, both at home, at school, just out in the public realm, it was a it was a hostile environment. It was an environment where I could trust nobody. So, obviously, you know, after 15 years of that, it becomes a, an embedded kind of personality trait.

**Interviewer** 24:27

And how would you say psychedelics allow or yeah allow you to no longer see people as a threat? Is there? Is it on just an automatic level where you just no longer feel threatened? Or is it some sort of change in how you think about situations and it allows this kind of trust to open up or openness?

**Participant** 25:02

You know, in answering questions like that, I, I try to keep one foot in, based in science and, you know, reason and, you know, I also have another foot in mysticism and spirituality and I read quite a lot about neurogenesis and part of me wants to believe deeply that there's some kind of rewiring going on that, you know, faulty, faulty brain activity is being repaired but don't get me wrong, you know, I'm not totally healed from people, you know. I don't walk around, you know, with a halo on my head and think everyone's wonderful, but, you know, I can go to work now and say hello to people before they say hello to me. You know, I always had this expectation that they have to say hello to me, first of all, to pre-empt any kind of anxiety, you know, then it was safe for me to say hello back to them. Whereas now, you know, I can walk into work and, and hold my head high and say. HI good morning, Andrew, how are you today? And if they don't answer it's fine. Whereas in the past, I couldn't do that. So, you know, to answer your question. I don't know. I hope it's some kind of neurogenesis. Maybe there's just some part of me that's been healed, I don't know but you know, whatever it is, I'm very thankful for it.

**Q5. Interviewer** 27:08

Okay, yeah. Well, most people don't know, don't worry, like, even the fancy scientists, people, you know, not me necessarily being one of them but you go and read the papers and stuff is like, it's like, uhhh yeah kind of, we think we know what's going on. It's like, yeah, yeah. It's like, we are very far from understanding everything going on in the brain. Alright, then, um, what aspects of psychedelics do you find most challenging or difficult?

**Participant** 27:43

The so-called Bad trips. They are very, very challenging but at the same time, I'm sorry, go ahead.

**Interviewer** 27:55

Sorry and you've had a bad trip, or trips?

**Participant** 27:58

You know, I've had a couple of them, and I try not to call them bad in the sense that after I've returned, I think my god, that was powerful. I saw things I didn't want to see but you know, My god. Wow, that was amazing but in a very challenging way.

**Interviewer** 28:38

Maybe you could speak a little more to the, the aspects of particular bad trips that you if you're able to have what you find challenging about it?

**Participant** 28:49

Again, this is this is very subjective, but you know, psilocybin takes you by the scruff of the neck, whether you like it or not, and shows you what you need to see. It doesn't discriminate about you, you know, and if psilocybin were a human being, I would say to you that it has, it has the idea that if you've come into its realm, you've done so consciously, and you must be ready and it will show you what it needs to show you. As I said, it doesn't discriminate. It's not, it doesn't care about how hurt your feelings get. It shows you what it needs to show you. I have got no doubt in my own mind that the difficult and challenging trips that I have had is because psilocybin will do whatever it needs to do to heal you. So, you know, for example, when I was having very strong suicidal ideation, it showed me things in the trip that caused me to rethink and I've thought about this, and I couldn't, I couldn't do that I couldn't come to that conclusion. In a sober state. Whatever happened in that moment, where something changed about my perception of myself and suicidal ideation, I could have not done that sober, but during the trip, it just happened in a split second, it showed me something and by seeing that, miraculously it's changed my whole outlook on me wanting to end my own life.

**Interviewer** 31:36

Would you be able to speak to what you saw? Or is it maybe something that falls outside of description?

**Participant** 31:45

No, I can remember quite clearly on my first trip because, you know, I found that I can have conversations on trips, and the first half of the trip was concerned a great deal with one of my colleagues at work, who I don't even have a relationship with, but she was there and probably two thirds of the way through the trip, I have a good friend who I've known for over 35 years, and she has two children that she's had quite late in life. One is nine and one is seven, two boys and I remember asking the question, What about [friend’s child one] and [friend’s child two]? What can you tell me about them? And they showed me something about [friend’s child one] the eldest boy that it just didn't make sense that he would become a terrible person and I can't remember, you know, that he would die. It was something about his mouth, that would get him in trouble. I saw a post-industrial landscape and you know, in that moment, I thought I cannot die because my friend, who is called [name] would need me and you know, I have got no question in my mind that that was the repair of that neuron that took place during the trip. That ended the suicidal ideation, and no amount of sober reflection on the same thought could have done that and I also had another very challenging trip and this one was really, really very, very spooky. I had taken about three and a half-dried grams late in the evening. Sorry, I have to give you a backstory. I befriended a young woman who is now aged 27 and I've known her for about six years and there is a kind of father daughter relationship that I have with her, she has a young son who is about a year and a half old now and she also has diagnosed mental health issues that she struggles with. So, you know, we have that issue in common and she was kicked out of her home when she was 19 and her parents have, don't want anything to do with her at all. Even her little boy, I mean, you know, how can you not want anything to do with your grandchildren? Nothing. Anyway, you know, to cut a long story short, one of her cousins, who was aged about 37 had died and they grew up together and my friend witnessed her extreme physical abuse. My friend has undergone extreme physical and sexual abuse herself but when her cousin died, it affected her very, very strongly because she knew the perpetrators and one of the perpetrators of the abuse towards her cousin was her own father and she exhibited a huge amount of rage towards these male family members, when she started talking about other women that she's known who have committed suicide because of the physical and sexual abuse that they've suffered and she said on a number of occasions to me that these women have actually committed suicide, and they kill their children as well and I remember saying to her, what does that tell you about their lives that a woman can take the lives of her children and herself? What does that tell you about their lives and on the night that I had my trip, I lay in bed, and I kept having auditory hallucinations of my phone ringing and I'd look over and there were no calls, no messages. So, I closed my eyes again and the auditory hallucinations would start, I keep hearing the phone ringing and at about 10:30pm I had another one picked up my phone and saw a video message from my friend and it was a video message at 10:30 at night of her and her little boy, fully dressed and she was in a very cheerful mood and she calls me unks kind of an abbreviation of uncle, unks and she said Hi, unks [sons name] and me are going out now. We're leaving and she kept saying, [sons name] say goodbye to unck and you know, I put two and two together, you know, I was tripping really hard and to me it seemed like a suicide video and you know, I try to remain calm, but you know who's who sends a video 10:30 at night saying we're going out now goodbye and I sent, I sent dozens of messages. I rang her phone and eventually after an hour she sent a message saying, oh, what's wrong [interviewee]? And it's never been spoken about between her and I. I've never asked her if she was planning to commit suicide. I just couldn't contemplate that, and she brushed it off as me overreacting but, yes, that was the second trip. Sorry what was the question? I've gone off on a tangent there.

**Interviewer** 40:50

Ummm, we're deep into it. I'm going to have to catch up which question was it. This, I think, is playing off the question, what aspects of psychedelics do you find most difficult and challenging? Yeah.

**Participant** 41:08

So yes, you know? Yeah, that was it. So, during that trip, as challenging as it was, it once again reinforced how painful it is when someone we love leaves us and I had never, you know, when you're depressed, and you think about ending your own life, you know, I became so self-absorbed, I didn't think about how, you know, the few friends I have in this world would feel. So, that that journey, that trip, showed me beyond any shadow of a doubt, how painful it is to be a survivor of someone who's committed suicide and it rubbed my face in it. You know, it grabbed me by the neck and said, Okay, so you want to kill yourself? Boom. Think about this. This is what happens to the people you leave behind. So, yes, that was challenging. Challenging trip number two. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 42:43

So you mentioned before that on your first trip, with the nine and a half grams, it was a sort of flip moment where you went from suicidal ideation to it just kind of being gone and that was the recognition that your friend would need your help in the future, and you had a sort of vision of her son, getting himself into trouble and I guess through that, that's where she would potentially need you. So, and in the second trip you were describing, that you kind of got your nose shoved in to this idea of how it affects other people. So, no longer do you have to put yourself in someone else's shoes. It's, you're just seeing how you would react to someone else, killing themselves and their child.

**Participant** 43:30

Yes

**Interviewer** 43:31

So, at that point, there, this is a sort of a question you were you had any more suicidal ideation or was this was just another layering of like reinforcement of the notion like. Hey, you don't need to feel like this or shouldn't or this is the consequences of those sorts of thoughts or actions?

**Participant** 43:52

It was just another lesson. It was lesson number two, you know, reflect on this. Just in case you didn't understand the first time, I'm going to make sure that you don't forget. So, yeah, it was it was another layer of it.

**Interviewer** 44:19

Thank you for that. It's a lot of energy to speak to these things I know that

**Participant** 44:26

it triggers it triggers a lot of stuff.

**Q6. Interviewer** 44:34

You've definitely spoken to this, but if maybe you want to add something additional or there's other ways in which things you might not have mentioned to this, I'll ask it, or we can just move on. So, the next question is, in what ways have psychedelics affected your life?

**Participant** 44:54

You know, I'm 61 isolated, alone. Had suicidal ideation could not see the future and it's brought me immense relief. You know, I don't wake up every morning thinking, I don't want to do this, you know, I, I don't go through the whole day thinking, I want to die, you know, and then get home and think I can't do this anymore, and then dream about it. So, I don't have those thoughts anymore and I'm, you know, immensely, immensely grateful to have some relief from that that pain.

**Interviewer** 45:56

Maybe you could speak to how the relief of those thoughts and feelings have affected what you do, or your interactions with people sort of maybe in a, like a behavioural sense, so not just how you feel, but maybe what you're able to do nowadays, because you're no longer experiencing those feelings or thoughts.

