10. Interview with Participant 10

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**Spoken duration of interview:** Participant (80%), Interviewer (20%)

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

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

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

**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

psychedelics, experience, ayahuasca, ego, feel, psychedelic experience, understand, substances, aspects, question, bit, challenging, dmt, thought, helped, working, day, world, challenges, find

**Participant** 00:00

Oh, it even tells me. It's very transparent.

**Interviewer** 00:02

It's good. Yeah, I think that the people who design zoom have obviously thought about that be like, well, we probably should, you know, it shouldn't just be a little thing that pops up like you need to hear it. So, that people are Hey, what are you doing? sneaky, so. Right. So, one thing final to note before we start is just to frame, I'm going to be asking a lot about psychedelics, and I just need to kind of define what I mean by psychedelics, and I'm asking you these, to answer questions related to it. So, for the purposes of this study, what we mean when we're asking about your psychedelic experiences as experiences where you've used things such as LSD, psilocybin, DMT, Ayahuasca, mescaline, Iboga, and any of their sort of analogues, so you might use 1p-LSD, we might use 5-MeO-DMT, or some, you know, different analogues of the mescaline 2-CB I think is mescaline analogue, I'm not too sure. I'm not fully out there on the research chemical side of it. That's like a whole other area really but some of the substances that people would put into the psychedelic box that we would like you to try and exclude if you've had experiences with them, or when you're talking about your reasons for using or the effects of psychedelics, when we asking about that is cannabis, MDMA, or Ecstasy, Ketamine and salvia, if you've used these, if you'd be able to sort of exclude them from when I'm asking questions, so it's not about your MDMA experiences or your ketamine or salvia even though I think there's some good reasons how like this, the experiences of some of these substances do overlap across different kind of affects you can have from psychedelics and so the borders are not, you know, like fixed and, you know, the definitely, I'm not saying they aren't psychedelics, but just for the purposes of this, we're kind of focusing on those core classical type of psychedelic experiences. So, most people so far have been either, you know, LSD, psilocybin, or DMT. For the most part but yeah, plenty of people have definitely done ketamine and MDMA and cannabis. So, yeah, if you can exclude the cannabis, MDMA, ketamine and salvia and include the LSD, psilocybin, DMT, Ayahuasca, mescaline, Iboga, and any of their analogues that is the frame we're looking through here.

**Participant** 00:14

Cool.

**Q1. Interviewer** 00:15

All right. So, first question starts nice and broad. Why do you use psychedelics?

**Participant** 00:22

So, today, as of today, I use them for first and foremost for reflection, introspection for as a part of an almost like a personal therapeutic programme for myself. They, and that's sort of, that's often solo. So, I will probably more often than not have them solo than with groups. Yeah, so, or actually, no, maybe No, I'd say it's probably half and half. Half the time I might be solo and half the time I might be with a group of people. Depends on depends on the substance, actually, to be honest and so yeah, primarily, I find it intriguing, to reflect not only on internal dynamics of myself, my state, my psychology, how I view the world, but it also has that externalising aspect of understanding more about the world that we inhabit and understanding the deeper layers or the layers behind the worlds that we that we often take for granted or we don't actually see a lot of and so it expands. It expands my understanding of the world. I live in. As well as the world within. So, primarily, that is, that is the main reason for using psychedelics. The other reason which is secondary is recreationally, however those occasions tend to be fewer and far between and only in particular settings. So, I guess we are I can understand the boundaries and where those can be negotiated. So, I've, I think early on, I had experiences with, say mushroom, I remember taking mushrooms and going out to a club, and it was terrible. Like it was just kind of felt sick and like it just wasn't good. So, recreationally. It's, it can be used definitely, with a little with a little bit of social with a little bit of social time with a smaller group of people particularly, or preferably somewhere connected to or close with nature. Where boundaries can be managed, as well and the purpose of that is partly social, partly for enjoyment. Yeah, actually that probably defines my recreational use.

**Q2. Interviewer** 06:16

Just writing down some notes on the things that you're saying it's useful for me to, because I can have a look back at them as we talk but also, I find some people find it helpful just to have a space where it doesn't feel like you need to keep talking. So, it's like I'm writing. You can sit there and maybe more thoughts come up, and you can just share them as they come. Yeah and have the reasons why you use psychedelics changed over time.

**Participant** 07:33

Yeah, absolutely. I think psychedelics I never understood properly. I just had lumped them in with drugs, basically, you know, I didn't think they I couldn't, couldn't have separated them. By definition, like I don't like, I obviously hadn't had very many hadn't had very many experiences with psychedelics, the classic psychedelics that you've mentioned there until I was 28. So, I'm 30 now, so really, only two years ago, I actually, I was like, Oh, shit. Wow, that, you know, that's incredible. Okay, this is, uh, you know, I'm onto something now and so, yeah, absolutely. I think I took them very unintentionally, as you would with a lot of other drugs, I think in the beginning and in settings which were familiar with many other sort of cocktails of drugs, like going to party or going to a club and those weren't satisfying experiences.

**Interviewer** 08:42

And what how did you make the shift? How, so you said it has changed from that. What, what moved was there just a particular experience that allowed it or even in recreational party sort of settings, you may be recognised uses in other ways, or like, what, what how did that occur?

**Participant** 09:17

You know, I didn't definitely I think when you're at a party or you're around, so much, so much stimuli. When the stimuli is so heavy, you don't have a lot of mental space to, to, to even consider the experience or consider another paradigm to view the experience. So, it actually it actually changed for me when I went to Costa Rica, and I went to a Ayahuasca retreat in Costa Rica and it was actually that was suggested by my dad. So, I actually didn't have I didn't have. He had heard about it through some, some podcasts. I think it was Joe Rogan, of course was Joe Rogan.

**Interviewer** 10:06

of course.

**Participant** 10:13

of course, and so he had been listening to him and suggested that we go to Costa Rica. So, yeah, so I had an experience with Ayahuasca, which I didn't even almost Yes, it was kind of, it sort of seemed separate to all of that, because the context was so different and it really just introduced me into a completely different way of viewing psychedelics, but I would just say, plants and plant medicine generally and working in a very specific therapeutic oriented paradigm, with facilitators with a designated space with a very, very strongly reflective orientation with intentionality, which at the start, I thought ohh, you know, I didn't really take seriously I was like, so it'll be interesting to see what happens and, and then after that, after that week, I was like, ah, life is quite different. Now, I sort of understand something quite different now about how this about how these substances can be used. So, yeah, it was really it was really an experience and a space that was designed for reflection and, and for therapy, in a sense.

**Interviewer** 11:56

And you did that with your dad? Like he was there participating as well?

**Participant** 12:09

Yeah, he was. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 12:13

And how was like, how was that doing it with your dad? Did that add another layer to it?

**Participant** 12:20

Yeah, I mean, it's, he had done it before. So, somewhere in New Zealand, he had done it, but that this was a complete, you know, this was very well managed, and it was run by the Shaman were from Shipibo lineage, if you're familiar.

**Interviewer** 12:40

I am.

**Participant** 12:42

that's good, had a very specific cultural container. So, his experience was also unique, although he had a he had worked with the medicine before so. So, yeah, it was it was a it was a really great opportunity for us to connect in ways that we hadn't connected as well or that we wouldn't connect on. You know, we're living in different countries, different places. It was it was it was great. It was sort of an adventure to really go over there and do that and I'm very grateful for him almost suggesting it because it’s catapulted my, my energy into a completely different space than it has been prior to that whole experience.

**Interviewer** 13:41

And the Ayahuasca retreat or ceremonies, was it multiple over two weeks a week? What was the sort of period that that occurred in?

**Participant** 13:53

Yeah, yeah, so it was it was just a week that we were there. There were four ceremonies. I have since travelled to Peru and, and gone to another centre and done some more work over a couple of weeks, at centres in Peru. So, yeah, so I've so I've had quite a bit of experience now working with Ayahuasca in those in those contexts. Yeah.

**Q3. Interviewer** 14:23

Cool. Okay. I think we've spoken to this, but the question is, how did you first start using psychedelics?

**Participant** 14:43

Yeah, I think it was, I had, I had a friend who had mushrooms and we will all suggest to the we, you know, have some mushrooms before we go out to a club which was a terrible idea. Yeah, that’s literally how it how it how them I'd say the first experience I had with them, yeah.

**Interviewer** 15:07

And did you use it multiple times after that in a similar manner?

**Participant** 15:16

I would say for you, maybe 2,3,4 times. Yeah. Minimal.

**Interviewer** 15:24

And was it all mushrooms or that max have said mushrooms and LSD and whatnot?

**Participant** 15:30

Just mushrooms? Yep.

**Q4. Interviewer** 15:32

Okay. So, what aspects of psychedelics do you find most meaningful or valuable?

**Participant** 15:56

Look, I think predominantly is different paradigms for viewing a problem, a theme, an idea, an issue, something in front of you something inside of you provides a new way of considering things that are going on in your world and around you. That sort of, the, the sort of it does allow you to see sort of an inherent beauty as well in the world around you and tap into tap into something which we seem to be immune to, or sort of, almost don't stop to recognise and be grateful for. So, it does it does help me to connect and be a little more present. To be to feel, to feel grounded, I would say afterwards, during Of course, there's so there's so much going on but it's such an experience, where you just I prefer to have you know, very few stimuli around because it really allows you to navigate and go and go deeper inside yourself or, or into something around you if you focus your attention on something so yeah, but look, primarily, I would say, new ways of understanding the world.

**Q5. Interviewer** 18:09

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

**Participant** 18:18

Hmm. I find is this in relation to, for example, just the experience itself, or are you talking about for example? One thing I do find challenging as is I find it quite energy consuming to educate people about psychedelics and sort of not justify what I do, but to, you know, go through that process, but I don't know if that's the right context for the question.

**Interviewer** 19:04

Yeah, that's a good question. So, really, it's quite broad in terms of how you'd interpret it, I would say it's definitely asking about if you have multiple ways in which it's challenging, I'd love to hear all of them. So, certainly within the experience itself, what particular aspects of going through a psychedelic trip, are difficult or challenging, but also, if you have social cultural context, you know, interacting with people, the law, da da da da, the difficulties that are sort of surround psychedelic use, that's also worth going into.

**Participant** 19:40

Cool, awesome, I can go all levels alright. So, yeah, look, I find it challenging to, to, to connect the dots for someone around what the substances and how I can how I use it in a way which I feel is respectful, and the beneficial, respectful to the plant, but also beneficial for my own for my own personal development. When someone's locked into, you know, the idea of thinking that you're just going off and getting high basically to have fun. So, I do, I do find it tiring to, to, to be around people who don't, who don't necessarily have an understanding of the various contexts in which psychedelics can be used, I find myself connecting a little more readily with people who are open to thinking about it in new ways or who have experienced it themselves. That's, that's a social, it's a social challenge there's obviously a bit of stigma.

**Interviewer** 20:57

So, I just one question on that. You're saying it's challenging to sort of explain it to these people? Is that more is that when you're coming, explain to people who have a sort of like negative resistance towards what you're saying, like, is it challenging in the same sense, if you're talking to someone who's just has no understanding about it, but is interested in open to the ideas?

