



Beyond the Festival: How Zendo Project's Four Principles Can Provide Guidance in a Time of Change

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THE ZENDO PROJECT TYPICALLY SPENDS weeks at festivals during this time of year, providing safe space for festival attendees, and is now doing its work from behind the scenes (and screens!). The Zendo Project is currently offering peer support groups in collaboration with DanceSafe's Party in Place Initiative, where Zendo Project staff and volunteers facilitate peer support groups for those who work in the events industry and whose livelihood have been impacted by COVID-19. Additionally, the Zendo Project provided virtual peer support for the online Bicycle Night event on April 19, where sitters were available to support event attendees through online video conference rooms. These offerings have allowed us to engage our community and discover the unique ways that support can be provided in our changing world.

We have also been asking ourselves how can the Zendo Project's four principles support change and healing in a time of crisis. As we connect with how our principles extend beyond the psychedelic experience, the following are a few reflections we've considered.

Let's begin with a look at our principle "Difficult is Not the Same as Bad," which encourages us to discover how difficult situations are opportunities for growth and change. To be honest, some things are just plain bad. Racism and a global pandemic go beyond just a difficult situation. The impacts are endless and, in some cases, unimaginable. However, if we are going

to make changes in our global community, we have to start with ourselves by asking, "What am I learning during this time that will make me a better person - an advocate for a better world?" By facing and exploring the unimaginable situations that are unfolding on our planet and in our society, we open ourselves to an opportunity. Where better to use the tools borne of our personal healing journeys and psychedelic explorations than to use them now to align more deeply with our values and apply them toward efforts to change our society at large?

The principle "Talking Through, Not Down" is also about the opportunity for self-understanding that arises when we turn toward an experience, including the sensations and feelings, so that we can discover new parts of ourselves. During the past few months, the world has changed rapidly. We don't know the trajectory of this planetary crisis, and being in that unknown space can be uncomfortable, especially as it impacts our day-to-day lives. And yet, it is from this place of unknown and rapid change that we might be able to see something we couldn't otherwise see. How can we grok what is happening to bring more compassion to our world? As we integrate these changes, like we would with a psychedelic experience, how are we turning our insight into action?

While being ambassadors for a healthier world, we must guide change appropriately, such as in raising children or advocating for causes like Black Lives Matter. While guiding change



A colorful shade structure, designed and created by Chelsea Rose, M.A., AMFT, MAPS Harm Reduction Operations Manager, covers the Zendo Project community, who volunteer to provide psychedelic peer support and harm reduction services at Burning Man in August 2019. Credit: Anson Phong

often means speaking up, at other times we may just need to stop, and listen. This is what the principle “Sitting, not Guiding” is all about. Taking a moment to slow down and listen, with our hearts, to the troubles that touch our lives allows us space to discover insight about what is unfolding. This may mean sitting still enough to hear our own inner guidance, or actively listening to the struggles of a loved one. From this place of listening, we empower compassion and intuitive understanding to develop.

Safety is a foundational human need, and having or offering a safe space to explore these questions and experiences allows us to see what’s happening in a way that provides valuable feedback and personal development. That is why a “Safe Space” is our foundational principle. Holding a safe space means positive regard, compassion, healthy boundaries, and space for differences. It means respecting all people, from all walks of life, even if we walk in very different shoes, in unique ways, and in opposite directions. In the article, “Sacred Reciprocity: Supporting the Roots of the Psychedelic Movement,” Celina De Leon, Ph.D. (C), writes, “We may consider honoring the very principles that psychedelics so often teach us; namely, the significance of our interconnection and the importance of reciprocity.”

So we might encourage you to connect for a moment with what you’ve been learning throughout this time and how those insights might be able to bring about transformation. We don’t know where this world crisis will lead us, so as we surrender to the journey, we can consider our intentions and hopes for the future, and keep an eye out for the seeds of insight that will guide our action toward creating a healthier world for all.

As the Zendo Project takes actions to bring about safe and compassionate care in new ways, we recognize that psychedelic

harm reduction and peer support in a time of world crisis means a lot more than providing services at festivals. The principles and practices of psychedelic peer support can help us take what psychedelics have taught us, and bring that out into the world as a means of change and healing for our planet. Psychedelic peer support principles that hold values like compassion, presence, and acceptance can help inform a healthier planetary consciousness, justice for our fellow human beings, and plenty of safe spaces to explore the healing that will bring us closer to these goals.

Reference

De Leon, C. (2020). Sacred reciprocity: Supporting the roots of the psychedelic movement. *Chacruna*. Retrieved from: <https://chacruna.net/sacred-reciprocity-supporting-the-roots-of-the-psychedelic-movement>

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