**Participant** 46:20

Um, not much has changed. Otherwise, you know, I, I'm not clinically depressed as much as I used to be, but I still have difficulty getting out of the house. The future does not look bleak, but I still have lots of questions around the future in retirement and only God knows furlough being on furlough has given me a glimpse into what retirement will be like and it's, as someone said, to me, retirement is not for sissies. So, you know, I'm still grappling with existential questions, but I don't feel mortal dread and I've come to the point now where I just, I say to myself, I'll cross that bridge when I get to it and I think that that's been really useful for me to just, I don't have to have the answer now. I'll see what happens when I get there but yeah, the mortal dread has gone. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 47:56

Could you elaborate a little bit on what you mean there by mortal dread?

**Participant** 48:05

Just this, this feeling of wanting to be dead, not wanting to be alive. That occupied every hour of my life.

**Interviewer** 48:28

And how long were you in that sort of state of, suicidal ideation or mortal dread?

**Participant** 48:37

Oh, I mean, it's not linear you know, it there. There are times when it's been, Yeah. I mean, it's always there in the background, or was always there in the background and the last year, it's been really bad but, you know, I'd say, for at least the last 20 years or so it's been present.

**Interviewer** 49:18

That makes sense I think, these sorts of things fluctuate, depending on what many factors whether or not the, you know, it's going to be more or less intense.

**Participant** 49:27

Absolutely.

**Q10. Interviewer** 49:29

Okay. Have psychedelics provided insights in how to live life well?

**Participant** 49:50

I'd say not particularly. They've just given me that one tool. I'll cross that bridge when I get to it. Perhaps that's the only tool that I need at the moment but you know, I can't jump up and down, you know, can't jump up and down and say yes, it's been absolutely wonderful because you know, it's not been that way really.

**Interviewer** 50:21

Just to clarify, what do you mean by the one tool?

**Participant** 50:23

The one thing that I can take away from, from my use is that I, you know, I do worry about the future a hell of a lot and the one tool is that I don't have to worry about the future, I can actually wait and see and deal with whatever arises in the future.

**Interviewer** 51:12

So, I actually forgot to mention at the beginning, but I think we're both on the same page here. So, when I asked about psychedelics, there's a few drugs that I include in that description, a few drugs that I exclude, just to focus the things in more. So, just for clarification, but I'm pretty sure we're on the same page. When I'm talking about psychedelics, I mean, things like magic mushrooms, LSD, DMT, mescaline Iboga, and basically sort of any analogues of those synthetic versions, and am avoiding things like marijuana, MDMA, stimulants, and opiates, and ketamine would I’d exclude out of those, so depending on how you take them, people describe them as psychedelic but for the purposes of what we're talking about here, I think we're more in the other camp talking about these drugs, but I feel like we've, we've really only been talking about psychedelics that I was thinking of, probably why I didn't mention it.

**Participant** 52:15

Yeah, yeah that's ok.

**Q13. Interviewer** 52:19

So, the next question is, how do you prepare for a psychedelic trip?

**Participant** 52:28

With my knees trembling. It's, I give it a lot of thought, it's not something that I rush into. You know, it's not like cocaine, where you're guaranteed to have a good time, you know, or, you know, that's, that's the only other thing that I've done that you can get a guarantee from, you know, it's not like alcohol, where you can, you know, initially start giggling and laughing. My experience with psilocybin is that I'm deeply, deeply respectful of it and I take it as I said, you know, with my knees trembling, because it's unpredictable, but not in a bad way. I know not where I will be travelling to. I could end up in another universe. I could end up dead, you know, quote, unquote. I could end up being a butterfly, you know. It's, there is no roadmap for a trip. So, you know, from that point, I'm extremely respectful towards it.

**Interviewer** 54:05

And is there any things you do before a trip to prepare yourself for it?

**Participant** 54:13

No, I don't particularly go along with this idea of set and setting. I trust the whole process. I trust that if my mind says, [interviewee] you need to do 10 grams. I do 10 grams. I trust if my mind says take it easy today, just do one I do one. I think this set and setting thing is a way for us to kind of maintain some control over an experience that you cannot control. I mean, for example, you know, people who are who are at the end of their life, they've just been given a diagnosis of a terminal illness, there is no set or setting that can appease them, you know, they, they take mushrooms knowing that they're going to die. I mean, that must be the most anxious thing you can do and, you know, thinking about fluffy clouds on a Caribbean beach isn't going to help that. So, from that perspective, I just prepare myself literally weeks in advance. It's, it's an idea that I let ferment, it develops, I set a day, and sometimes the day comes and I, like na, don't feel like it and when I do feel like it, and that might be two another three, four weeks, I just trust the whole process with it and that's as much as I can say.

**Interviewer** 56:07

is there any internal conflict that goes on when it comes to sort of recognising when you will, and you sort of you won't do a trip and potentially how much you're going to take, like, is there may be like a rational voice or a non, you know, sort of having a little argument about oh, we should or we shouldn't?

**Participant** 56:39

I'm not sure. I trust my feelings. I know, I have an inner landscape that that I trust more than any thoughts or rational feelings and, you know, I may wake up and think, okay, it feels like a good day to do microdose. As I said earlier, and I've been off work for nearly five weeks and I've, it's only in the last three days that I've done the microdosing just haven't felt like it. So, I'm just trying to think, you know, I'm trying to think hard, whether there is actually a conversation that's going on and I mean, rationally I will say to you no, that I just if it feels, appropriate I will do it and if there is an if there's a kind of na I don't feel like it today, I just won't do it. I don't go into a conversation about how much is it going to be a good trip or a bad trip. It's just a feeling.

**Q14. Interviewer** 58:02

Okay, that's fair enough. The next question is, where do you normally take psychedelics and why do you take them there?

**Participant** 58:19

I always take them in my bedroom. I tend to take them in the morning. The bedroom is a safe place for me. A womb like place. You know, I can wrap up under my duvet. Yeah, I'm definitely a night person. I would if I choose in the future, I wouldn't do night time trips. The whole atmosphere feels quite well, dark, you know, for want of a better expression. So, yeah, bedroom morning. That's it.

**Interviewer** 59:05

And do you do you do it in the mornings, do you have light coming into the room? Are you doing it in a dark room?

**Participant** 59:12

Yeah, I draw the curtains. Do it in a darkened room.

**Q15, Q16. Interviewer** 59:25

I'll ask this next question, but maybe it needs a little bit of sort of explanation. So, can you describe any special arrangements you make in the places where you take psychedelics? And the idea is a little bit in the physical space that you use, are there any objects or things that you want around you or that you use people or potentially even activities that you sort of bring into that space that you know, you think it is going to be helpful or useful in your psychedelic trips, might you need them.

**Participant** 1:00:05

None at all. Except music. That's the only thing and I just have my wireless earbud earbuds next to my bed and I will pre choose. Well, no. On my last trip, I pre chose some music and it didn't last more than 30 seconds I pulled the air buds out and that was the end of that, but I think that's because of the first trip. I had some music that was absolutely amazing, and it's never really worked for the other trips. So, but yeah, if there was anything, I was kind of neat to have is, yeah, a selection of music just in case but nothing else.

**Q18. Interviewer** 1:01:08

What do you normally do during a psychedelic trip?

**Participant** 1:01:13

Oh, that word normally. Yeah. I mean, the last trip I had was absolutely challenging beyond belief. I mean, you know, I start off in bed and sometimes I stay in bed. Other times I get up and walk around it's unpredictable, isn't it? You know, for me at least it's I couldn't predict what I would do but yeah, the first three times I've been in bed the last trip was one where I ended up walking around the house doing various things Yeah.

**Q19. Interviewer** 1:02:16

Is there anything you avoid doing during a psychedelic trip?

**Participant** 1:02:22

I have made a rule not to go on social media. So, no Facebook, no Instagram, nothing you know, I do not interact with social media.

**Interviewer** 1:02:40

Would you use something like YouTube or the internet at all?

**Participant** 1:02:47

Yes, I beg your pardon. I mean, I will possibly watch things and I suppose I should have said I will not interact with social media. So, I will not leave any comments at all on anything. You know, I don't like anything, dislike anything but yeah, I can. I don't have a problem actually going onto Facebook or watching YouTube videos or listening to music or Instagram, but I just have this rule of thumb. No interaction with it at all

**Interviewer** 1:03:23

Okay. Is there anything else that you comes to mind that you may be consciously decide you're not going to do these things. You're going to avoid these things while you're tripping?

**Participant** 1:03:42

I mean, it may be obvious, but I wouldn't go outside in sort of public realm for example, you know, I wouldn't go to the supermarket or even into the backyard I wouldn't want to see another human being so yeah, no going out of the house.

**Q20. Interviewer** 1:04:17

Is there anything special you do after a psychedelic trip?

**Participant** 1:04:35

Nothing special just reflect a lot and oh, I do journal writing. So, I make I make notes of anything that sticks in my mind as being of importance.

**Interviewer** 1:04:54

Do you do journal writing during the trip, or is this only post?

**Participant** 1:05:01

Post trip. Yeah.

**Q13. Interviewer** 1:05:02

Okay. Do you you've spoken to this, but do you practice any type of integration or self-reflection to make sense of your psychedelic experiences? And if so, what does that process involve?

**Participant** 1:05:25

Yeah, I do a considerable amount of post trip reflection. Something that I actually enjoy doing reflecting on experiences, drawing from my life experience, trying to see beyond the mundane aspects of a trip and that can present its own dangers as well. It's in many ways, having a trip is like trying to interpret a dream and, you know, we all know how, how intangible those are and how, you know, we can interpret dreams in so many different ways but no, I actually enjoy just sitting down and reflecting, and, as you say, in trying to integrate and, you know, as you know, that that could take weeks, months years, for any final truth to emerge, so, but it, it adds an immense amount of meaning to my life. So, yeah.

**Interviewer** 1:06:54

You mentioned mundane dangers. Could you speak more to that?

**Participant** 1:07:03

Well, just going back to the analogy of a dream, you know, you know, we might have a dream of dying and immediately Our thoughts are, oh, my God, I'm going to die. You know, and, to me, that would be the, you know, a mundane interpretation of a dying dream. You know, we may die in our relationships with other people with our jobs. You know, it doesn't necessarily mean a physical death. So, yeah, it's, you know, I might trip about something, you know, and yeah, it may seem very mundane, or I may make a very mundane association of it, and it could be something really important. So, yeah.