**Participant** 21:21

I think you've got people who, sort of like your modern day, social justice warriors who think, who have, who have less of a nuanced way of understanding the world and so they tend to, it's drugs equals bad basically, the drugs, drugs equals bad people, which are hard to hard to connect with and also, I would say, the subsection of people who are frequent drug users themselves, but have used psychedelics multiple times but only in party, kind of recreational type contexts and with multiple other substances and so they've not really seen, they almost don't believe you that you've had the ability to have these sorts of experiences, almost like you're making it up because they haven't had that experience with the same substance. So, it's those scenarios, I think, when someone just doesn't know anything, I, I really, I don't mind, I don't mind sharing what I have to what I have to share, because they tend to be open to, and I'm never pushing I'm never pushing an agenda of, you know, come and take some mushrooms with me, you know, so I don't feel like it's, I don't feel like it's something that I have to go out and advocate for but I but I, but I think it's people who yeah the drugs equals bad people, and it's the people who are also frequent drug users where substance is actually an issue, I have a very close friend who, who I actually didn't realise held this belief until I had a conversation with him a couple of weeks ago and, and he was he's, but he's a previous alcoholic. He was worried about, he's worried about actually taking substances because he's been to the whole AA programme and substances characterised in a very specific container, in an AA and so, you know, mushrooms equals substance to become addicted to, for example and so it was interesting for him, I kind of had to, I had to dial it back and come back to like some basics to show them how it wasn't like a substance you're going to get addicted to and go to mushrooms anonymous. So, so. So, yeah, look, those are challenges. They're good challenges to have as someone who you know, is interested in this field, and needs to talk about it, we need to become literate in it, but I but I do find social, I've found. I've, I've found my experiences to be quite quickly disregarded by some of the drugs equals bad people and the people who are regular drug, regular drug users, I would say who haven't had those kinds of experiences.

**Participant** 24:30

Other challenges experienced. Look, I think culturally still, it's I find it taboo to talk about. I worked in corporate companies and I left my corporate job last year and I couldn't really talk about what I really, really wanted to go and do. I kind of had to give a had to give a which was, you know, potentially working with psychedelics and psychology together. So, I found, so I found the departure process a little inauthentic, because I didn't feel like I was able to share completely what direction I was moving in and why and, and so that that's just the nature of I guess, you know, professionalism and corporate spaces, I, I didn't feel like I was able to be completely open about it yet and it is purely because of the legality of the substance, I think there and also the, you know, to, still taboo, still taboo. Yeah, so those that I would say, the social and cultural types of challenges that I've, that I've thought about the, I would say, just the other challenge is, is, is, of course, just the ineffability of the whole experience, particularly around working with Ayahuasca, when it feels like to a lot of people you're going off to do something a little bit crazy, like you kind of do you have to go to the jungle, and go and go and sit in a retreat for weeks to go and go and learn something new? And so I think it's the, I think I've found that, whilst my experience has been met by a lot of my networks as really interesting and, and I feel like I've been able to communicate the depth and the seriousness and the, the, the weight of the whole experience in the right way. I found a challenge, socially has been almost the degrading of the experience by trying to use words to describe it and the and the, and sort of how, whilst that experience was so special, and so maybe transformative for myself, it can be kind of thrown around by others, as a bit of like, a bit of a joke, or a bit of a like, ah, [name] going to go do that again, you know, so. So, yeah, that that's, that's socially something else that I found slightly, slightly challenging, misunderstood, I think. Yeah.

**Participant** 27:45

I think I'm talking about a lot of the contextual factors there.

**Interviewer** 27:56

Yeah, it's fine.

**Participant** 27:58

If I think about, if I think about the other aspects that are challenging when it comes to psychedelics, I think I definitely think it is. You, you're going to face challenging, challenging moments during the psychedelic experience itself. I have had lots of challenging trips, but none that I ever felt that I was out of my depth to be able to work with. One, one of the things that I've been that I have had before and which I'm conscious of is the sort of literal versus the figurative way in which you come to understand things about yourself or the world. Sometimes I've taken something I've learned or understood from the psychedelic experience, as a as a literal thing, which has mostly turned out to be a mistake and it's taken me a bit more time to dig in and understand what there was really, to that entire, I don't know that entire hallucination or that entire trip or that entire thing that I pulled out of it and sometimes, sometimes it has also just been whimsical and meaningless as well and so, I think one of the challenges of the psychedelic experience is trying to work out well what is what is really important, what is what is less important and also what is just, you know, enjoyable background, what is, you know, It's you could call it, I don't know, sorting the wheat from the chaff in a way of the experience. Now, of course, I could come to value a part of the experience at a later date and there has been some examples where I've clicked at a later time about what something was but on the whole, I think that's been one of the challenges for me has been, you could, you could fall into a, into a rabbit hole, I think quite easily or be convinced that you need to do something, when it's not, you know, it's not really quite some, it's not realistic or practical or pragmatic to really, to really be doing to really be doing that and so that's one that's been one of the challenges that I've worked with, and I sort of have come to understand how to how to navigate now but the other one is, of course, just what resources do you have in order to manage challenging, challenging trips, or bad trips, I guess, other people will call them I am a believer that there are no bad trips, and that there are just challenging trips to manage or ones which provide you insight about, about, about yourself, and, and so when I subscribe to this sort of paradigm of learning opportunity, it helps me maximise the benefit from the from the experience that way, I feel like I've only been able to have that. I feel like I've only been able to develop that skill set and those resources for managing the experience through a well-managed retreat, like I was doing with them with the Ayahuasca originally where the container was really right, they did it in such an incredible, caring way. They had great facilitators, there was a, I mean, there was a really strong emphasis on preparation and integration of the experience and support provided afterwards. For both of the both of the centres I went to and I think because of that I've seen how effective it can be done, given the right set and setting but, but also, with careful preparation and careful integration. What you can really take from the experience, yeah. So, challenging, yeah, they were challenging moments where I was just like God, like, get me out of here but, you know, it's, it's part of the experience is facing, facing some of your fears or coming into contact with some of your fears.

**Participant** 32:56

So, so, ultimately, those challenges are good challenges to have at the end of the day and actually, if you don't want to, if you don't want challenge, then you probably shouldn't have psychedelics in those contexts.

**Interviewer** 33:15

That's potentially what the recreational scene is for.

**Participant** 33:21

I think so. To be like the feeling of it, but, you know, without the intention. I'm, I'm yeah, I think intention is really key to my experiences these days, even. Even if it's smoking cannabis is having an intention. Whilst I don't always remember to do it, I know it's important to be clear about the intent of the use of a particular substance. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 34:03

You mentioned this idea of the misinterpretation of the literal versus the figurative and I wonder if you could speak a little more to that and expand on that idea and sort of clarify what you mean by it.

**Participant** 34:20

Yeah, for sure. Um, so yeah, no there’s a number of examples I could use. So, I had an experience, was actually working with Ayahuasca where I was shown a lot of a lot of females, a lot of also like female nudity. So, I'm gay as context. So, that was really confusing to come into contact with something that I wasn't necessarily attracted to, so, I sort of had an experience which was around femininity but you know, the female form I, part of me at the at the moment was like, oh, maybe I'm not, maybe I'm not gay, you know, I took I took it so literally and later came to realise or how I've interpreted it now, as rather than you're somewhere along the Kinsey scale that you need to know you need to figure it out. Now I've interpreted it as connecting with connecting with my femininity or connecting with my, my feminine, my feminine nature, it was a little part of the part of the experience also showed me having a baby with a woman, so, you know, this kind of classic familial type role, which in my mind was something very far away but again, I've reconnected with the idea of connecting with, with the divine feminine or feminine nature, or the feminine aspects of, of myself understanding that we are all both masculine and feminine but actually accepting and embracing the feminine aspect of myself. So, that's a that's a great example of like, the literal and the sort of, like, sort of oh shit moment, but then going, Oh, no, hold on, like, peel it back a bit.

**Interviewer** 36:50

Can I ask? Was there a sexual side to the visions of the naked woman when you were seeing it? Was like, Ooh, that's nice in a that sort of desirable way?

**Participant** 37:02

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, it was, it was it was. It was titillating. I would say if I was to use a word to describe it, yeah. Um, so that's how I've rationalised it now, and I haven't detected any kind of change in my attraction either. So, I'm like, I'm don't, I would think I'm the same as I was, when I went into that experience, it hasn't changed me, or it hasn't revealed something that wasn't there but as I later reconciled with, with a therapist talking about it, there like, well, you can, you can view this in so many different ways, possibly. There's so many ways to think about this and, and one of the suggestions offered up was this idea of connecting with the feminine, which has also come into future connecting with femininity and connecting with which I've actually connected to connecting with Mother Earth, we often talk about the feminine nature of the land, or you know, you have, yeah, Mother Earth or Pachamama and in so part it was also it could be about a grounding the sort of the feminine aspect of the grounding and the reconnecting with nature as well. So, that's how I've that's how I've actually rationalise something which had the potential to cause quite a bit of confusion, you know, in someone else that would have, you know, caused a bit of confusion, I'm sure as well, but I felt like I had the resources to connect the dots and, and understand it.

**Interviewer** 38:57

One thing that I try and drill down on a little bit is you were talking about challenge. So, I was asking about challenging aspects of psychedelics and you, you've mentioned a number of them, but I, you, you spoke a few times about you sort of said the trip was challenging, but I think one of the things you mentioned is coming into contact and facing your fears, is there any like is there are you able to categorise might not be the best word but let or label but like, certain aspects that are challenging, so facing fears might be one of them. physical sensations or dealing with other people, you know, is there to like, get more clarity around? What's inside that? What do you what do you, because challenging is, we just yet kind of circular explanation. If you say the trip is challenging because it's challenging. So, I'm just yeah, if you've got anything to share, there.

**Participant** 40:00

Yeah, so the, depending on the dosage and depending on how much you've eaten and all of that there is an aspect of pure physical intensity, like the physical sensation of being in the body is can be challenging can feel overwhelming a little bit. By, for example, I actually just had acid, probably five days ago, it was the first time I had had acid for a couple of years. I don't have it very much, but it was a really great example of it was quite a strong dose, the physical sensation was so overwhelming. Almost orgasmic to be honest, like, it was quite like all just like, relentless, but it was, it rendered you incapable of like your mind is kind of firing all over the place, because it rendered you incapable of physically shifting yourself anywhere else but you just had, you just had to experience it because you were just so it was just throughout your entire body. I remember working with working with Ayahuasca, the first time I remember, leaning back seat, I was seated up, I was feeling extremely nauseous, just leaning back and feeling in the maloca this kind of like, this wave, this constant like wave, and it was the waves were getting bigger and this wave of energy and I was just like, I was just like, I just don't know when this is going to stop. So, yeah, the physical sensation can be, can be, that can be a challenging aspect. I, for example, with working with Ayahuasca don't really, I don't really enjoy feeling nauseous. So, my preference is just like, vomit, get it out of the way, or, or try and sort of manage the nausea. So, so yeah, the, I'd say the nausea, which sometimes accompanies the substances can be challenging and fits into that sort of physical discomfort. I think there's been nothing that has come up, which I feel really grateful for that is challenging because of the nature of the content.