**Interviewer** 1:07:54

Just a thought on that. Is it something similar to the idea of a literal interpretation of the experience vs a metaphorical?

**Participant** 1:08:03

Yeah, absolutely and, you know, I'm aware that when I'm tripping, I'm very conscious that in the beginning there, there's lots of paranoia around that my reality is not, real and I could imagine I'm hearing things. So, you know, I try to bring some rationality to what's happening and as the trip gets deeper and deeper, those qualities begin to disappear and are replaced with something more spiritual. Less real, but it feels less mundane. It's hard to describe, more authentic. There's less paranoia, more authenticity.

**Interviewer** 1:09:13

And this is when there's this shift from a rational interpretation to a more feelings and potentially spiritual mystical based?

**Participant** 1:09:26

Yeah, yeah. So, I start off with the trip and you know, it can be quite anxious and, you know, I can feel very anxious and you know, quite paranoid and then it settles down and moves into a spiritual realm of feelings that I trust and I am aware that I'm not paranoid, if that makes sense. It feels safe.

**Q23. Interviewer** 1:10:09

Are there any noticeable changes in how you think or feel in the days or weeks following psychedelic use?

**Participant** 1:10:18

Yes. Sometimes the qualities that I experienced during a psychedelic trip actually continue for at least a week afterwards. It's as though I'm getting glimpses of the experience whilst I'm sober.

**Interviewer** 1:10:53

Is this in both a positive and negative sense?

**Participant** 1:11:04

Once again, I wouldn't use that word negative. For me, it would be, for example, my last trip was very, very challenging and I experienced trying to find the word. How would you describe something when you when you smell something that is not really there?

**Interviewer** 1:11:30

Well, it would be a. I forget what the term for smell hallucination is, but that would be

**Participant** 1:11:38

but yeah.

**Interviewer** 1:11:39

Yeah, for lack of a better term.

**Participant** 1:11:42

Smell hallucination is the only one I can think of, but in my last trip, I had a smell hallucination. That was extremely strong and, you know, seven days later, for probably 15 or 20 minutes, I could smell it again and that was very challenging, you know, that smell was very, very challenging and obviously, it reminded me of the very challenging experience. So, yes, to answer your question, I do have glimpses up to a week afterwards of challenging and not so challenging experiences.

**Q24. Interviewer** 1:12:44

Has your use of psychedelics changed over time, and if so, how has it changed?

**Participant** 1:12:54

My dosage has decreased, and I certainly don't feel the need to macro dose anytime in the near future.

**Interviewer** 1:13:19

Can I ask? What's sort of the time period it's been since you first used psychedelics to now? Like, how long has that been? Oh,

**Participant** 1:13:29

it's been very recent, probably. I'd say within the last, it's about four months in total.

**Interviewer** 1:13:46

So, your first trip ever was four months ago?

**Participant** 1:13:50

Yes.

**Q25. Interviewer** 1:13:51

Okay. What do you, and if you need me to elaborate before I ask the question you can if it doesn't make as much sense, you can ask me to elaborate but what do you think is the core psychedelic experience?

**Participant** 1:14:34

It seems it seems to me as though the core psychedelic experience for me is personal growth and development and you know that that covers a multitude of sins but, and I know it might be a cliche, but you know, it really does feel as though it's been an intensive period of psychotherapy, you know, 20 years of psychotherapy all rolled into, you know, three, three months, four months.

**Interviewer** 1:15:40

Would you like to elaborate on the idea of personal growth and development, and 10s of psychotherapy is there, I guess this speaks to some of the questions that have come before sort of like the aspects of psychedelics. So, I just throw it out there, if you're interested.

**Participant** 1:16:00

I think, you know, from my most of my later adult life, I've been grappling in the dark, trying to understand what went wrong in my life, and I knew something wasn't right. We could never quite actually pin it down and before psychedelics, I really began to open that Pandora's box and face up to the past and look at the reality of the traumas that I'd faced during my lifetime and it is as though someone somewhere, has said, Okay, he's finally ready to take the next step, which is going to be very, very painful but he is ready now to, to move on and begin to, accept what has happened throughout his life and I think that that is what is going on at the moment with me as I'm bringing some level of acceptance to the traumatic life that we probably all have to enter into and just to, you know, let my shoulders drop and, and so yeah, it's been a hell of a journey. You know, it's been a hell of a journey. It's and it's not all been bad. You know, I've had some wonderful experiences in my life that many, many people in this world will only dream about having and may not even dream about them but it's also been tied up with huge amounts of trauma and loss and I'm just I think I've come to a point of trying to bring some balance, balance and acceptance.

**Q26. Interviewer** 1:19:37

So, the next question is, and you can choose if you want to how much detail or whether you want to answer this, but can you describe your most challenging or negative psychedelic experience?

**Participant** 1:19:50

Yes, this happened about three weeks ago. I took a dry dose About three grams in my bedroom in the morning, curtains closed and it took an exceptionally long time to actually come on to the point where I'm thinking, you know what the hell's going on, because normally, after about 30 minutes, you know, I can feel that tidal wave coming on but this time, there was absolutely nothing and then, you know, after about an hour and 15 minutes, boom, you know, it hit, and I tried listening to music, and that didn't work and I'll move quickly on to the experience. I died Andrew, I died. I experienced my own death. I, I gave up in my mind, I gave up all my attachments to this world. I gave up any financial projects that I was interested in. I gave up my friends. This experience felt so real that I stood up in front of the mirror, and I said goodbye to myself. I said, goodbye [interviewee]. This is it. I took the keys out of the front door and the back door so that people could actually enter the house and retrieve my body because if you know, if I left the keys in the door, they'd have to break it down and this is where that smell came in. I call it the smell of death. If you could imagine smelling the most beautiful purple roses, the most fragrant purple roses that you could imagine in a morgue. masking that, that smell of death. So, you've got this mixture of death and beautiful rose, and I kid you not the smell was so potent and I'm not sure many people can understand what it is like to give up everything in this life to say I don't care about my bank balance anymore. You can have it. You know, my DVD collection that I pride myself on you can have it, my books. I don't care anymore what happens to them. My financial obligations. I don't care anymore. I just do not care about anything anymore. I am leaving this place. That's a huge thing. I think one of the most difficult things about dying is letting go. You know, letting go of our children of our husbands and wives and the bank balance and the fast car and you know who was going to drive that car now? I gave it all up and I looked in the mirror and I looked at my face and I said [interviewee], you're an old man and it's time to go and I looked in the mirror and I said goodbye and I went upstairs and I lay down and I actually had a smile on my face because I thought well this isn't too bad and then I got up and I went to the curtains and opened them and it was a bright sunny day and I let the light in but you have to understand that I actually felt even then that I had died but somehow my consciousness was still around, you know, maybe I was in limbo I carried on for the whole week, I actually sat down at my desk and said, you know, because I've been on furlough I haven't seen or spoken to another human being for a few days and I thought, Oh, my god, well, what if I actually have died? And I'm just here, you know, my, my consciousness is still here and then seven days after the event, I smelt the smell of death again and the next day, I read something that popped up on my web page somewhere and it is, If I can repeat it correctly, if you die before you die, you don't have to die when you die and you know, to a lot of people, that might seem like a conundrum but to me, I understand that perfectly. I died before I died. The second part I don't know about, I'll have to face up to that when the time comes but yeah, that was an extremely challenging experience, but and it's difficult to pick any goodness out of that but something's changed and I'm not sure what it is but something has changed in me because of that experience. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 1:27:15

Could you maybe just describe, or elaborate a bit on, why what was, it seems very reasonable that if you die in this experience, that that's going to be challenging, but is there? What about that experience, what about that process was challenging for you? Like if you maybe you'd be able to break it down a bit into different things you experienced and what that meant to you? And maybe why it was challenging?

**Participant** 1:27:54

Well, I imagine the process of dying is a very, very difficult process, indeed. The process of letting go of this life. I don't know what it is about being alive in this body that we have, you know, that we can smell things. We can touch things, you know, we can use our five senses to experience the world around us and there is so much beauty in this world, you know, just a sunset a sunrise. Listening to birds sing. You know, a woman's backside. There are so many beautiful things, you know, the smell of a woman passing you by and to let go of all of that. To let go of all the pain, because you know, the other side of love is pain. The two have to work together and to let go of all of that consciously. It's very, very challenging, I think. Saying goodbye to the self, you know, saying goodbye to this this body that I've inhabited for 61 years. With all the aches and pains and the joys and, you're saying goodbye to the fact that I'll never be able to have a conversation again, with another human being, I'll never be able to see a beautiful sunset to experience a taste of something new in my mouth or an old favourite, that I won't be able to travel to, you know, foreign exotic places, again, letting all of that go. Knowing that when I let that go, I don't know what will replace it, if anything. I mean, I'm quite fortunate that I'm very poor. You know, I don't have any fancy cars or real estate to be worried about, I don't even have children, but I could imagine an individual who has children and grandchildren, my god, you know, letting go of not seeing them again. You know, not being able to see your grandchild run up to you and, you know, literally jump into your arms, that must be very, very painful and there is no good goodbye, you know, it's a bit of an oxymoron, isn't it? Good, bye. Has that answered the question?

**Q27. Interviewer** 1:32:15

Oh, I don't know if I expected a, what I expected but thank you for giving more in that respect. This might be the same or similar. So, you can interpret the question slightly differently if you want to speak to another experience, but can you describe your most memorable or life changing psychedelic experience?