**Participant** 42:42

In terms of I have nothing, nothing that I didn't understand about myself, already, or is it was a surprise to me emerged but things emerged, which I sort of thought were issues or maybe had addressed, but wasn't that sure, but then I came up with, ohh okay, no that's the thing I need to think about this. So, I haven't had any surprising content come up, which has really hit me for six. I've, I've had content which has come up which has made me think about things in different in different ways. So, the I think the challenge, yeah and it comes to this, the challenge of discernment, discerning what is what has been almost communicated to your what your understanding from the experience versus what can kind of be sorted out or what is also just kind of background or enjoyable kind of visuals or feelings or? Yeah, yeah. I haven't had when I've been with one of the challenges because well, actually, last week, I was at a festival, and had some of some of the acid, one of the challenges I had there, which was very specific to the festival environment and it wasn't, it did have a party aspect but it was during the day, and it was in nature and it was separate, but was the negotiation of boundaries when there's lots and lots of other people. So, I found that challenging that to have quite a strong experience where boundaries were kept changing and that actually left me a little unsettled naturally as it would but yeah, that's so I definitely have a preference for environments where I can actively manage the boundaries, understand health and safety implications, etc.

**Interviewer** 44:53

Could you speak to that a little bit more I'm curious as to the boundary negotiation what was happening there? What were the boundaries were set, and then they evolved over the course of the trip?

**Participant** 45:07

Yeah, so, I mean, we had located a specific little space within, within a forest and it was right near a stream. What we hadn't realised, even though we had consumed, you know, taking some LSD really was, was that it was going to be used as a thoroughfare for people to walk up and down the stream to sort of adventure about and whilst they didn't do it, you know, it wasn't like there's someone walking past every second, every five or 10 minutes, someone or a group of people might walk past. So, you can't actively manage the energies that are in the space. You also this the unpredictability of what was going to happen. Left kind of was challenging to manage in that moment and also meant that I couldn't completely go inwards or completely decompress, or, or dive in, because there was stuff happening in the external environment that was unpredictable. So, I guess it's just about what is the what is the container you’re in? And is the container secure? The container wasn't secure. Not that it was an overall bad experience. There's definitely, you know, I think that wasn't for the for the beginner, beginner psychedelic user and I can definitely take interesting stuff away from that, but it was one of the first environments where I had had something during the day and it was going to be around multiple people, even though it was in this nature, and it was it was daytime. The boundaries did keep shifting and the energies would, you know, this of like you had to we were so close to the, to the thoroughfare that we felt that we had to acknowledge people as they went past, even if we were, you know, really going through something. So, so yeah, so that was that was that was challenging. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 47:19

Fair enough. Yeah. The maintenance or the container is very important. Definitely.

**Participant** 47:27

Yeah and it also. Yeah, that's it. That's right. You want the you want to know that the container, you know, you want to know what to expect, I think. Some people are a little more open to those to those other energies. It again, it depends completely what your intention is, when you're when you're going into those experiences, I think.

**Q6. Interviewer** 47:53

Yeah. Yeah. Okay, moving on. So, this question starts broad, and then there's a number of, sort of, depending on how you answer it, I might not ask all of them, but they get into a little more specific of this question. So, firstly, it is in what ways have psychedelics affected your life?

**Participant** 48:24

I think they've helped me to be more present and in my day to day non-ordinary states of consciousness. It has, it has definitely coincided with for me the last two years with a lot more reflection work in the form of maybe journaling, working with therapists and, and also just doing a lot of my own work, I would say it's, it's actually it's coincided with also a reinvigorated sense of wonder about the world and a thirst for learning. A thirst for understanding the deeper dynamics of the world and so it's sort of no, it's no real jump then to, to, for me to basically say, I'm going to leave my nice paying job and move back and become a poor student again and study what I really want to do follow my passion rather than rather than do something else. So, it's coincided with a big career shift for me, basically. Yeah, I think this sort of thirst for thirst for learning and a desire for also, Oh, actually, I would say, a clarity over what's important in life predominantly in the ability to connect with, myself and others a little more easily.

**Interviewer** 50:45

Do you think there's any sense in which this connection with other people is that a sort of limited subset? Like, are you? Have you distanced yourself away from types in certain specific people or types of people and more towards another? So, is it a kind of general connection to all people or is it more like a shift towards a particular kind of person?

**Participant** 51:15

Yeah, good question. I'd also to stay at, this is probably a nice, a nice one to tie in as well. It's coincided with basically, I just don't drink alcohol anymore. So, I'm just I'm almost, I'm almost completely sober. I mean, I have it every now and then but, but it has coincided with a reduction and the consumption of, of alcohol for me. Yeah, in terms of specific subsets. Yeah, I think as you as you come to know, yourself, better and understand a lot more about yourself, you can act in accordance with, with yourself and your and your and your values. It also means I realised, you know, I had realised through the process, I say this, like as a past version of me, and of course, there's this whole journey that we're all on and, you know, you never leave this part of yourself, but you there's this awareness that you have over it and there's an aspect of me, which is also very New Zealand thing is the people pleasing is the people pleaser and so this concept of being acceptable to many people, and so, actually, I think what it's what it's done is probably helps me to be authentic, and connect with the people who, who are important to me, or who share similar values to me and has allowed me to have the comfort to discard relationships in my life that were perhaps not serving me, or which the return on investment really, really actually wasn't there. Yeah.

**Q6a. Interviewer** 53:25

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

**Participant** 53:35

Yeah, yeah, it has. I'm I think I'm a lot more open. I'm a lot more open to diversity and diverse experiences. I think I I'm more emotional, which actually helps me to connect with people. I think it's helped me to build to, to build empathy, with others an increased sense of empathy. Sorry, what was the question? What was the question again?

**Interviewer** 54:28

The question was has your personality or identity being shaped by your psychedelic use?

**Participant** 54:36

Yeah, the other thing that I just add is that I do feel that I am more open to risk taking now. So, I think I was a little more risk averse and I think I've been brought up to be quite risk averse. I've always been quite careful, quite considered and working with psychedelics has allowed me I think it's this concept of when you're grounded and you understand yourself well enough, you're able to go into the world knowing that you have something to come back to and so that sort of that sensitivity to the risks of a situation has been, it's still there, but there's a part of me that has probably in, you know, shot from the hip a little bit more and, you know, gone and done something a little bit more. Something that maybe myself two years ago wouldn't go and do for fear of something or being seen a certain way for it. Here's a great example. I remember, in my mid-20s, walking through a park and looking at these people doing Tai Chi and thinking, God, I don't think I could ever do Tai Chi that looks quite embarrassing doing it in front of all these people. Last year, I was I did a, I went to this to school. It's a school of practical philosophy. So, it's philosophy, but sort of made quite simple and accessible for lots of different people and the teacher would run Tai Chi on Saturdays and actually, I ended up just doing that. I was like, Yeah, fuck it looks great. I'm going to do it. You know, it's the having these embodied experiences and being open to new experiences as well. So, I think the openness to new experiences, is thanks to a diminished risk or fear response, which I feel like I've benefited from in the last couple of years. Yeah.

**Q6b. Interviewer** 57:00

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

**Participant** 57:17

I don't, I think it helped me to see where there are inconsistencies with how I have lived my life and what I should be doing. It hasn't required me to go into a complete 180 but it has altered my course in a way where I don't think if I had gone and experienced working with Ayahuasca a couple of years ago, I don't think I would be coming back to New Zealand right now to study and pursue a career which, you know, doesn't have any tangible or reliable kind of income at the end of it. I think it's, I think it's helped me to live more closely in accordance with, with my myself and in my in my values. Yeah. So, long term goals. I think I think it's actually going to, I don't think it's altered my long-term goals, but it's helped me to helps me to live a life where I'll be pursuing a goal. I know, I'm actually rather than sort of, I probably felt that in my 20s, I was blowing where the wind took me rather than rather than maybe taking action towards a certain direction. So, it's given me more purpose. I would say

**Interviewer** 59:12

Would a reasonable conceptualization of what you've said, be that it's helped you to it hasn't changed what you're you necessarily desired or wanted to do but it's potentially reaffirmed and made it more clear or emphasised those things which are sort of deep or true to yourself or aligned with your values.

**Participant** 59:51

Think Yeah, I think I think you're getting at the right stuff there. I think it’s shone a light on the myself and my, my being and my skills, which has been allowed me to reflect on how those are best placed in the environments that I've put myself in, personally, romantically, professionally. Which has then allowed me to sort of shift gears and shift course of shift course of direction. A little bit. Yeah.

**Q6c. Interviewer** 1:00:52

Have psychedelics caused you to seriously question your own beliefs? And that's at both sort of broad scale, you know, religious or spiritual aspects, but and also just on a maybe more mundane, day to day sorts of thoughts and your thoughts or beliefs about kind of what's going on? Or how you think about other people or what you think, you know, just belief is a very general thing. I think so, just Yeah.

**Participant** 1:01:31

I think so sorry, has it caused me to change my beliefs?

**Interviewer** 1:01:38

Yeah ohh, seriously question not necessarily change.

**Participant** 1:01:41

Yeah, critically, consider absolutely. The importance of even having beliefs in the first place. To be honest, I find myself far less attached to beliefs than I may have been in the past. In fact, frustratingly, so for some, maybe I don't find I don't find a great degree of attachment in classic, for example, identity markers, you know, male, gay, New Zealander, they're all sort of descriptive of me to others, but they don't hold a great sense of my ego doesn't really hold on to them. At, all my beliefs in a way. In a way, that means that I'm upset if I need to let go of them. So, I quite enjoy the challenging of beliefs or the critical the critical nature with which psychedelics asked me to question, beliefs and I and identity because I do I lump. Yeah, identity into that as well. Question who we are. Yeah, so. So, yeah, yeah, the answer is definitely, definitely yes. Yeah.

**Q6d. Interviewer** 1:03:26

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

**Participant** 1:03:35

Yeah, yeah, definitely. Yeah, it's helped me to be a lot kinder to myself, to understand, really what I'm going through, to actually listen to my to my body, one of the one of the things I've learned through working with various psychedelics now is that I have a really bad mind body connection. So, I really don't, I don't listen to what my body's telling me or I don't dive into my intuition often enough and so what it's what it's done is given me the space to, to, to dive into, into my intuition and to recognise, for example, emotions or feelings that might be sort of trapped inside or things that I might be experiencing that I haven't given the time to address or process. Yeah.

**Q6e. Interviewer** 1:04:59

You mentioned and something in relation to this, but maybe it touches on some other aspects, but has your psychedelic use affected your use of other drugs?

**Participant** 1:05:10

Yeah, so obviously alcohol is pretty much I just felt it was completely inauthentic. culturally reinforced in New Zealand, very, you know, with such a binge drinking culture, it just felt I actually realised I don't, I don't even enjoy it. So, like, why am I doing it? It was such an inauthentic habit. So, absolutely for alcohol. Look, I think also my use of psychedelics has meant that I don't put myself in a lot of party clubbing scenarios and partly because there's so sort of, or maybe scenario maybe scenarios where there's a lot of just distracting from the world. So, it's sort of like a numbing from the world. I find myself gravitating towards scenarios where, where people are really connecting and finding genuine, genuine connection with one another and those don't tend to be environments characterised by parties, drinking, and then of course, the suite of other substances one might consume in those environments. So, I'd say I might have taken, you know, a bit of MDMA here and there before psychedelics, less so now. Not that I'm not interested understanding I think now the research around MDMA as a sort of psychedelic adjacent and with certain therapeutic benefits in contexts. I'm not closed off to that idea, but certainly, the recreational drug and alcohol use is near gone. I have increased in cannabis use. Yeah, I've been I've increased and cannabis use that is partly for me a just a recreational and actually just in it, and I just enjoy it. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 1:07:48

Yeah, well, there’s nothing wrong with enjoying things and I guess it's, it's just more about so long as you're not enjoying it so much you're putting your long-term health at Jeopardy shouldn't be a problem. If it's not if you're not, then it's not a problem.