**Participant** 1:32:47

Yeah, it was the first experience that I had and I saw myself emerge from my mother's womb at birth but the form that I took was that of some kind of grotesque, pig like, creature, that was not wanted and that was hated and then when it within a split second, I saw myself emerge from my mother's womb as a beautiful baby who was wanted and desired by my mother and you know, I think I think for infants, one of the most important things for them is to feel the need, that they are wanted. That when they wake up and their mother looks at them or their father looks at them that they don't have a vocabulary, but they can look into the eyes of their mother and their father and see the love that they are actually wanted and that's what I experienced for the second birth that I was welcome here and that's been hugely important for me to experience that and yeah and, you know, to see the reality of what probably did happen and to make it right again, at some level so yeah, for me, that was quite a profound experience. It made me feel good about myself put it that way.

**Interviewer** 1:35:09

And has that stuck around that, because you describe, I guess you've spoken to or alluded to be the difficulties of your childhood and growing up and I imagine that, in some sense represents a lack of love and desire and support from your family and having this experience of being reborn, did that shift something inside towards like a change in self-image or love towards oneself or something along these lines? And has it stuck around?

**Participant** 1:35:54

In an ideal world, I wish, I really wish it would have been completely transformative but I think that's too much to ask, that that type of change, that you're alluding to, is called a miracle, in my in my view, and they don't happen too often and in answer to your question no, that there was no a huge transformation of my personality and I find it really, really difficult to describe what has changed, but something has changed. Maybe for the first time in my life, I allowed myself to love myself a little bit. That may be present. For the first time in my life, I may see myself as something less than a grotesque, grotesque pig like creature and, you know, actually see myself as a human being just like everybody else. Something has changed, but it's not been a miracle and I'm sorry that I can't articulate that change better but it is a positive change.

**Interviewer** 1:38:05

Maybe just a little follow up on that. In terms of you how you feel about yourself, did you before to let's say a more of a degree or even categorically have a sort of lack of or I don't know if hates the right word, but a dislike something negative feelings towards yourself and this experience has shifted that in a more loving direction?

**Participant** 1:38:37

Yeah. Oh, god. It's really, really difficult for others to understand the level of self-hatred that I feel for myself or have felt for myself. It's, it's, it's deep, and it's enduring and I was diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, emotionally unstable personality disorder and, you know, regrettably, most psychiatrists only see a diagnosis as an external anger projected out onto the world that is uncontrollable. That kind of unmanageable emotion that is projected out into the world is anger. Whereas what a lot of psychiatrists don't understand is that that anger and hatred can be internalised and that's what happens to me. You know, I hate I literally hate capitalised, bold, underlined and italicised. I hate myself and I think having that experience has dented that belief a little bit, it's taken it and shaken it up a little bit. brought some compassion to it and perhaps I'll never be able to see myself as lovable as an adult, but it starts with the child, you know, if I can begin to, to love the child within me. It's a start and, and I'm thankful for that, that little experience I've had.

**Q28. Interviewer** 1:41:34

The next question is actually quite similar to what you've talked about, about your, your last challenging experience of dying but I'll run through it anyway and if it's, maybe you maybe some additional things comes up? If not, we can just move on to the next one. That's okay. So, the question is, if you have experienced ego death, could you describe what it is like? And there's a follow up to this, which is how has this experience impacted you? So maybe Firstly, would you categorise or conceptualise your recent experience as ego death? Or, if not, you might describe it differently?

**Participant** 1:42:27

Yeah, I have some difficulty. I keep seeing that expression pop up and, you know, I have I hold a different view. I keep reading about people who are actually seeking ego death and if they only knew, you know, I mean, I'm of the view that we cannot exist without an ego, you know, we have to have some sense of self and if I'm correct, and, you know, in thinking about what the ego represents, if you don't have one, then you possibly will be insane in the truest sense of the word. So, from that point, you know, maybe I'm just being a bit pedantic about the whole thing, but I certainly wouldn't seek the you know, annihilation of my ego, annihilation of it and, you know, I don't see ego as something that lives or dies, or I don't see the ego as a size, you know, people talk about how he's got a large ego. You know, I tend to see ego in terms of fragility, kind of a, you know, a solidness, you know, is my ego solid enough to bear the challenges of life? You know, has it formed enough, has it developed enough? So, I certainly wouldn't describe what I experienced as ego death at all and I don't know why people have that desire to do that but, you know, living in the society that we live today that's filled with hubris and entitlement and very fragile egos, I can perhaps understand why someone may want to rid themselves of those qualities and that's probably their way of bringing about a profound change in themselves. So, yes, to answer your question, no, I don't, I don't. Ego death is not something that I've experienced.

**Interviewer** 1:45:30

Okay, then maybe, so that I can get a better understanding of your experience where you talked about dying, was there, when you when that experience occurred, and the period between the dying and the I guess you you'd sort of described it as unsure or sort of thought you might have been dead for about a whole week, like there was a sort of loss of sense of, I'm alive, I'm not alive. So, I'm going to try and get at this but it's not going to be perfect, I think. On the transition, or the time between lying in bed and dying, and then getting back up and opening the curtains and seeing the world was alive was there an experience happening in between these moments?

**Participant** 1:46:44

\*long pause\* I was walking around the house and I was looking outside, and I still felt as though I was dead. I felt that something about me had died but what was remaining was [interviewee's] consciousness. I don't know what the hell happens to us after we die. You know, I don't know if we end up in Bardo, waiting for some spaceship to take us to our ancestors, or if that's it, I haven't a clue but, I felt, I felt as though there was some aspect of my consciousness that had not died. Which takes me back to the very first experience that I had. I'm going to find this very difficult to put into words, but I experienced the place that I came from before I was born, and I experienced the place that I will go to after I die, and they are one and the same. There is consciousness. There is self-awareness. I had conversations with buildings that had one eye and I have to say, before having my first trip, I consciously did not read about other people's trips, because I did not want to subliminally influence my own trip but I can tell you without any shadow of a doubt that the places that I saw were very much in this world and part of Indonesia, the architecture was Indonesian and I kept, everywhere I looked, I saw an eye in the architecture built into the architecture that I could have a conversation with. So, you know, getting back to the last experience it has this sense of being a part of that consciousness that doesn't die. It's like a universal consciousness. I don't know if any of this is making sense, but?

**Interviewer** 1:50:05

I've read far and wide and listened to a lot of different people's takes on psychedelic experiences and the interpretations and understandings that people bring back from those experiences and it's not for me in conversation or an interview like this to sort of judge that, or that does or doesn't make sense, because I'm just here to understand and hear how you think about your experiences and your understanding about what happened to you and what that means and that's, I think, the powerful aspect of psychedelics, it's like, hey, you don't need someone to tell you that this is what that means it's like pffff, it's your personal place to make a decision, or come to some sort of sense about what happened and what that means for you. So, it's not any more out there then saying, Christian, Muslim, Hindu god exists and has all these special powers and stuff it is as real as that and it's, I would say, as probably as real as some of the physicists ideas about multi universes and all these other things and what happened before the big bang it's like we don't know, we don't know and that's the, as you say, originally, kind of that's the mystery. That's the one foot in the mystical, one foot in the rational, it's because we don't know and we know we don't know. So, the rational tries and tells you, but what are you going to do?

**Participant** 1:51:49

And we will never know, it is, you know, it is, in my view beyond human comprehension. We just don't have the capability to understand it and far less to put it in words, you know.

**Interviewer** 1:52:07

But we shall try \*laughs\*.

**Participant** 1:52:09

Absolutely, absolutely \*laughs\*.

**Interviewer** 1:52:12

So, in that description there between the time that you said you died and sort of got back up but still felt that some aspect of you had died, but the consciousness of [Interviewee] was still there. Were you experiencing that, that place that exists before you were born and after you die?

**Participant** 1:52:35

Not in such a beautiful way as the first trip. It felt like Bardo, it felt like I was in limbo. Waiting

**Interviewer** 1:52:47

is bardo limbo? Or is it because I don't know what that references to?

**Participant** 1:52:51

I think so. I mean, I come up with words. I don't even know the meaning myself sometimes, but I think Bardo and Limbo similar. Yeah, kind of a waiting area, between life and whatever comes next.

**Interviewer** 1:53:12

Was there a sense during that period of having a body a physical body?

**Participant** 1:53:28

Not particularly. I. you know, I suppose the answer was yes and no. I mean, I remember walking up and down the stairs and my, you know, my arthritic knees were playing up. So, you know, I wasn't gliding like a ghost, down the stairs, but I certainly felt very detached. Yeah, that's the word detached from my body.

**Interviewer** 1:54:01

And what about a sense of personal identity? personal history, sort of, the idea of I think ego when it's talked about is the idea of one person's kind of identity, which brings in all sorts of past experiences and desires and goals and beliefs and all these things. During the experience of death, let's say when you weren't walking around, and maybe were in this transition period, was there a feeling of being [interviewee] of having associated with [interviewee's] life experience?

**Participant** 1:54:48

Yeah, I think so. I kept thinking about people coming into the house and discovering me and what would find this stinking corpse and why can't I see it? I know I've died but why can't I see my own corpse? I did seem quite preoccupied with allowing people entry into the house when I think about it, I took the keys out of both the back door and the front door and I was very preoccupied with being found. being discovered, yeah. Which is interesting.

**Interviewer** 1:55:46

Might be something worth reflecting on later? What that, those actions might have meant?

**Participant** 1:55:56

Yeah, now that, you know, I've spoken it out loud to you, it does seem quite important and yeah, I'll certainly reflect on that.

**Q7. Interviewer** 1:56:09

Okay. Has your psychedelic use noticeably affected your relationships with significant others? And if so, how have they been affected?

**Participant** 1:56:27

Well, that's a that's a really difficult question for me to answer. I haven't had any feedback one way or the other from, you know, the few people that I do know. You know, they haven't said, Oh, you're behaving really strange, or they haven't said, Oh, well, you changed so much. I mean, I have told them about it, and I've told them about the successes I've had with them, but I haven't had any feedback. So, I'm not sure I can answer that question.

**Interviewer** 1:57:08

Would you just add to that question, do you think the lockdown situation has interfered with, to interact with the people close to you and so that could be partially, you know, you just don't have as many opportunities?