**Participant** 1:08:08

That's, it's right. I also I'm unemployed at the moment. So, to be honest, you're speaking to me at quite an uncharacteristic. I'm not studying right now, and I'm also not employed. So, so. I'm going to, I'm going to, I think ordinarily, actually, if you were speaking to me, four months ago, I'll be like, No, I don't smoke weed that much at all. So, actually, yeah, I'd say it's less to do with the psychedelics that increased but more to do with my employment situation. Yeah.

**Q7. Interviewer** 1:08:45

Makes sense. Yeah. For sure. Yeah, I understand that from personal experience as well. It's just you know, become nothing else to do there can it's easy to reach for it as well. Or at least not nothing but required to do less things. Anyways, um, have your psychedelic experiences affected your relationships with significant others and by significant others, that includes things like a partner, but also things like brothers, sisters, parents, family relationships, good friends, stuff like this. So, not just like your significant other.

**Participant** 1:09:41

Mm hmm. Yeah, definitely. Romantically it's, it's given me a lot of affirmation that I'm where I need to be romantically. So, actually when I was first experience experiencing Ayahuasca my, I was seeing a guy at the time and it gave me I was a little bit disillusioned about the relationship, but it gave me a bit of affirmation at the time that that was actually helped me to see him in a completely different light, and helped me to see that this was a necessary part of my part of my development romantically so so, definitely benefited me ultimately, in terms of things that I've brought back to share.

**Participant** 1:10:47

Yeah, it's, it's, um, it's quite complex, funnily enough. It's helped me benefit work, helped benefit work scenarios, there's been times where I've been challenged at work have been challenged quite a few times at work, or where I've been able to conceptualise a challenge that I had at work in a different way, which made it easier to engage with the next time. So, I found that there were benefits interpersonally and for myself for myself in those scenarios in the work setting. With family, it's been, it's been less of a less of a catalyst for evolved interpersonal relations there because they have been living in different countries to me. So, now that I'm back home, they're a little bit closer and there's, I guess, maybe my story might be a bit different from others who work with psychedelics and that I don't feel like I have a, like, a major challenge or a major trauma event which I've been working to overcome but, you know, there's been many layers to, to my upbringing in my childhood, one of them being that I grew up in a very religious background and so part of part of my psychedelic experiences have been diving into the impacts that religiosity has had on my sense of worth, as an individual, and acceptance of self, and how it's also impacted those around me as well but yeah, I think it's a, it's a slightly harder question to answer that one that you asked, but I would say it has benefited me romantically for sure.

**Interviewer** 1:13:00

Are you still in that relationship?

**Participant** 1:13:04

No.

**Interviewer** 1:13:12

Sorry, go ahead.

**Participant** 1:13:15

I mean, I was going to say, actually, the, the, the psychedelic experience helped give me a bit of solace in the fact that I kind of wanted the relationship to go on for I wanted to be committed properly for the long term and it gave me an affirmation that it's okay, for a relationship to be temporary, and that it was going to be temporary and that was that it was only going to be a limited period of time and that actually, it's, it has helped me align my views where just in terms of understanding that relationships don't, don't have to be for a lifetime in order for us to, in order for them to be valuable. People are with us for, for a moment, a season, or a lifetime and, and depending, you know, one's no more no more valuable than the other, necessarily and so it gave me that affirmation, which actually helped me feel very comfortable. I sort of not broke up but sort of we parted ways. When I left last year, and it was the most not easy breakup, but it was a very, it was just, it just felt extremely natural. It was like an inevitability, which was good.

**Q8. Interviewer** 1:14:49

Have psychedelics, I think you've mostly spoken to us, but if anything comes up, just chime in, or we can move to the next question, but have psychedelics change how you think and feel about yourself?

**Participant** 1:15:04

Yeah, yeah, definitely. I think from that point before just about accepting, being a lot kinder to yourself, you realise your, that your ego was so harsh on yourself and is always comparing or is always, always measuring yourself up against others, or will have a constant of negative self-talk about it and so I do, I do think that whilst that is there are aspects of that that are still there psychedelics have helped me be in a space where I can understand. Yeah, I can understand myself a lot. A lot better. Yeah.

**Q9. Interviewer** 1:15:49

Cool. Similar question but sometimes this brings up different things because of how its worded. Have psychedelics changed how you view yourself?

**Participant** 1:16:27

Hmm, well, I think. Yeah, kind of, it's a little bit nuanced, I guess. A bit a bit hard to answer. Yeah, that they have? And I'd say for the same for the same reasons. I've probably mentioned in those previous questions. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 1:16:52

Cool. Yes, the questions are quite similar but for some people, it draws out a different way of thinking about it. So, I've kept them both in there because it for not all people, but for some, it really does get a kind of quite a different answer sometimes.

**Participant** 1:17:11

Yeah, viewing yourself the concept of viewing yourself versus understanding yourself.

**Interviewer** 1:17:17

I think so. The question before, it is like sort of how you think and feel about yourself. So, it's potentially a little bit from like, within and then thinking of yourself from without looking backwards. As if you could do kind of an objective observer on yourself and sometimes that changes the way people answer the question. So, yeah.

**Participant** 1:17:44

I think, I think, I think definitely, in terms of the viewing of myself, I've I do now view myself as having the ability to create anything I want. Whereas I didn't think that was I didn't think that was characteristic of how I viewed myself before, I did feel not some not trapped, but definitely there was a path to follow, there was something to go and you know, there was sort of like a, it was a finite amount of possibility and psychedelics do give me the sensation of well, anything is achievable, actually and it gives me a level of excitement and sort of zest or vitality to go thirst I mentioned a thirst for knowledge before which feeds into all of this is Oh, like you are this person you there is this person scratch the surface underneath and there's someone who's desiring to, to, to go and be in the world and the way that they want to be in the world and define it for themselves rather than have someone else define it.

**Q10. Interviewer** 1:19:13

Have psychedelics provided insights into how to live life well?

**Participant** 1:19:21

Yeah, just sometimes it's really basic stuff. Like, like your mind body connection. It's like just get into your body more. It has definitely I remember, gave me a really random working with Ayahuasca gave me a really very specific thing to go and do it said, that tree that you walk past on the way to work, in the park, go and sit down under it, like go and do it. So, whilst it can be very specific, it's you know, offering suggestions for connecting, connecting with connecting with nature.

**Participant** 1:20:12

It's also it's also, I think, part of the Ayahuasca experiences that working with the diet and the dietary restrictions as well and the concept of nourishing your body and what you put into your body as well has been an aspect of that, which has been a benefit of going through the process of the of the preparation and the integration of that of those experiences but I've definitely, you know, it's given me an appreciation for the, for the potential for food as a nourishing and as a nourishing experience for your body giving back to your body as well. Yeah, yes, there's been like specific little wellbeing type nuggets, I feel like I've got from Ayahuasca specifically.

**Interviewer** 1:21:10

Would you link the nourishing aspect to something you learned in the Ayahuasca ceremonies or what I Ayahuasca sort of lends itself as a guide or was that interpreted to the container? So, the more the retreat and the whole setup?

**Participant** 1:21:33

Yeah, I think it's the I think it's the retreat, the setup, that that was that specifically for the diet, nutritional aspects, Yeah. I'd say the connection with nature, aspects and the connection with body and mind is come through the psychedelic experience, specifically.

**Q11. Interviewer** 1:22:11

Have psychedelics shaped your worldview?

**Participant** 1:22:14

Yeah, in the sense that they have made me interested in understanding the nature of the world and have rendered me open to other views. I don't think I have a rigid worldview. Although some others may challenge me on that. My worldview, I guess, I struggle to talk about what my what my world view is, it's definitely, for example, provided a lot of insight, particularly when working with Ayahuasca in terms of Western paradigms and what Western paradigms have, and living in Western cultures has in terms of, say, for example, consumerism, or capitalism. It's provided commentary on environmental type issues. So, I'd say I'm a little more and sustainability-oriented issues. For example, I actually don't, I don't eat I probably eat half as much meat as I used to prior to prior to working with psychedelics. So, it's changed my world, yeah changed my worldviews in those respects and one, one other, it's helped me understand the deeper dynamics of religion and ideologies, but not necessarily made me subscribe to a particular ideology. In fact, as mentioned before, I feel quite unattached to ideology. Yeah, yeah.

**Q12. Interviewer** 1:24:45

Have psychedelics changed your relationship with nature?

**Participant** 1:24:52

Yeah, definitely. I think just a just a deeper appreciation for being a nature, also for growing up in a country where nature is quite abundant, which has been part of the excitement to return here. I have marvelled often in the psychedelic experience at the, the symbiosis or the sort of relationship oriented way in which the ecosystem operates and whilst I don't have I'm not a biologist, and I don't understand the in depth aspects of our ecosystem, it has given me a greater appreciation for the world, I think, for everything beyond the ego or the self, actually.

**Q13. Interviewer** 1:26:25

So, the questions are changing a little direction now. So, it's going more into your, how you use psychedelics, then necessarily their effects that they've had on you or your life or your thoughts, or beliefs or things like this. So, the first one is, how do you prepare yourself for a psychedelic trip?

**Participant** 1:26:50

So, substance dependent, but if I'm thinking about some of the commonalities, maybe between the mushroom and the Ayahuasca experiences, mushrooms being the ones, which I would probably use more frequently, most frequently outside of the ceremonial Ayahuasca context. So, I write down my intention before I have these substances, or at least I meditate on it or I, or I provide mental space to consider it. I prepare the container. So, I'm so there are special things I might, you know, make it comfortable. Comfort is one aspect. I understand the boundaries, as mentioned before, with which it's going to take place minimise potential for disruption, which obviously was hard last week at this festival. I, I have an appropriate playlist. So, music is a really important part of the experience and so using music, which can enhance the experience is really important. In fact, having worked with DMT a little bit that is an extremely, extremely important part of that process. I found I found the whole DMT experience to be completely changed by just the audio there. I will also often have some kind of aroma, candle, some kind of fresh air and some somewhere close to nature ideally as well. Yeah, play in a place that's a little more open rather than closed and yeah, that’s probably a good way to characterise it. Hey, I actually I do need to go to the loo do you mind if I just pop up for a couple of minutes?

**Interviewer** 1:29:20

Go for it not a problem.

**Participant** 1:29:22

Yeah. Cool.

**Interviewer** 1:29:23

I'll just pause the recording.

**Q14. Interviewer** 1:29:29

And that I'll ask that one again. That would be a bummer if I forgot that. Where do you normally take psychedelics and why do you take them there?

**Participant** 1:29:46

Home is just easiest. It's, you can control just so much more variables. So, it's just it's just that easy to do it. Depends of course, where you live and how comfortable and easy it is to do it but otherwise, a dedicated retreat space is my ideal scenario, that's that is connected or close to nature somewhere and of course, the alternative for recreational use is maybe away on holiday at some kind of more remote house or some other location that is on private land with a small group of people and then as was the case last week, a festival space where there is the possibility to leave quite an intense social, high stimuli environment.

**Interviewer** 1:31:01

And I guess it just depends on the intention as to which one would be the optimal choice or what you feel like doing in those situations?

**Participant** 1:31:13

It's sort of to be honest, it's around. I mean, I would my preference would be to rather than take it here at home would be to be in a safe space in nature. Somewhere close to the nature but it's just having those options available. I don't think I've probably had those options available in the past being in New Zealand that might change, yeah.

**Interviewer** 1:31:42

it's lovely in New Zealand, we don't have any killer animals. So, you can.

**Participant** 1:31:47

That’s exactly the thing I was thinking as of last week at the festival I was like, I can walk around barefoot here, it's fine. I'm, I'm grateful for that, yeah no, I the amount of times I've come across something which you just wouldn't want to you definitely wouldn't want to be intoxicated whilst coming across. Ahh yeah, I'm very grateful for that.

**Q15. Interviewer** 1:32:21

You've probably mentioned to this but if there's any ones other things that come up, are you more than welcome to mention them. So, the question is, are there any items that are important to have with you when tripping?

**Participant** 1:32:39

I do like to have my journal just in case something comes up. Yeah, I would say some audio type device but in terms of something which is sentimental. I have some I don't have a specific sentimental item that I might that I might take along. I might wear something which a have obtained from my Ayahuasca travels somewhere. Yeah.

**Q16. Interviewer** 1:33:35

How do you prepare the space where you take psychedelics?

**Participant** 1:33:43

So, maximising for yeah minimal disruption, comfort maximising for having multiple options around so ensuring water, blindfold, earplugs if need be, but also the ability to be maybe a few steps away from nature, if I need if I want to go and do that as well. So, it's, it's about not being locked into a space about having the potential for multiple options during a trip. Yeah, yeah.

**Q17. Interviewer** 1:34:48

Are there any other preparations you make prior to taking a psychedelic that might not have been covered so far?

**Participant** 1:35:01

No, I think it's just trying to identify where on earth I would have time to do it, to be honest. Sometimes I might plan it a week in advance, and sometimes it might be opportune, and I go, Oh, well, actually, I've got free time. Just because I'm unemployed now doesn't mean I'm doing it lots. To be honest but yeah, I think it is just having the planning aspect.

**Q18. Interviewer** 1:35:42

What do you normally doing physically during a psychedelic trip?

**Participant** 1:35:47

I'm normally lying down. I do I have, compared to other people, my trips tend to be relatively physical. So, I might engage in shaking or movement and so having some physical space, you know, not having stuff close by that I'm going to knock or to tip over is helpful. Yeah, yeah, that's, that's typically what I'm doing. I'm not necessarily engaging in an activity. It's quite, it's generally laying down and quite still, if not moving yeah.

**Interviewer** 1:36:37

A question that sort of jumps back to one of the other ones. When you're doing using psychedelics outside of the retreat ceremony context. Are you doing it mostly during the day, a mix of day and night? Do you have a preference there?

**Participant** 1:37:01

I have done it in the day, mostly in the past rather than at night. In terms of preference, though, and it depends on the substance. I mean, mushrooms is a lot more manageable with LSD, you kind of don't really have an option because it goes on for so long. So, I do like I do, like, I do enjoy psychedelics during the day, because you the light is quite interesting. You I mean, you can look at so many more things. I think if you particularly if you're closer to nature, yeah.

**Q19. Interviewer** 1:37:52

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

**Participant** 1:38:05

I mean, definitely the mobile phone, like it's kind of kept away and that connection with time. So, having a watch around is generally not that great. So, I'd like to tuck the phone away, tuck the watch away, time kind of becomes a little bit irrelevant. Think other things that you don't want to do that you don't want to deal with, I mean, things that may come up, or you know, that you can manage beforehand. For example, when I was living in a shared house over in Australia, I would tell one of the flatmates that I was going to do it so that I was going to have a mini ceremony in a way so that they wouldn't come into my room to ask me questions or so it's that minimising of minimising of disruption, I think. Yeah and then, really, you're kind of if you're in your own space, you're you are quite cut off. Yeah.

**Q20. Interviewer** 1:39:31

Is there anything special you do after a psychedelic trip?

**Participant** 1:39:39

A lot of the time I'll write a journal about it. I'll probably eat after because I'm hungry.

**Interviewer** 1:39:51

Is there fasting involved when you use psychedelics?

**Participant** 1:39:57

Beforehand, I will have a lighter meal. I won't have a massive meal beforehand. Yeah. So, but no, no fasting necessarily and, and afterwards, you just you do I do just take it really easy on that day like, I don't do anything, I don't do anything. I don't have a commitment basically like I don't have to get somewhere by a time like this kind of everything just kind of flows. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 1:40:43

And then in terms of no commitments, is there Is that mostly just for the day off or do you have space either side of the experience that you set aside?

**Participant** 1:40:56

Yeah, I think it's just the day of I think working and studying as I have been, it's been unrealistic to have time either side and I'm you feel I feel completely regular the next day. To be honest. It's entirely possible to have a day experience and then even actually do something in the evening if I want to, but no, like it I generally it's just the day.

**Q21. Interviewer** 1:41:22

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

**Participant** 1:41:36

Definitely breathwork is a really big one. I have been through many experiences where the facilitators particularly in the Ayahuasca ceremonies where I've had the facilitators sit with me and just focus on breath, breathing in the right way and so I find the breath, a common tool to revert to in times that are challenging. Other tools and techniques. I think, I think coming to the point I made before about the sort of literal versus the figurative interpretation of what's occurring, the sort of the, the understanding that, you know, I, whilst I may be feeling that way, that sort of reserving of action, until there's been a proper integration or digestion of that information, following the session, so that helps me It takes a weight off, sometimes you feel like there's an impetus to act in the moment. Which I've never really done or acted upon but for I did for example, I did you know after a recent experience that Oh, gosh, I really need to tell my mum these 10 things, better write them down and then I was like, No, no, you don't need to do that. So, it's like a self-managed in the moment, like yeah not having to not having to do the things that I felt like I needed to do in that moment. So, that sort of reality check, I guess but yeah, I think in those really challenging moments. It's the closing the eyes, it's the focusing on the breath. It's anything to reduce the sensation oftentimes, actually, when working with Ayahuasca, it's actually it's actually working with the Mapacho tobacco, which really, I've found to help quite a lot in the middle of some really intense experiences, as well.

**Interviewer** 1:44:06

Is that in terms of smoking it or sort of having it around like an aroma?

**Participant** 1:44:14

Yes, inhaling it, putting an intention into it, and inhaling it, which was guidance provided by provided by the facilitators but there's also there is also that aspect of I've had the agua de Florida, perfumes, water sort of put across my forehead by one of the facilitators and that helped us to calm down on experience actually, here's one that I didn't really realise I was experiencing in the middle of the ceremony, some really strong sensations and obviously quite loud they fed me little bit of lemon juice and, and it was just so strong and it completely like subdued my experience. It was really fascinating. I saw this like yellow and lemon and interesting things, but I was so that subdued my experience, I haven't doesn't mean that I've got this lemon juice on hand for every future thing I do, but that has helped me as a tool to navigate a challenging scenario in the past, obviously provided these are all provided by people that have seen it done before and who are experts as well.

**Interviewer** 1:45:54

I have heard of lemon juice being used to disrupt or to cancel, essentially, you know, interrupt an Ayahuasca experience and I wonder what the explanation, or the biochemistry that yeah, that's causing that to happen.

**Participant** 1:46:21

It's a fascinating matter. It was a, it was fascinating to experience that to be to have someone feed me and then to go and then yeah, really subdued the experience. It really yeah. Did something quite, quite interesting. Yeah.

**Q22. Interviewer** 1:46:45

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

**Participant** 1:46:56

Yeah. So, some journaling, I'm not a rigorous journaler in fact, I really don't like sitting down writing but, but journaling. I do a lot of a lot of audio notes with friends. So, rather than writing messages, I will send a lot of audio notes to each other. That's with a few specific close friends. So, that's acts as like a verbal journal, I guess, in a way. The other thing has been engaging with professionals, professional therapists, psychologists, which has been beneficial, where I felt like I've been able to open up about my experiences and the other is actually just engaging with people who work in a who are, who have experienced working in a therapeutic capacity with psychedelics before. So, those might not necessarily be my friends, but there are people who maybe have gone on an Ayahuasca retreat with I might do it everyone's quite open to, to hearing other's experiences and journeys and decompressing a bit there. So, I think those are my mechanisms for reflecting apart from the reflecting that I just do. In my mind, every now and then. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 1:48:28

Would you when you talk to other people, is that mostly within the Ayahuasca community of people who you've done it on the retreat with or is that people who, you know, in any sort of psychedelic capacity, or I guess, maybe a limited subset, because you're not necessarily going to share it with everybody?

**Participant** 1:48:53

Yeah, it's a good question. Depends on depends on the issue. If it's an issue that I can talk about relatively easily with a friend then I then I then I would, for example, I've had a lot of shame, associated shame, and fear attached to my sexuality emerged from these experiences and so that's quite easy to talk about with my friends, who, who, you know, I've been open about that with. To talk about the I think the Ayahuasca, Ayahuasca experiences or things which are specific to the Ayahuasca experience that definitely, I've connected with Ayahuasca people about that. For example, things that I've come to understand later in life or how I've interpreted things, or I would use them as a support network for something which was Ayahuasca specific but apart from that, it's close friends.

**Q23. Interviewer** 1:50:15

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

**Participant** 1:50:33

I do feel like right afterwards, that first moment of entering the real world or going outside or going, being in a regular situation that is not sort of crazy, in your mind is like seeing with a pair of new eyes or breathing, breathing the air like you can know, I do find. I do find I notice little things in the day or two after that that sort of indicates to me that I'm a little more present.

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

Has how you use psychedelics changed over time?

**Participant** 1:51:25

I think it's hard. I mean, yeah, I guess you could say, because when I was first using them prior to Ayahuasca, it was a very, it was sort of a party only environment, but it wasn't I didn't use them a lot. So, yeah, okay, I think I use them in a very I use them in a very intentional way now. Compared to how I might have used substances, generally, prior to prior to that experience.

**Q25. Interviewer** 1:52:31

What do you think is the core psychedelic experience? And next for you personally, rather than a collective core.

**Participant** 1:52:41

Okay, a core psychedelic experience. So, a classic psychedelic experience? Is that what your classic journey?

**Interviewer** 1:52:51

Not necessarily. I will, I've got one alternative phrasing which might help with zooming in or narrowing in on what the question is to ask what is unique or special about psychedelics for you and if you can think how those two might fit together as to where they meet.

**Participant** 1:53:14

Yeah, it's, um, it's, it's a, it's a forced, almost like a forced way to look in a different angle at something, you're, you're sort of you're, you’re, you're, you're seeing something in a different light. That is, that is the fundamental. I think benefit for me is an as an as an alternative perspective. A different narrative. A yeah, a peeling back of the layers that sit, that, you know, an appreciation for the nuance for the detail for the senses and engagement with the senses.

**Interviewer** 1:54:35

Anything else you'd like to add to that or is that you feel that's good?

**Participant** 1:54:39

No, I feel Yeah, that feels right. Yeah.

**Q26. Interviewer** 1:54:47

Can you describe your most challenging or negative psychedelic experience?

**Participant** 1:55:03

My most challenging or most negative. I don't know if I have a single experience which, which actually speaks out to me. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 1:55:31

If you don’t, we can move on. That's fine.