**Participant** 1:57:25

Yeah, I think it's a quite a significant effect on me as an individual and you know, work and relating to people. Yeah and my friends, I don't see them, they live quite far away. So, it's really put a block on any kind of relationship activity.

**Q8. Interviewer** 1:57:53

Okay. You've definitely spoken to this but again, if there's anything additional you want to add, or new thoughts come up there, you just like to say, feel free to chime in. So, the question is, have psychedelics changed how you think and feel about yourself? And I'll do with that and there's a follow-up a little bit after.

**Participant** 1:58:24

I'd say yes, on a scale of one to 10, probably it's a, three, four. It's a process. It's an ongoing process, really. Nothing drastic, yeah.

**Interviewer** 1:58:50

Nothing drastic. Okay but in, on this sort of scale of three to four change is this in, does it have a particular direction, directionality or how you could describe what those changes about how you feel and think about yourself. You've spoken, certainly to some of those aspects but I wonder if there's anything to add to that?

**Participant** 1:59:20

I don't think so. I mean, just to repeat that it's, it's reduced my anxiety on a day to day basis. I feel more comfortable having interpersonal relationships with other people. I feel probably less self-hatred and I don't feel a dread of the future. I presume some people will say those are quite enormous things. I would like to feel happy at some point, I would like to have some more energy, youthful energy, but perhaps that's just what happens when we all get older that energy disappears, you know.

**Interviewer** 2:00:19

Potentially, I obviously can't speak to that personally. So, yeah and the sort of follow up to that, I don't know if it would necessarily add anything but how has these changes impacted your life? Is there? Is it mostly just a feelings-based thing? Or is there something noticeable that shifted in your life that, you know, is new or different compared to before?

**Participant** 2:00:59

No, I don't think there's anything significantly different. I mean, I carry on as normal. Except my internal world has shifted a little bit but nothing significantly in the external world. No.

**Q6e. Interviewer** 2:01:14

Okay. Well, I don't know if you have, I didn't check your survey answers but how has psychedelic use affected your use of other drugs, if it has it all?

**Participant** 2:01:42

That's a very good question and an important one, because I have struggled with the use of alcohol in the past and through my own self-determination, and with the help of an organisation, I've, you know, I managed to get on top of it but what has been really interesting for me is that despite getting on top of it, you know, after a difficult day at work, I have conversations on the train home, should I have a bottle of wine? No, you know, there was this definite conversation going on. Yes, you can have a bottle of wine. You had a really tough day. No, you can’t, and I usually ended up buying a bottle of wine but since taking psilocybin and you know, this has been quite an unexpected side effect. I don't think about alcohol at all, absolutely zero. I can go into the supermarket and you know, the aisle with the alcohol, it doesn't speak to me anymore at all. It's, and that seems quite miraculous to me and even after having a really hard day at work, I can walk past a supermarket. No conversations on the way home, no conversations going past the supermarket. So, yeah, it's been incredible.

**Interviewer** 2:03:39

Would you, what was your relationship like with alcohol in the past?

**Participant** 2:03:49

I went through a very, very difficult time, about three years ago, and there was a time for a few weeks when I was drinking up to two litres of vodka per day. Going to work, drinking at work, dropping three and a half milligrams of zopiclone, just to get through the day, and then at lunch, smoking, a joint cannabis joint and you know, that went on for a good a good 12 months and then the stressors the environmental stresses changed and that's what I was able to actually get on top of the drinking. So, I wasn't drunk. I was sober, you know, all the time but yeah, looking back, I can see it was a direct response to environmental stresses and emotional stresses that I was under, at the time and it was, you know, the self-medicating, soothing aspect but still after a hard day at work, that bottle of wine always looked very appealing and it is a very slippery slope, you start with a half-bottle of wine and then the next day you drink, I drink a bottle of wine and then every night it's a bottle of wine and then lunchtime. It's you know, it's it just grows exponentially. So, yeah. As I said, it's a wonderful side effect for me. I don't even think about it. So, yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:06:21

If I can delve a little deeper. What was the what was going on? In the sort of three years ago, the environmental stressors that were manifesting this coping behaviour of intense alcohol use and I'm not sure zopiclone is a type of antidepressant or depressant or something, I'm not 100%?

**Participant** 2:06:46

I'm just trying to remember the name for a sleeping tablet, basically and, yeah, I was on 200 milligrams of what's an antidepressant, is it Zoloft? I can't even remember the name of it but yeah. So, yeah, to answer your question. It was I was living in London at the time, and it was a housing issue. You know, I'm a man of a certain age, and I don't want to be sharing a room in a house, you know, I want my own place, I'm a very independent person and I had a lovely little flat all to myself, and which is, I don't know if you know, in London, it's, that's quite a bit.

**Interviewer** 2:07:44

I do. I lived there for a short while. It's like, expensive, and, or, like, Yeah, I know

**Participant** 2:07:51

Yeah so and I lived there for six years and without doubt, every year, the landlord would give me an eviction notice and tell me he's selling the flat. I'd have people coming into the flat to have a look around and then he'd say, oh, [Interviewee], don't worry, I'm not selling it anymore. I'll never sell this flat and then the next year he'd say oh [Interviewee], I've got some financial problems, I'm going to put the flat into auction really sorry about this and this went on for six years. Every year, he put the flat up for auction. Every year, people would come and view and he'd never sell it and, of course, I was getting a little bit of housing benefit, because I was only working part time and you know, you know, sometimes when you're too honest, you can be too poor. Part of the housing benefit agreement was that you have to notify them of any changes in your financial circumstances. So, I was working part time and every year my employer would give me a 50 pence an hour pay rise and I would write to housing benefit and tell them I've had a 50 pence an hour pay rise and they would stop all payments of housing benefit for three months. So, there I was working part time and every year they stopped paying, I'd have to write to them, I'd have to go and set up meetings with them and I'd have to borrow money from friends to pay the rent and if you could imagine doing that for like five years. Every year it's the same thing. I'm selling the property, housing benefit problems and then I had some kind of, if you had seen me, you probably would have thought it was some kind of psychotic break but I think it was just a cathartic release but, you know, my best friend who came and the police had to break the door down, you know, from what she tells me, she doesn't ever want to see that again but you know, I have this cathartic break and shortly after that, I said, I can't take any more of this, and I left I left London, and I moved to Manchester, and I've been here for 18 months. I've been off antidepressants for about 15 months. I've never been to the doctor. In the 18 months that I've been here. I take no medication whatsoever. I don't drink. I don't smoke cannabis. It's been a process of healing I think for me to be here, you know, I can I am renting this property and I can it takes about two thirds of my salary but I can eat, you know, my days of partying are finished and, you know, the end of the month, I have a small credit. You know, it might be a fiver, but it's not a debit. Yeah, it's, it's, yeah. It's been a healing process moving out of London.

**Interviewer** 2:12:02

So, would you attribute a lot of the sort of reduction in use of drugs, medications, prescriptions, alcohol, cannabis, things like this and maybe the stress related to that to be in large part, in small part sort of related to the move? Are you able to parse the how much of this change is related to your psychedelic use vs how much is the new environment which you now live in?

**Participant** 2:12:37

That's an interesting question because despite everything being balanced, and life affirming, up to about five or six months ago, I was my ideation, suicidal ideation was at its strongest ever. So, yes, that, you know, that contradiction is very apparent, isn't it that I'm healing and yet, the death wish is even more powerful than it has ever been and I can't even begin to comment on why that should be but, you know, on the one hand, yes, coming here has been very, very, very healing for me but the existential threat continues until I took the psilocybin and then that stopped. So, yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:13:47

And maybe just jumping to similar but slightly different area. Did you have any other relationships with drugs that psilocybin has you, you would describe as directly impacted?

**Participant** 2:14:08

Sorry, I don't understand the question.

**Interviewer** 2:14:11

So, the idea is that you sort of described to me you had issues with alcohol, you're taking zopiclones, and you're on antidepressants, and you were smoking joints, and this was related to the stressful environment in which you found yourself. You moved, and a lot of those went away,

**Participant** 2:14:33

Yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:14:35

But was there I don't know. Once you once you started using psilocybin Were there any residual use of or using of other substances that continued which it has now affected?

**Participant** 2:14:50

No, no, I from the time I moved up here, I weaned myself very carefully of antidepressants. It took me about three months to get off of them. Then I've been off them completely for about 15 months. I very, very rarely smoke cannabis very rarely. I don't, I'm sleeping much better, so I don't need sleeping tablets. Even though I may have had a bottle of wine on my days off. I certainly wasn't drunk, and it certainly wasn't every day off. I probably say I was drinking six days out of the month. So, yeah, to answer your question, no, my body was free of all other stimulants, narcotics, whatever, completely free.

**Interviewer** 2:16:01

And since using psilocybin have you completely stopped using alcohol as well?

**Participant** 2:16:07

Absolutely, yeah. Absolutely.

**Interviewer** 2:16:15

Okay. We're going to shift a little bit in terms of the focus here. I know we've come up to sort of the two-hour mark. So, I just want to double check with you. Are you okay to carry on we have maybe about 10 questions? It looks like left and I'm not sure on your time pressures.

**Participant** 2:16:38

No. my time is good. I just like to nip to the toilet and get myself a glass of something to drink.

**Interviewer** 2:16:44

Sure, go for it.

**Participant** 2:16:44

Okay thank you.

**Interviewer** 2:19:55

What are you drinking?

**Participant** 2:20:00

It's orange cordial and sparkling water.

**Interviewer** 2:20:04

Tasty. You good to start again or would like it just a little time to settle?

**Participant** 2:20:13

I'm good. I'm good. Thank you.

**Q29. Interviewer** 2:20:15

All right. So, the first question on this sort of, sort of shifting in direction is, have your experiences with psychedelics affected your spiritual or religious beliefs? And if so, how have they been affected?

**Participant** 2:20:42

Yeah. I think they have. I think they have affected my spiritual beliefs in the sense that, I take a much broader view of, spirituality in the sense that I think I can say that I'm agnostic. It's just unknowable but at the same time, I also know beyond any shadow of a doubt that there is something very life affirming, that is running things and not that I ever had any doubt about it, but I just know that everything, plants, insects, the oil in the earth, the copper that we extract the gold. It's all living material. It's all I wouldn't go as far to say sentient, but perhaps it is but yeah, everything has life, you know, this, this planet is teeming with life and yeah, I can't really go beyond.

**Interviewer** 2:22:35

Okay and when you said that there was it has changed your spiritual beliefs. What was it like before these experiences?

**Participant** 2:22:46

I think I had become quite cynical. You know, just get me out of here kind of thing. I've had enough of this place. This place is intolerable. You know, I stopped seeing the beauty of life. I'd stop seeing life anywhere. Whereas, I think I've recaptured that I can. I can see the beauty in the smallest things, you know, how little weed popping out of the tiny gap in the pavement in my backyard. To me seems really beautiful and that it wants to live. It's looking to live, you know it, it’s like a fly that lands on my desk and if I move my hand near it, it senses danger. So, it must have a sense of itself. It must have an ego. It must. It wants to live it you know. Yeah and for me, that's amazing that there's just so much life in this world. It's just Yeah. It's incomprehensible. It really is.

**Interviewer** 2:24:18

And before you were saying that I think you stopped seeing that. So, what was that like for you?

**Participant** 2:24:45

I was decaying. I think, you know, I, I'd given up I could not see the beauty in anything. I could not see life anywhere. Yeah, my whole being was filled with, with decay and death. That's all I could see or that's all I wanted there seemed no point in listening to birds singing anymore, or the same no point in watching a sunrise or a sunset you know, all of the things that I was interested in reading, photography, you know, cycling, lost all meaning and they're slowly coming back.

**Interviewer** 2:25:46

Have you gotten back into some of those hobbies?

**Participant** 2:25:50

Well, I, I am doing a bit more reading. I don't go cycling much but that's out of fear of motorists on the road. Funnily enough, I felt safer cycling in London than I do up here in Manchester. It feels really dangerous up here. So, I just don't go cycling. In London, I used to cycle 18 miles a day to work. Sorry 18 miles in total, there and back. I haven't taken my camera out, that's something I would love to get back into. I love photography and it's all been packed away, but yeah, slowly, slowly, you know, I've got a huge DVD collection and I've actually started watching some of my DVDs again and that's a big thing. You know, that's a really big thing, but yeah and you can't, you can't force these things. You can't say, I'm going to read all of these books, or I'm going to go cycling. It just doesn't work that way for me.

**Interviewer** 2:27:16

So, the next question is, have you ever experienced a spiritual crisis because of your psychedelic use, and what if you did, what helped you get through this experience? And I can elaborate? Yeah, would you like me to give you a bit of definition? Okay, so I, here, basically, a spiritual crisis, also called a spiritual emergency, is a form of identity crisis, where an individual experiences drastic changes to their meaning system, such as their unique purposes, goals, values, attitudes and beliefs, identity, and focus, typically, because of a spontaneous spiritual experience.

**Participant** 2:28:13

I don't think so. No, none of that's ringing true for me.

**Q30. Interviewer** 2:28:24

Have psychedelics and you again, I keep prefacing these, but I think you've definitely spoken to this in different questions we've covered but have psychedelics changed how you think or feel about death or the process of dying?

**Participant** 2:28:41

Yes. I've experienced what I would think is a first-hand glimpse of what it must be like to go through that process. I don't know what the reality is like but I think I've experienced something quite unique and profound and I feel, you know, dare I say it's not something that I would want to go through again and there is no need for me to experience that again but it has had value and it's helped me to you know, let my shoulders drop a little bit and I understand and I think you know, if you died, if you owe the bank 500 pounds, it just doesn't seem that important anymore. I pay it off when I pay it off. If you want to come and take my stereo come ahead, take it. Nothing seems that critical anymore. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:30:25

I thought that I had that I follow up with how you described a while back the experience of that death experience. You said for about a week afterwards that you felt still as if something had died but [interviewee's] consciousness was still there. So, you carried on sort of a question, did you carry on normal day life, different activities you needed to do, going to work, and feeding eating all the normal sort of human habits, but there was just some sense of change or loss of something?

**Participant** 2:31:10

Yeah. I'd be going about my normal business and I'd suddenly stop and question the reality. Am I alive [interviewee]? You know, yes, you you've just made yourself a meal but are you actually alive? No one has called you in three days. You haven't seen another human being, are you alive? Yeah. I'm quite reluctant to say this, because it may make me sound quite insane, but I even had that feeling quite earlier with you. You were asking me questions about my experience of dying and I thought my god, you know, is, is he trying to see if I'm ready to move on? You know, are you part of this conspiracy? You know, is he part of the moving on process? You know, have I passed my test? Will he allow me to move on? And it, it only lasted a few seconds, but it felt very, very real. Know that, yes, I might actually be dead, but Andrew's part of this Illuminati in the sky ready to move me on? Yeah.

**Q31. Interviewer** 2:33:04

Have psychedelics changed any fundamental beliefs about the nature of reality? And if so, what has changed?

**Participant** 2:33:16

Oh, that's a very difficult question to answer. I think it has altered my perception of reality and I keep getting flashes of the complexity of this world and I think it is a much weirder place than we can ever imagine it to be, that we actually know so little about our existence here on this life and occasionally, get glimpses of what may lie beyond and it's just absolutely mind boggling. It's not something that I can sit down with for too long because it is just incomprehensible and this life that I am living, that, you know, we're all living, in the grand scheme of things, it is so, so, so small and insignificant. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:34:44

Has this shift or change in your fundamental beliefs or your perception of reality, has it impacted your life in any ways that you could articulate?

**Participant** 2:34:59

Not particularly, I think, you know, I've always had that persuasion. I've always been in the mystical camp and I think my experience of psilocybin has, it's just affirmed and confirmed it's underlined in and it's made it real, for me but to answer your question, no, no major shifts, No.

**Q32. Interviewer** 2:35:34

Okay. Have psychedelics changed your outlook on life? And if so, how has it changed?

**Participant** 2:35:56

I have to wait and see, I think I need to re-enter life beyond furlough and see what this last trip has done. I believe it's changed, I believe it will have impacted my relationships and I think I will take things far less seriously. I think I'll be a more relaxed person, generally, but I think I need to go back to work and see how that plays out, but that's how I'm feeling at the moment.

**Q33. Interviewer** 2:36:43

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

**Participant** 2:36:56

I think psychedelics will bring about a profound change in human consciousness. I don't know what it's like in New Zealand, but you know, here in the UK, and probably you can remember, I don't know how long ago you were here but, certain personality traits have become embedded, you know narcissism, entitlement, a lack of compassion towards others, a competitiveness. It's become embedded in the psych of a lot of people now, and I can't see any political structures reversing that, you know, no socialist Labour government is going to reverse this hubris, arrogance that that has taken hold of people. No sport is going to bring us together as a human race. No music is going to achieve that. We've tried all of those things and we seem hell bent on self-destruction as a species. So, you know, psychedelics give me great hope because this is the one thing that can change human consciousness. It can change people's minds and if there was ever a time when, you know, our species needed to change, it's, well, I suppose every generation says the same thing but, psychedelics, to me are the only thing that will cause human beings to change, I'm, I feel really strongly about that I can see it happening, that our consciousness will be changed by them. Not by music, not by sport, not by political structures, but by psychedelic processes.

**Interviewer** 2:39:37

And maybe you can speak to what type of change do you imagine in this scenario?

**Participant** 2:39:46

Well, you know, predicting the future is always a tricky prospect. Well, you know, it is my hope that it reverses some of the less constructive qualities that people seem to have embraced in this country and around the world and, you know, to make people more cooperative, rather than competitive, more compassionate, more empathic, and to become a fully, fully fledged human being, because, you know, I actually do believe that we're not fully evolved human beings, and I think a lot of us are, and I include myself in this half beast and half human being we can, we can do the most horrific things and in the blink of an eye, we can do the most beautiful things as well. So, as a species, you know, I actually don't think we've become fully human yet and I hope psychedelics will take us one step further to becoming fully human or humane beings.

**Interviewer** 2:41:29

I have two questions in my head that I would like to follow that up with. The first one being the ideas that you're putting forward here, do you think you have experienced those changes in yourself as well? So, you talk about, like becoming more compassionate, more empathic, and sort of an advancement towards becoming say more humane or more human, is this something that you experience?

**Participant** 2:42:03

I hope so but you know, I have to let others form an opinion about that, because I think it's dangerous for us as individuals, to form those opinions about ourselves but what I would say is that I feel less critical towards political structures, I feel less critical towards their failings, less judgmental and just see it as part of our evolution, you know, that we have to go through these processes and come out the other side, hopefully.

**Interviewer** 2:42:48

And a sort of follow up to the other question I was thinking is, you're saying becoming a more fully fledged human being to become more humane. Can you speak to that a little bit more about, what you mean by that? What you see that as looking like, or sort of, like projecting it forwards?

**Participant** 2:43:14

Yeah. I think it's, I think it's still very, very difficult for me to kind of form a view of what an ideal human community would look like because we don't have many examples of it really but, I used to live on a very small Caribbean island at one time, and I saw what cooperation I saw how cooperation in a community worked and I can see that as human beings, we, our nature is to cooperate at a very kind of basic level, it's what we like to do. I think we've all been brainwashed into this Darwinian idea of the strongest shall survive, the fittest shall survive. It's not it's about cooperation and I think there will come a time in the future. When we do embrace cooperation as a means of, of survival. I mean, the rest of it is all nostalgia and pie in the sky, really, you know, what kind of I mean, we can all come up with utopias in our minds, but who knows what a fully-fledged human being looks like, you know I don't think there, there have been too many good examples of them around for us to form an opinion but we get glimpses of people, you know who, who come and go, and who leave a record of, of goodness behind them and I try, I try really hard in my day to day life to be cooperative, to be life affirming, to support life to support people. I try to be a good human being. With all of my own frailties, yeah.