**Participant** 1:55:34

Yeah, no, I don't I don't have a, I have, I've got I've haven't had a single bad experience that was just the worst. I've had lots of lots of challenges, like small challenging ones, but nothing, which is just like, blowing me blow me out of the water and the way none that were so bad. Oh, actually, actually, no, I do have one. I, I had a, I was having DMT last year and the setting was the setting was away at a sort of a batch near a beach somewhere and I thought that thought that it would be interesting to experience my, the, the Arcana, the song that was used in my Ayahuasca ceremony as the musical backdrop for the DMT experience and so it was it was actually sung to me in one of my final ceremonies over in Peru. So, I had had the headphones on and that was probably pretty close to one of my worst one of my worst experiences, I really quickly realised that the pairing of the, of the music which was which was, I mean, not music, it is you know, and, and.

**Interviewer** 1:57:21

Was it an icaros?

**Participant** 1:57:23

Yeah, sorry the icaros. Yeah, not the Arcana. The icaros that were there was sung to me, which are from seem to be from the plant and specific to, to the plant specific to Ayahuasca, I quickly realised that there was something quite negative happening, something that just wasn't right at all, with the connection of this plant with that plant, which a, and I and I experienced a lot of very like, it, basically, it felt like a telling off from, from the plants in a way, if I was to use that language, for trying to maximise that experience through the connecting of those, that would seem to be they were sort of not meant to be mixed together. So, yeah that was a was a bad experience a bad experience and was I had a friend who hadn't done DMT before, but he wanted to see me do it and he saw me go through that and say, Oh, no, I don't want to do it and, yeah, so. So, that was that was a really quite a quite a powerful lesson for me. I sort of heeded the advice of the plant you could say and, and really tuned into what was going on there, but it was a bit of a telling off. I consider it as.

**Interviewer** 1:59:01

Could you give a little more detail as to what was the when you paired it with the Icaros, what, what happened? What made it challenging? Was it just simply a feeling or recognition or was there bodily sensations like what was the what was the aspect that made it like, this is the difficult trip that came to your mind?

**Participant** 1:59:29

Yeah, felt bad in my body. I didn't feel nauseous or anything, but I've had a very heavy energy. Sort of a lethargicness and I'm not the type of person that necessarily gets lots of visuals. So, I don't, I didn't necessarily have a bad visual coming at me or you know, some kind of thing going on. I would say that in terms of how I feel like I pick up on some of the lessons or the messages that comes feels telepathic in, in a way. So, I, I do, I did feel I did feel I felt bad immediately and I had negative effect as well. So, I was sort of suffering like visually, which is, I think what contributed to my friends scepticism. So, yeah, I yeah, just those things together. I looked like I was in pain. Like, I think it was writhing around on the bed a bit and yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:00:52

Have you tried DMT, this is I'm imagining like, pure, like crystal DMT?

**Participant** 2:01:00

Oh, no, this is. So, this is a it's close to a crystallised form of DMT but it's a it's actually. So, it's made from the Acacia tree. So, my friend actually makes it in Australia, he, he he's almost gotten to the point where he's refined it to a crystallised form. However, what he does, he infuses a DMT mixture with some sort of generic happy herb thing you can buy from a buy from a shop and so it is the pure DMT molecule, but it's not quite like it, you need to smoke quite a little bit more of it. To get to get an effect basically. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:01:51

It's not Changa, is it?

**Participant** 2:01:56

Sorry, say it again?

**Interviewer** 2:01:57

Is it changa? C H A N G A?

**Participant** 2:02:06

Yeah, I've heard a little bit about changa. No, because it does, it does definitely just have this plant. I think Chang has a bit of a bit of a tough one to identify, because there's so many potential variations. So, I avoid using that word, because I feel like it can come in so many forms but yeah, it does. You just sort of you smoke It. It looks like little leaves, but they've been infused with infused with DMT. So, it would look like changa to someone. Yeah. You could pass it off as that.

**Interviewer** 2:02:46

Yeah my understanding with changa is that although there is variations on it, and people do you know, different plant mixtures generally it's a it's got harmalas in the MAO inhibitors combined, so that it intensifies and prolongs a DMT trip but I don't I don't think all changas are like that, either.

**Participant** 2:03:09

That's right. Yeah. No, that this this one is very, it's an intense 10 to 15 minutes, basically, that you that you have. So, it's not. Yeah, it doesn't have the MAOI in it. Yeah, some of they make it with the Ayahuasca vine, which has the MAOI a lot of the time I think. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:03:30

And did you so did you try the non changa, variety again, later on without the music?

**Participant** 2:03:38

Yes, so I'd done it many times before. With, without that music. That was a one of I would say 50 experiences that I have had with it.

**Interviewer** 2:03:52

And have you had anything similar in terms of the maybe not negative bad feelings or the unpleasant experience, or is that you kind of unique out of all of those?

**Participant** 2:04:11

Yeah, that is that is very unique. That was very specific to that scenario. There wasn't some there's been sort of heavyish moments, but for the most part, my experience working with DMT has been completely emancipatory, completely submersive, completely out of this world and pretty much mostly positive ways. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:04:45

I can delve into that a little bit because I know a lot of what we've been talking about, I think is stems, stem from your Ayahuasca experiences and some of the others. I don't know how much you when you've been talking about it has come from the DMT experiences, but in regards to those have you, have you had the what people describe as like a breakthrough experience where you pop over to the sort of the DMT dimension?

**Participant** 2:05:11

Yeah, yeah, you're right. I've been I've been speaking mainly about, like, the longer because I think when you're going in with a therapeutic intention in mind, you need a longer experience to really consider to delve to think to ponder to yeah to really move with the, with the waves in the ocean that DMT experience has been. It's, it's more recreational, for sure. Partly, because after reading a lot about the studies that have been done on DMT, that one by Rick Strassman, many, many years ago now. Therapeutic benefit of DMT in that form is very, very minimal but it's a fascinating experience in and of itself. So, yes, in terms of this breakthrough. I feel like I've broken through a few times. Yeah, for sure. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:06:19

And is there what you're saying is DMT uses a bit more recreational is what's the do you have an intention, even when using it, like as it as it has its own purpose? Maybe as to why you use that? compared to the others?

**Participant** 2:06:36

Yeah, yeah. So, I will, with DMT, I do have an intention, I always have an intention with it. I because my friend makes it, it's all by myself. So, it's always in that setting with someone else and that actually, I did try it by myself once and it didn't work very well, because of purely because of the dosage was hard to get right because you get you get blasted off pretty quickly and it's not you kind of need someone there to, to help facilitate as well. So, so it's been more intentional but possibly more intentionally recreational. I have had some sort of understandings or lessons come through those experiences, though. Although they're fewer and far between, I would say compared to compared to the other experiences, partly because there's just it's 10 minutes, it's 15 minutes but they have, but I definitely have written about them afterwards as well. So, that same sort of journaling type approach or that same if it's been an interesting thing that's popped up, I would journal about it as well and I would consider it Yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:08:09

Okay, as thing if there's anything are they you were saying that you're not a you don't you're not much of or let's say relatively very visual, in terms of your experiences on psychedelics. IS DMT different in that sense? Is it highly visual? Because that's supposedly its main characteristic, let's say all the most popping of it emphasised

**Participant** 2:08:36

Yeah, actually, that's a that's a very good point. That is the that is the if I was to differentiate the DMT experience that would be that would be it's highly visual. I do feel like I'm submersed in a in a different world. Yeah. In a different visual world. Yeah, absolutely. Visual.

**Q27. Interviewer** 2:08:58

Okay. Cool. Can you describe your most memorable or life changing psychedelic experience?

**Participant** 2:09:08

Oh, wow. Yeah, gosh. Trying to think about what, what one is most interesting to, to call upon. The most life changing. I think. I think it was probably my first my first few because it was such a novel experience but It was coming to learn a lot about my first my first few ceremonies was really just learning about internalised shame from just around my sexuality and so that's been life changing because it's something that I've previously not thought was an issue. I thought I was really fine with it, but it's helped shine a light on some of the internalised shame and some of the some of the worth lessness with which I've absorbed messages from the world and internalised those about myself. So, it's definitely been one of the most interesting. One of the most life changing experiences, because it helped me helped me to examine issues around my sexuality and shame with a lot more detail in the last in the last few years. Yeah, yeah, I think that those were, those are really my first Ayahuasca experiences, which were, which are around, which are around dealing with sexuality and shame and it's something that I continue to work on today. So, it's not necessarily whilst it was life changing, it's life changing to look at it in a new way. It's work to continue afterwards. I think it's that misconception of take, take the psychedelics, and it's all done. It's sort of like no, take the psychedelic, and then then work, then then the work starts.

**Interviewer** 2:11:46

Now you have to integrate it into your life.

**Participant** 2:11:49

Yeah, it's right. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:11:54

How would you describe after going through these sort of reflections or investigations of shame around or internal internalised shame from culture from other people and potentially from yourself towards your sexuality? What's the has there been a shift like how has that evolved through that process?

**Participant** 2:12:25

Yeah, yeah. So, getting at that idea of I guess how do I know? How do I know if something's shifted? I find myself a lot. I find myself being able to be a lot more open readily about my sexuality and who I am without maybe in conversation meeting people for the first time segwaying into a conversation. I sort of, I do I do feel like there isn't, it's not a it's not a shame attached to that. In all honesty, it's still something I'm working on. Something that happened at the festival just recently, which made me reflect on the fact that I wasn't I'm still not 100% comfortable with public displays of affection and that just comes down to comes down to sort of inbuilt safety mechanisms you have growing up to protect yourself from the from the world around you and cues in your environment which indicate that you might not be safe. So, I always have I always do have that radar, that safety radar on because you sort of you need it, but I do feel like I've been able to free myself or be in a freer state of being with my identity. I've also what's also been really helpful is that I feel whilst my sexuality is one aspect of my identity, it's a small aspect of my identity. Something that I previously probably relied a lot not relied a lot upon, but I don't think these are working. Can you hear me?

**Interviewer** 2:14:37

Speak again. Can you hear me? Are they still going?

**Participant** 2:14:45

Yeah, yeah, no, no, I can. One of them is going they're about to die.

**Interviewer** 2:14:50

Okay. We're I would say there's a few questions here that we weren't necessarily need to touch on, I think we've already touched on them but there's probably about six, six to eight questions that we've got left, and then we're done. So, I don't know, if you want to take them out and just talk to the mic in the computer, if that works for you and through speaker or as you prefer.

**Participant** 2:15:18

Yeah, I might just disconnect my Bluetooth and then I'll just speak into the computer. So, bear with me. All right. Can you hear me now?

**Interviewer** 2:15:40

Yep.

**Participant** 2:15:46

Yeah sorry where was I before.

**Interviewer** 2:15:48

You, you were saying, You're talking about your sexuality, and that you read you at the festival just before you sort of recognise that you hadn't fully accepted, for example, public displays of affection and you were talking about noticing cues in the environment that might suggest that it is not safe, as a, you know, and one can understand what you meant by that in theory.

**Participant** 2:16:13

Yeah, that's right. I think it's always, you always need to have some form of safety because you're not always safe in all environments, but it was a great example where I felt like I couldn't relax into that environment because of my sexuality. However, that was a very, it's a very open place with, with open displays of affection, from multiple people. So, it was it was a safe environment is what I'm saying but there was a barrier mentally for me still. So, it shows me that I've still got some work, work to do but I feel, I guess, where I was going was, was just around. I think previously, being gay was a relatively large or larger aspect of my identity, which I kind of held close to myself and now it's now it's kind of like something that is not really not important, but it is something I don't find I have a great attachment to in terms of, again, like I mentioned before, identity markers and beliefs and all these things. I feel a I feel like they're ways to describe aspects of me, but some, but they're not they're not an inherent kind of quality of mine somehow. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:17:48

Sort of a spontaneous question that comes up in regards to what you're saying there is, I think it comes in maybe two parts. I think previously, earlier in the conversation or the interview, you, you described this sort of less of an attachment to these identity markers, you've just kind of reiterated that is that a less of attachment overall to identity as a thing in itself. So, not just the markers, but just this whole sense of, like identity being a very important thing to be identified with necessarily is that and inside of that when you're talking about the shift of or the change in emphasis of your sexuality being a part of your identity. Is that is that a consequence of the first proposition is true that there's this less attachment or to identity as a whole? Or is it like a shrinking, let's say, of its size and relative size to other identity markers? Or maybe a bit of both? If that makes sense?