**Q34. Interviewer** 2:45:58

I guess you've just you've sort of answered to this one but again, maybe if something different comes up you want to speak to otherwise we can move on. The question is have psychedelics changed how you think about the human species and what we're doing?

**Participant** 2:46:17

I think I kind of spoke to that. Yeah.

**Q35. Interviewer** 2:46:20

Okay. So, final two questions. So, second to last is what advice would you give to people who are interested in or currently using psychedelics?

**Participant** 2:46:34

Oh, to tread with care. Be respectful. It's you know, this is just my viewpoint, that psilocybin is not something to be used for recreational purposes. I mean, you can, you know, but it would feel disrespectful If someone did that, to me. I mean, you know, who am I to tell people what to do or how to live, but, you know, someone came to me and said, they want to try psilocybin, I would have a, you know, lots of long conversations with them beforehand, and try to find out what, what their intention is, you know, why are they doing this? What are their hopes and aspirations? Because otherwise, I couldn't encourage anyone to use psilocybin unless they had a genuine and deep interest to explore their internal world and perhaps beyond, and they're ready for that. It's not something to be trifled with, you know, particularly at large doses. Sorry, what was the second part of the question?

**Interviewer** 2:48:20

So, it was what advice would you give to people who are interested in or currently using psychedelics?

**Participant** 2:48:25

Right. So, yeah, I mean, if anyone's currently using, they don't need any advice from me, I'm sure you know, their experience will teach them and perhaps, you know, I have this this way of viewing life that perhaps psilocybin itself invites you to partake, to participate of it, to partake of it and it meets you where you are, you know, if, if our beloved Donald Trump took some psilocybin, it would meet him where he is, you know, he's, god help him but you know, he's probably not going to change hugely overnight, but you know, we can all hope.

**Q36. Interviewer** 2:49:20

And the final question is, are there any final thoughts or comments, or even questions that you would like to ask or mention before we finish the interview?

**Participant** 2:49:41

No, not really, but I just like to say thank you for your patience and understanding and giving me the opportunity to actually talk about it because as I told you earlier, I'm quite isolated and you know, it's It is important for me to be able to speak to someone who understands or has an interest and you know, you're studying and yeah, no, just thank you, Andrew, it's been a pleasure talking with you.

**END OF INTERVIEW**

**Interviewer** 2:50:16

Thank you as well [interviewee],like really, you've spoken to a lot of things that are very heartfelt, and, like, deep and genuine and personal and that's not easy for a lot of people and it definitely sounds like you've experienced a lot of hardship and struggles throughout your life and just bringing up that, again, and thinking about it, you know, it's, it's not, it's not easy to live it, but it's like, just to even go back over it and tell someone about it can be, as shown by early in the conversation, thinking about the beginning of it, very emotional. So, like, a big thank you really to for as well for sharing because I'm super curious and interested in these things, for sure but it requires people to share with me their experiences for me to sort of gain a broader understanding, and hopefully create something that's going to be useful to the broader community. This is, this is the one of the large motivations for doing this is like, yeah, I'm interested, but I want it to be helpful I want what I do to be like mean something, rather than just like at the end of the day is like as a master's thesis, done and it's some stacked away in some filing drawer somewhere, then nobody reads it but I think there's this value, not only in the potential of creating a document that is useful to people, but just the conversations themselves, just giving, as you said, people the opportunity to speak about their experiences, because I think a lot of people don't get that opportunity. We live in a society that is not so forthcoming with love and acceptance, and a lack of sort of stigma or judgement around drug use, and psychedelics as well and so there's not as many opportunities to speak to our experiences and what and how they what they've meant to us, and to not get just some sort of like, Oh, yeah, drug experience, blah, blah, you know, wiffy diffy fancy, magical stuff in the head, it's like, the stuff, you know, really impacts people and

**Participant** 2:52:55

Absolutely

**Interviewer** 2:52:56

you can see that, and I think the side of the evidence coming out of the research and sort of clinical trial stuff is only further validating the, like, providing more like legitimacy to the fact that it doesn't matter, essentially, what's underlying these experiences, whether or not they're true or not, it's like, what is the effect? What are the outcomes, and it's like, look at society, look at the outcomes. So, hence, why, you know, any framework, I think of understanding or thinking about these experiences, is legitimate, like, if someone comes from a mystical spiritual perspective and wants to, or understands it through even a particular form of mystical experience, you know, there's multiple domains of different belief systems, and that's what works for them and that leads them to some sort of positive shift in their life, or to some resolution or relief of pain or issues, or just the complexities that were confounding them is now sort of helped, then I don't, I don't care what you believe, like, often and then not in a sort of, like, not like, I don't care, but like, good for you because my feeling, I guess my feeling is society wide, it's held together by so many different perspectives and belief systems and how these fit together and how what, you know, we can cooperate with other people who come from different backgrounds with different histories with different traumas and historical baggage and all the rest and it's like how did where do we meet where we you know, we meet in literally now time, like the existence is happening, but you're going to have a different belief system, than me likely and the next person is and you're going to have different experiences and it means you're going to interpret things in a different way and psychedelics is just one more part of the whole soup that that makes this society and I, so I don't see why we judge it so harshly. It's just a bit silly. I think.

**Participant** 2:55:14

It is but, I mean, I don't know what you think but, you know, we haven't really touched on like legalisation or decriminalisation and I still think some people need to be protected from themselves. You know, because some people will, you know, on a dare do 30 grams 30, you know, 30 dried grammes of the stuff and you need to be ready for that.

**Interviewer** 2:55:43

Yeah, no, I, I definitely agree, then you need to take responsibility at the same time. It's not. There are consequences to one's actions and doesn't matter what you do, you know, psychedelics can be potentially harmful or helpful, depending on how they're used and depending on the person who's using them, and the situation they're using them in and you can say that for any drug or any other sort of activity we get involved in and so this process for me is about sort of exploring the boundaries of how people use it, and identifying if there's any commonalities and ways in which they used that that help people that harm people and sort of navigating that space a bit to provide a document to have some conversations about what are some potential guidelines? What are some potential ways that you know, just if you're new to it, or you you're not, you're using psychedelics, and it's not working for you, maybe you need to go and research a bit more and find out how other people use because maybe you're coming at it from an approach that's not going to work for you personally and then it's just an additional piece of literature that can be available to help people and that's sort of at the kind of base level is what I would like this process to culminate in.

**Participant** 2:57:18

So, when you publish your thesis, will it be available for a general readership?

**Interviewer** 2:57:28

I believe so. I'm sure I retain I think, with master's thesis and PhDs, the author retains the copyright. Whereas in things like online publishing, unless you do open access, you give up the copyright to the publishing people, it's, it's a whole scam thing in itself.

**Participant** 2:57:50

I suppose what I'm getting at, will I be able to read your finished product?

**Interviewer** 2:57:56

For sure. I'll send I can send it directly to you.

**Participant** 2:57:58

Okay, so I'd be really interested to read.

**Interviewer** 2:58:01

Because that's because, yeah, especially like, that's kind of why I mentioned copyright. Like, I own it, I can do what I want with it.

**Participant** 2:58:09

Right, right right right.

**Interviewer** 2:58:10

So yeah, I will definitely email it to each of the people who participate, cause I'm sure each individual's going to be interested or maybe not depends on what's going on, but is there for them in case they want to look read through it and because I'm collaborating with the Beckley Foundation, as well, they're going to have the opportunity to present it as a collaboration. So, there's going to be more opportunity for them to talk about the findings, if it's appropriate in whatever conference or setting there talking about it, then and I will make sure to share it online as best I can. So, I don't know specifically about the repository where it gets placed, it gets put in like the University Library’s thesis thing and I don't know if that's accessible, like publicly so I'll have to, I don't know the process behind that but certainly, there'll be a way where I can just like put it up online and people can just download it and yeah, I'll do that because it's like I'm not doing this I can again put it away somewhere secret so no one can get access to it's like well, well, that was a waste of time, other than but not fully as well because even I think again, the conversations I very much enjoy this like it's I think I find it very meaningful or valuable. I don't know how to, like, intrinsically enjoyable to engage in these sorts of one on one and even group conversations and especially about topics that are, provoke such intense and introspective thinking and consideration of like many things and there's not as many topics where you can talk about it, and it's as fluid and able to integrate so many different aspects of life as psychedelics. You can talk about politics, you can talk about sports, you can talk about whatever, but they, they more rarely, I think, can you like, expand on them, and they start to have some sort of like, meaning beyond just the topic itself. So, I think that's partly what draws me into the interest as well is probably the people, I think that's probably a big part that people who are drawn to try psychedelics, there will be also the people who are more open and likely to think and talk in these sort of, I don't know, the lack of better term like psychedelic ways. So,

**Participant** 3:00:42

Just being authentic.

**Interviewer** 3:00:45

Yeah. Which is, I think, unfortunately, lacking in a lot of social interaction nowadays, and probably for good reasons. Like, it's, as you say, the survival of the fittest, this idea of, you're not necessarily my enemy, but I'm competing against you and so I need to one up you somehow and if I can do that through a sort of manipulative social game, where I not necessarily exploit you, it could be symbiotic but I get the upper hand, I get the better end of that deal, I get more information, then you, then I provide to you, da da da, you know, there's some level of holding back and, a lack of transparency and how one comes and approaches a conversation and answers questions, or presents oneself and these certainly, I mean, I certainly understand why people do that and, and I think we all have to, to some degree, and it's, I guess, it would just be nice to have that like less, like just a bit more like, can we talk about some real shit, rather than just being, superficial and that, yeah, because that forms, I think, talking about real shit forms connections and then that's how you build community and cooperation is like, I can trust you, you can trust me, because I know your dark secrets, you've told me about your what's going on with you. I've told you about me. We've seen it, we acknowledge it. We're flawed human beings, that's what it is and then we move on and, and but we're also aware, you know, now I know, I'm more aware of your strengths or your weaknesses, so I can, we can better work with each other, when we know they probably not going to be able to manage this situation very well. I should help. Or I'm not very good at these things. I know a person who is and I and I can trust that sort of understanding or knowledge about them. Whereas fake one is, you know, I'm super confident. I'm a superstar salesman, I'm a da da da da da, and you're like, are you really? Can you really do that? Well, I'll say I can because that's the only way you'll give me a job. Right? Yeah, do something, it's like so you're just bullshitting. It's like, Yeah, but you have to bullshit because if you're just like, I'm a normal dude, I can probably do the work. Rather than like, I'm 100% confident I can do this, this this. I know all these things. Don't worry. I got all the experience you want. I'm the best. I'm better than everybody else. It's like uhhhhh.