**Participant** 2:19:07

Yeah, that does make sense. Thanks for explaining it. I think. I think it's both. I think one of the one aspect is oh I've realised that there's so many more interesting, diverse aspects to me, which make me, so many. So, many aspects, so many personality traits, so many experiences, so many connections, that make me uniquely who I am beyond that, beyond that identity marker, but it is also just that general overarching idea of non-attachment, I would say.

**Interviewer** 2:19:51

Okay, so shifts in both aspects. That's interesting and what do you is it has it been, you were just saying, is that a replacement of an increased diversity of aspects of smaller identity markers? Or has there also been a, a relative increase in older ones that you had in terms of how they're important to you?

**Participant** 2:20:18

No, I think it's probably newer aspects or understanding new things about yourself or your openness to experience means that you are doing more of something or you or you, you're open to understanding something or you like, for example, I never had never done philosophy before but I last year, took a philosophy class at university and went to the school of practical philosophy. So, I would have never could have called myself a rookie philosopher, but I guess now I kind of can if I want to put a label on it. So, yep, so that so that's one that's one way to, to think about it. Absolutely but I think it's I think it is just a Yeah, it's sort of opening your openness to new experiences to diverse ideas means that you have the sort of a repertoire to work within which I find enormously beneficial in day to day life now.

**Interviewer** 2:21:23

Just thinking on the point about the philosophy I imagine, they covered this, but I could be wrong here but I'm pretty sure I'm not philosophy, when you go into sort of the root words, and the meaning of it means the essentially the love of knowledge and you've described being very interested, and desiring to learn things. So, I think even without knowing it, you have you are a philosopher in some sense, and someone who seeks out and wants to learn. Although, obviously, often, we use philosopher in a more refined context than just simply a lover of knowledge, because that's very broad, but I think it's the original where it came from.

**Participant** 2:22:12

Yeah, that's it, that totally makes sense to me and to be honest psychedelics. I mean, I was surprised when sort of, it's called the school of practical philosophy and the idea is, it's philosophy, but practical. So, they try and get you to do lots of practical exercises, often meditation, Tai Chi, discussion, talk, but I was surprised, I was like, I was kind of like, the most practical philosophy is also taking some psychedelics as well, but they because there was a sort of connection with or non-attachment with substance. So, I could tell that the teacher was very cautious and in terms of their, in terms of their approach towards substances, and so it wasn't something that I offered readily but I could engage completely with what was going on and for me, psychedelics do offer another practical philosophy. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:23:04

Yep. I can resonate with that idea. That makes sense. There just seems to me another way of coming at it. Different perspectives, lets say, or a different method of inquiry and yeah, they definitely shortcuts some of the hurdles that some people have, as you say, it sort of forces an alternative perspective once you become in the chemically induced state. So, you're on the ride at that point.

**Participant** 2:23:36

That's right. Yeah. Yeah.

**Q28. Interviewer** 2:23:43

Yeah, I'll just read it as it is. I don't like how I worded this question, but it's the other ways I've tried doesn't seem to make it any better. If you have ever experienced ego death, could you describe what it is like?

**Participant** 2:23:55

Do you not like the concept ego death?

**Interviewer** 2:24:02

No, I do I do the I do the "fingers", the air quotation marks, because I don't have a problem with it but I find that depending so in the literature, there’s words like ego death, ego, dissolution, unity, or oneness, and these are all getting at, or the mystical experience and stuff like this and these all have overlap and share and share common features and ego death, arguably is a big part of the mystical experience as it's defined, at least in some of the literature I've read is sort of being subsumed by the mystical experience rather than being the whole thing but some people get tripped up on the word ego death and don't like the terminology. So, I do I do this and just this sort of like to emphasise that I'm taking the word as it's kind of used broadly for some people, rather than, and I pick that particular term because I think it's one of the most common ways word or descriptives used to point to that experience and, actually, what is that experience? And that's kind of what the question is getting at. So, I sort of, say ego death is like a pointer, but not like if you don't fully interpret it, like I don't like the word. Some people don't like the word death, because why would you want to kill your ego and things like this? So, it's trying to accommodate different views and hopefully it gets translated with this, but that might just come across as kind of blasé or facetious or something about the term itself, where it's like, yeah, so I don't know. I'm still figuring out how to ask that question. In a way that. Yeah. I don't know. It's difficult.

**Participant** 2:25:57

It could be open to interpretation for some people, some people. Yeah, might I mean, it's like a psychedelic colloquialism isn't?

**Interviewer** 2:26:07

Yeah and but at the same time, I think it does speak to a collection of features or an experience that is reasonably cohesive and so there is, so yeah, I don't want to put too much more into it but your interpretation of so the first thing is trying to find out what do you think ego death is? So, one do you think you've had it? And two what do you think it is, essentially? and that way I can, I'm trying to build a definition of sort of what people actually think it is. A little bit.

**Participant** 2:26:53

Can you hear me now?

**Interviewer** 2:26:54

Yes.

**Participant** 2:26:57

Cool. My headphones, one of them is still alive and keeps reconnecting back to my computer.

**Interviewer** 2:27:03

Yeah. Just the one way to say that is just a switch of Bluetooth off and they can't connect.

**Participant** 2:27:10

Oh, yeah, turn Bluetooth off. Thank you. Yeah, so ego death. To me, the I mean, the ego is the is there's the I sort of subscribe to the Eckhart Tolle concept of the ego, if you're familiar, being the voice, the voice in the head, the, the, the ego, which is constantly seeking to reinforce itself, its self-importance, its, its place in the world, it's sort of like the Yeah, different to the ego of Freud, that we that we might be used to and so the concept of the, of the ego death for me, I think is really about a is about a death to the aspect of the self, which contains those sorts of unhelpful negative talking patterns, the behaviours, the aspects of the self which are, which seek to serve the ego at the end of the day and are driven by the ego, which is it's challenging because the ego I later learn, really is actually it's never dead. It's, it's always there but it's about how aware of the dynamics of your ego that you are as well. So, yeah, my ego death experience, I actually might get my I might get my journal from the Ayahuasca experience where I have written about ego death because I think that might be more illuminating rather than me trying to talk about it. So, yeah, there was a very specific ceremony where I had an ego death experience that I hadn't,

**Participant** 2:30:17

that I was quite, quite happy because I, as I was going to Peru, I thought, Oh, I'd really like to have this ego death experience people talk about this is, yeah, this is the sort of the aftermath, the next day of me writing things down. So, I'll just try and pull out the things which I think I think are important but start by saying, you know, it was the most remarkable and profound experience working with Ayahuasca that I've had. In a, I'm not sure it was possible to put down in writing all of the things I learned and then I have a whole, here we go, I've got a designated ego death section, jese. So, here we go. Yeah, I can now observe my ego at play more easily. In my life, I learned new aspects of my ego that I hadn't considered before. So, yeah, became more familiar with my ego, I started to see all these different dimensions of my ego that I wasn't aware of before, or things that things that were part of my ego that I hadn't considered were part of my ego. People pleasing was one of them. A sense of importance, over rules and procedures and a being better than others by following rules and procedures. Shame identified in earlier ceremony so that ego finds power in shame, financial habits, so just purely consumerism is that you go searching for, for power, in a sort of loss of control of, of some of my financial habits as well. The challenging nature of some work scenarios were due to my ego getting in the way. So, the pinnacle of the evening was a ceremony for the death of my ego, I spent time asking questions about my ego and becoming intimately familiar with it. Through this intimacy, I was able to send pure love and compassion towards it. I saw how insecure and powerless it was, how it was always searching for something to validate its sense of importance. I flashed back and saw so many events where my ego dominated, for example, the challenging period at work in November, where my ego told me you don't have to do this, you can get up and walk away. I was close to quitting my job but persevered through and was after learning all about my ego, and sending love and compassion towards it, I had the experience of putting myself on a big cross was a little bit religious like actually, but putting myself on a cross and lighting a fire. So, in this sort of visual in this scene, I was sort of burning myself basically and I watched the flames envelop my body. So, I didn't feel any physical pain, but my body acted out as if it was burning alive. My arms were wide out, I was gasping for air. I was hot, sweaty, I was making noises in the room was still present in the room, but my mind was in a completely different place. I was struggling and the facilitator came over to help piece me together again. This new me rebuilt without the ego. Also, I thought that ego was coming back comes back. The Agua de Florida, combined with her physical touch, was healing, and was so needed and I was so grateful for her support in those moments she told me to breathe. After I had burned my ego at the stake, I began to see some what I began to see ways in which my ego played out, which is what I sort of read to just before I had a sense of new person. I had I had a sense of being a new person of ultimate vitality, I felt every cell of my body infused re energised immediately wanting to implement and take everything I had learned and apply it to life. There you go. That was that was that was it?

**Interviewer** 2:35:08

I like it sounds. It's deep.

**Participant** 2:35:12

Yeah, yeah. shit. That's a whole, whole little book of ceremonies there. It's it makes for interesting reading now.

**Interviewer** 2:35:23

Well it's good isn't it? journals are definitely, memory is unreliable, let's say and things get forgotten.

**Participant** 2:35:36

So true. Yeah really valuable to have stuff written down about these experiences so but yeah, there you go, I had a ceremonial burning at the stake of my ego and I thought, I thought I'm free.

**Interviewer** 2:35:56

Just one more ego game.

**Participant** 2:35:58

Yeah, that's right and then I realised Oh, that ego suffers many deaths. Okay, it's just a normal thing.

**Interviewer** 2:36:07

Is there? Um, have you ever had an experience sort of an out of body or a loss of identity of who what you were? So, of being human of being [name] of having a particular historical past like your essentially your memories, your life and loss, a loss of future goals and concurrently or not with a loss of sense of having a physical body? Have you ever experienced something like that?

**Participant** 2:36:45

I think DMT is the closest experience to really departing in a sense of who you are. However, I have pretty much always I've never been like, I don't think I've ever asked Who am I? But there's been so many moments where I have been far away but I'm not I don't think I'm a, I guess it's that process of I'm not attached, I don't think I'm attached to who I am, or there isn't a great deal of attachment here and so it's easy for me to just disconnect and I find the sort of exploration say of the DMT worlds to be quite natural, in a way. Yeah.

**Q29. Interviewer** 2:37:30

Okay, cool. You've spoken to us before, as well, but I don't know. I'll just ask it as I like going down my linear list that makes it simpler. Have your experiences with psychedelics affected your spiritual or religious beliefs?

**Participant** 2:37:56

It's made me it's made. So, I grew up religious, Christian. I've realised through working with psychedelics then how actually ego dominates a lot of religion. It's helped me understand how ego is embedded in institutions and in particularly religious institutions and so it's helped me come to terms with I think, a spirituality, which is my own is no one else's and a contentedness with what I believe to be my spirituality and so I don't find myself subscribing to necessarily religion. You could call it you could call it spiritual, maybe but then that also comes with the connotations of, I don't know, wearing spiritual garb and doing generic spiritual things as well, which is kind of a bit off putting. So So, yeah,

**Interviewer** 2:39:07

I think I want you to how would you describe it? Or do you have a word for it?

**Participant** 2:39:13

Um, no, I would probably if someone asked me what I was, I'd say spiritual. Yeah, I would say spiritual, but that's the that's the best fit word for it, I guess, I guess. I guess I like to take the most interesting pieces from what I've learned from everything. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:39:41

Yeah, that makes

**Participant** 2:39:44

a personal religion or ideology, I guess, which I think everyone kind of has in their own in their own kind of way but I'm so far away from, you know, looking at looking at a static book and pointing to lines in a book, to tell me how to live my how to live my life.

**Q29. Interviewer** 2:40:10

Yep. Have psychedelics changed how you think about death or the process of dying?

**Participant** 2:40:26

I do think that the experience of ego death or the feeling of dying, has made me a lot more comfortable with the concept of death. I think I could, I think I would be a lot more comfortable with passing away, right now because of the non-attachment to ego and identity. Generally. So I think whilst it's not something, I mean, I'm not someone who thinks that long term but I have thought I did say to my friend the other day, I said, You know, I think if I died, now, I could be quite happy. You know, I could accept, I can accept death and I'm quite open about death as well. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 2:41:30

Do you have, in terms of your personal spirituality, do you have thoughts on the metaphysics of reality, so to speak, of what, you know, you know, kind of a grand cosmic idea of what's going on?

**Participant** 2:41:51

Yeah, that you must get some great answers to that question. I'd like to see the transcripts to that question. I have heard so many different things on this. from, you know, seemingly quite wacky things to just quite, I would say, you know, you know, this is this is it, this is life, once you're in the ground, that's kind of it, you don't, no such thing as a soul, we're just physical. I do, I do subscribe to the general idea. Even though I'm quite in the scientific realm, it's funny to I guess, it's funny being in academia, and working and studying in a scientific realm where we take you know, data, and we think about, you know, what's measurable and observable? One thing, one thing working with psychedelics has taught me is that science can only tell us so much about the world. It is by its nature, limited to those things which we can measure and therefore, the realm of subjectivity is, is hard to measure with any with any kind of consistency and so, therefore, we can never really know about the subjective experience in a, in a, in a way that would satisfy a scientific paradigm. So, despite possessing these views, and I do see myself as is, you know, valuing science and seeing the contribution of science and what it can do, I subscribe to, I guess, a belief that in that we are souls experiencing life. On Earth, in human in human bodies. Where we may have where we've experienced life in other places before. So, I guess it is a form of sort of, it's sort of like it's the universe experiencing itself, we have the ability to use our senses to interact with the world and it's sort of like a bit of a universal cosmic experiment in a sense. So, I sort of acknowledge that there is an inherent paradox in those perspectives, but I believe both at the same time, in a way, well, maybe that is my that is maybe a fanciful way of thinking about life and, but I do, I do. I do believe there is something deeper occurring and I don't think we'll ever know for sure but I'm very I love listening to people's interpretations of that kind of question because I feel like I've heard a lot of them and they're quite, they are quite fascinating and you don't, Yeah, yeah. What is real? At the end of the day.

**Interviewer** 2:45:21

Yes. Some, you're bringing it, you're triggering all the points in my head. I'm like, I know all these, you know, these sorts of definitely. I've mulled them over quite a bit and some of that definitely comes up during interviews, especially on psychedelics and that's, that's partly what the earlier question was, like, has you have you seriously question your beliefs? Is that yeah it's religious yeah it's day to day beliefs but it's also like, if you don't want to categorise it in that sense, but belief is a more general sense, that gives people the opportunity to, I don't know, like, I try not to guide it too much. Just like, where does the where does that question Where does someone go off with that question? So, it's like, I could frame it more precisely, like your cosmic beliefs or something, but then it's giving it words that people might not particularly agree with? Like, what do you mean by cosmic, but belief is a very universal, at least in English word to throw out there and it captures that I think, good. It can be stretched and used in many different ways. Of course, the word has many interpretations, but we kind of get, we get the general shape and texture, so to speak, as to what it what it's going after. Yeah, yeah, just interesting.

**Participant** 2:46:52

Yeah, it's an interesting space. It's fascinating, because there's only so many things we can know in in this in this world, and this context through science, and so I think it's really fascinating. For example, I'm really interested in fungi and, and the world of the world of fungi and, and how little we really know about help fungi work, for example and so there's, there's so many symbiotic connections that fungi have with the plant kingdom and, and we're only really just learning about all of this. So, it's sort of like we're uncovering what we don't know, or what we know, we don't know and there's a lot of it and, and in the knowledge that, you know, we there is so much to understand about the world and we know so little. I do think I do think there is there's a part of me, which might be fanciful, might be whimsical, but it's there's a part of me that is really enjoys hearing about these alternative ways of thinking about understanding the world and what we are.

**Interviewer** 2:48:16

The interesting thing, I think, I don't know if you agree with this, but my intuition is you would is the we don't know, at the end of the day, like there's, there's an uncertainty, there's a huge amount of uncertainty about how all of this came about and even the, you know, the things we fundamentally interact with, even on day to day basis. We don't even understand most of those things, like to a point where we could give you a nice description of like, everything that is necessary for that thing to be its thing and function it's like, it's the world is so complex, it's just so complex, it's like, and as you say, there's only a limited amount any we could understand, especially as a singular person. Like, I find myself being baffled by what seemingly is very simple things. I'm like, this is excruciatingly complex, when I start digging into it a little bit. I'm like ohhh, stay away, too much thinking.

**Participant** 2:49:21

Yeah, that's right.

**Interviewer** 2:49:22

Yeah but that's the mystery. That's the mystery of how do you know what the hell's going on, and how did it come about?

**Participant** 2:49:32

Which is, which is what I why I always find people who are very, who are so confident with themselves and their knowledge in the world to be even more baffling because I have an understanding of how little we know about the world and then the confidence with which some people approach the world which gives other people a sense of safety and security, but is often unfounded. I find that dynamic, fascinating psychologically.

**Interviewer** 2:50:02

Yeah, maybe we, I don't know how much time you have spare left, because we're getting near the end but maybe we can touch back on that idea. At the end if you're keen?

**Participant** 2:50:13

Yeah.

**Q31. Interviewer** 2:50:14

I just don't want to one thing I know I do. I'm a little naughty, let's say in that the interviews should be as much you and less any of my ideas because you don't want to influence the conversation beyond. Obviously, I created all the questions and set up the whole thing but like beyond putting answers and influencing further later questions by essentially making you think what I want you to think or like, oh, he likes it when I say these things. So, he smiles more, so I'll do the things that make him smile that makes me feel good. You know. So, I guess we touched on that. So, I asked, one of the questions I do ask separately is also have psychedelics changed any fundamental beliefs about the nature of reality? And I just sort of dropped that into if people don't resonate with the spiritual religious beliefs, they might go with the more secular wording of it, let's say. Yeah, but I think we've spoken to that, so I don't.

**Participant** 2:50:15

Yeah, yeah, I feel like we've addressed that.

**Q32. Interviewer** 2:51:21

Have psychedelics changed your outlook on life?

**Participant** 2:51:33

Yeah, I think I don't know if I can add any more to what I've sort of described already. To be honest. Yeah, for Yeah. See all of the above.

**Q33. Interviewer** 2:51:45

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

**Participant** 2:52:08

I mean, depends on the substance and the context but personally, I think that they have, they're sort of like the magnifying glass for the mind, they, they do give us the ability to investigate the mind and the dynamics of the mind in a in a, in a in a deeper way. Not in a way that will always satisfy science, but the role they have as a as a for me personally as a reflective and a therapeutic role.

**Q34. Interviewer** 2:52:53

Have psychedelics shaped your view of humanity's future?

**Participant** 2:53:10

I haven't spent a lot of time in the space of meta ideas in psychedelics. I haven't seen I've heard about other people's experiences of seeing doomsday things in the future and other dynamics. No, I don't I don't think so. I think it's allowed me to do more with the present for me rather than the future. Does help you to understand possibilities I think trajectories sort of where things might end up, I can't what I don't have any detail to add to add to add to that though, or Yeah.

**Q35. Interviewer** 2:54:17

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

**Participant** 2:54:28

Use it at your, only if you feel the call to do it. So, your own volition rather than the pressure of those around you. Consider the, the potential interactions with other medications that you that you might be using and consider your set, consider your setting, how you're doing it and consider, interrogate why you're doing it. Make sure that you have the right support, or the right resource around you that can help you to both prepare, but integrate as well and, and enjoy it. Enjoy the process.

**Q36. Interviewer** 2:55:52

And the final question is, are there any final thoughts or comments or questions as well, that you would like to mention or conclude? To mention before we conclude.

**Participant** 2:56:07

It was? No, I think you've done a I mean, I think it's pretty in depth. One, one question, which I was thinking of which I feel like, you might, you could benefit from asking is just around. Was there anything that you expected from the experience that you didn't get? People often wander into these, I know, we said, you know, that particular with Ayahuasca, like, you know, don't go in with any, you know, expectations, Mother Ayahuasca will show you what she needs to show you. We are humans in a world where we develop expectations about how things should be and so the so some kind of question around that I thought, could, it could be quite interesting to ask partly because there's a challenge that I have, that I've had, that I thought would come up in some form in all of my psychedelic or somewhere in my psychedelic experiences and it totally hasn't and maybe that's just me but I've expected it to come up and it hasn't registered anywhere once.

**Interviewer** 2:57:29

Would you be willing to share what you thought was the what was the expectation?

**Participant** 2:57:38

Yeah, maybe not. Actually, maybe it's still something that I'm still something I'm challenged by, I think, and I haven't vocalised yet. So, I think it's still something that I want to, to work through first, but

**Interviewer** 2:57:54

no problems.

**Participant** 2:57:56

Yeah, but there is there's one, there's one elephant in the room, that if I was really critically thinking about, you know, psychedelics, obviously, not the silver bullet doesn't do everything but there is an there is something that I feel is an issue in my life that hasn't come up and maybe I'll learn later as to why, you know, I probably will but I'm surprised it hasn't. So, maybe that maybe, maybe that's an interesting question to ask people is like, have you developed? You know, is there anything that hasn't been addressed? Like you sort of expected to, because you will see these people who come at psychedelics with sort of rose tinted glasses of, well, they do everything they can, they can, they can heal everything, you know, they will save the world and while starting with a very optimistic view of them. You know, I think they, I think, again, we need to acknowledge some potential limitations of, of psychedelics as well.

**Interviewer** 2:59:05

Yeah. Yes, I don't, it's not reasonable. I think even in a very loose if you're going on even loose logic of reasonable, like something being reasonable that one thing can do everything because it's just. No one's ever. You know, I don't imagine anyone's had an experience where one particular thing has just solved every problem in their life and done it like, for the rest of time infinitely. It just like just this is all you need. It's like, just life seems more complex than that.

**Participant** 2:59:43

That's right. Yeah, absolutely. It's not. It's not intended. It's not supposed to be a silver bullet. It's one tool in the toolbox, I think. Yeah. Yeah.

**Participant** 2:59:56

Let me stop the recording there. Then that was