**Participant** 3:03:34

That's the sad truth, isn't it? That is the sad, sad truth it really is.

**Interviewer** 3:03:40

I think one of those two things that I wanted to come back to that I sort of highlighted that I thought one of your things you talked about was, where are we. It was about the survival of the fittest and the survival of the strongest and my I have, when you talked about the survival of the fittest, I know a lot of people interpret it as like that competition mode level experience, where it's like, I have to exploit you somehow or get one up on you but I personally think of survival of the fittest as both potentially. So, it's both in the situation where your wellbeing or your group's wellbeing or some broader setting, group, grouping of organisms, let’s say the whole planet is better off because of an action even if it's competitive. That's fitness, for example, but also in the cooperation sense if I, if I can increase my wellbeing or others wellbeing through increased cooperation that's also been more fit as being more fit in the environment. So, I think there's I agree with you, I think there is this push or the slant towards this competition mindset, but I think it's a false understanding or a miss, a failure to understand fitness in a more holistic sense.

**Participant** 3:05:14

And appropriateness. Yes. I think Darwin was really miss represented, so yeah.

**Interviewer** 3:05:23

It was. So, also, I was going to give you that link to the micro dosing, Imperial College thing. I'm pretty sure I have it on my favourites somewhere. So, I can just pop that quickly. So, grab that before we go but, there was. So, one to one thing you said you were interested in reflecting on was that idea when you had sort of the death experience of wanting to be found?

**Participant** 3:05:55

Yeah.

**Interviewer** 3:05:56

And one other one that I sort of picked up, that was interesting to me. Was this sort of question you're asking yourself of, are you alive? So during that kind of week period, afterwards, or let's say during the whole thing, I can't necessarily split it up but you had you, you were saying that you hadn't interacted with people for a couple of days, you were asking the question, Are you alive and I, it's, I just sort of had, I think, a thought or a feeling of this idea of interconnectedness. Maybe there's sort of, there's like a missing sense of being connected with other people because this idea of like, life is mutually life, mutually supports other life and when you kind of disconnect from other people and become isolated, there's a sense in which you're independent and potentially more vulnerable and I think maybe you lose a sense of who you are, because you're no longer getting the feedback from the community who you interact with, who reinforce and project onto you falsely and correctly, like, what, who are you. What are you what is what's going on with you how you make other people react? So I didn't really explain it very well but I think there was just some sense in which it clicked with me like the lack of connection or communication with other people in the sense of like, do I even exist as like, other people sort of give us that feeling of being connected and being alive.

**Participant** 3:07:44

I think you've hit the nail on the head and the word that's in front of me is invisibility. As I become older, it's becoming incredibly, incredibly apparent to me how invisible I am in the workplace. I am probably one of the oldest people in my workplace. I'm surrounded by people in their early 20s and you know, people literally walk past and I, I just don't exist at all. I'm invisible. So, yes, I think that that is a very valid point and

**Interviewer** 3:08:35

Like a ghost.

**Participant** 3:08:37

Absolutely, yes. Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, I actually do feel like that, which makes absolute sense to me. With the death experience. I've been walking around feeling like a ghost. Absolutely. That's a very powerful insight that you've given me there.

**Interviewer** 3:09:00

Cool. That's just something that came. With the, with the interview, I would say we're sort of into sort of finished but I just let the thing record sometimes could probably turn off but yeah, it's more a little bit informal at the end because I can't, the process itself, I'm not supposed to put in my thoughts too much otherwise. For example, provide leading questions for example, which means I'm getting less of your authentic say reaction to a pre-determined sort of set of questions and might be guiding it a bit too much. So, that's why a lot of is I sort of hold back and go oh, that would be interesting. If I this was a conversation I'd be jumping in and putting in my thoughts and would be playing off those and going down different thought paths but yeah, for the interview, it has to be a bit more reserved. More, less me more you but at the end is where I'm like hah I can say, some of the things that I thought that I, and I guess it also helps prioritise. It's like, well, what's really important to actually jump in and say, because I probably, we had, there was quite a few silences during, when you're just thinking, after asking a question and probably just out of habit, I would, I might prompt with additional words, thinking that might help the process of what you're solving or thinking about, but actually, it might just be interference as well, just kind of cuts in.

**Participant** 3:10:37

I'm, I'm put on a personal note, I'm really glad that you didn't cut in and, you know, I presume it doesn't work the same for everybody but my thinking process is not spontaneous and fiery as a lot of people's thinking processes are and you know, once upon a time, I do remember being in a kind of psychological group setting, and I was given some paper, along with everyone else and told to create a piece of artwork around a subject and everyone else immediately knew what they wanted to do and as usual, I didn't, so I sat in silence, and it really disturbed the facilitator and she was like, What's wrong [interviewee]? And, you know, there wasn't anything wrong, I was just thinking, what I wanted to do it, I'm like, please just leave me alone. So, I can think. So, I found that very valuable that you allowed that, that space of silence where I can, yeah, put my thoughts together, and be able to articulate them in some way or the other. So, yeah, thank you for that.

**Interviewer** 3:12:11

I also am just happy to have the opportunity to practice that because I think it is out of habit to communicate, because, you know, depending on the setting, and who you're interacting with, there's no expectations that you're not allowed to add your opinion, or, well, you should have some sort of more like hold it and let them say their thoughts out because, you know, it might be a group conversation, it might just might just be one or a few people and so it's sort of like you, you jump in this, I don't know how to say like free flowing a bit more and so here, I think it's good to be able to do both, because that works for some people, it doesn't work for others and

**Participant** 3:12:56

Absolutely. I think silence is loud and it's very disturbing to people. You know, particularly in a setting one on one or in a group where everything goes silent. It creates so much anxiety in people that someone has to say something to break it. So, yeah, but yeah, you're right. It doesn't work with everybody.

**Interviewer** 3:13:26

I think a Zen koan that I've heard from Alan Watts was the thundering silence.

**Participant** 3:13:34

That's a really good way to describe it is thundering isn't it? It really is.

**Interviewer** 3:13:41

Let me grab you that link.

**Participant** 3:13:43

Okay.

**Interviewer** 3:13:51

Should be added to my favourites I'll have to search for it.

**Participant** 3:15:47

I mean, if you can't find it, it's not a big problem. I can go on to Imperial College and have a look around. See what's.

**Interviewer** 3:15:55

Yeah, I don't think it's, I might have just had it on. Yeah, here we go. Dropping it in chat.

**Participant** 3:16:18

Okay.

**Interviewer** 3:16:28

So

**Participant** 3:16:29

Okay.

**Interviewer** 3:16:30

Yeah on there, they have a few ones that they're looking at and the one they have a micro dosing survey study and they even have one where you can, one of the thoughts that I had when you're talking about micro dosing is the idea of the placebo effect and whether the belief and knowledge that you're taking a psychedelic is amplifying it, I mean, it seems quite likely and they have a way of a programme where they can set up someone's you can follow their instructions and actually do your own self blinding experiment. So, I haven't had a look through how they go about doing that but that's one way to test if you're particularly interested and want to supply information to them, you can actually self-blind yourself, run the test on yourself, and then find out later, oh, I felt really good that day and actually, it turns out, I took a placebo, or I actually only felt good. On the days I took a micro dose or you know, I'm more accurate, you know, 80% of the time I knew I was taking the dose and 20% of time I was wrong and that those sort of ideas give you a good sense of like, how much of it is just the expectations, the your own mind, and beliefs around how it helps you and how much of it Is there's something, actually some physical process that's shifting in some way?

**Participant** 3:17:56

Yeah. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 3:17:58

So that's, that's a way so there's lots of information online? I'm sure you've read plenty. Is there, I don't know if you have any. Are you looking for any particular information at the moment, because I might be able to direct you because I've had to research quite a bit? So, maybe I've come across something.

**Participant** 3:18:24

I can't think of anything specific. I just tend to hop on the internet, YouTube and see what kind of pops up in front of me and keep following the links but if anything does come up, would you be okay, if I emailed you and said, do you know anything about this, or that?

**Interviewer** 3:18:43

Yeah, for sure. Like, you're more than welcome to email me in the future. If you want to talk again, in the future, more informally, we can set something up like that, like, part of this, of course, is the study and part of this is just connecting with people it's like you don't build a psychedelic community without meeting people talking to people building connections.

**Participant** 3:19:08

Absolutely.

**Interviewer** 3:19:09

So, yeah.

**Participant** 3:19:11

Okay.

**Interviewer** 3:19:12

So just feel free to send me an email if you feel like it.

**Participant** 3:19:18

Okay, will do will do.

**Interviewer** 3:19:20

Alrighty.

**Participant** 3:19:21

Great, okay. Thank you so much, Andrew and listen, I wish you all the very best with your thesis.

**Participant** 3:19:27

Thank you.

**Participant** 3:19:28

I really look forward to reading it and once again, thank you for being patient and, you know, being able to hold those little difficult moments that we had, but thank you very much.

**Interviewer** 3:19:43

You're really welcome, [Interviewee] and again, thank you as well. I very much enjoyed this.

**Participant** 3:19:48

Great.

**Interviewer** 3:19:49

All right.

**Participant** 3:19:49

All right. Bye bye

**Interviewer** 3:19:51

bye.