

# Ask MAPS Anything

GRACE CEPE



*Since its inception in 1997, the AskMAPS email inbox ([askmaps@maps.org](mailto:askmaps@maps.org)) has received thousands of inquiries about psychedelics, therapy, and research each year. MAPS' Communications Associate Grace Cepe connects with the psychedelic community and provides educational resources through AskMAPS. In this edition of the MAPS Bulletin, she answers a commonly asked question about our clinical trials and shares her response to a former gang member who reached out for help.*

**Hello! I'm very interested in participating in the Phase 3 clinical trials for MDMA-assisted therapy for PTSD, but when I enter my zip code in the application, I get notified that my zip code is not within range of any trial locations. Would it be possible for me to travel to a nearby clinical trial location to participate?**

I understand that you are willing to travel to participate in our studies; however, clinical trials are highly regulated by the FDA and we are unable to override the distance criteria. In other words, qualified participants must live within range of each of the clinical sites for the Phase 3 trials of MDMA-assisted therapy for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The Phase 3 trials are expected to be completed in 2022, meaning that the FDA could approve the treatment as early as 2023.

You may try searching for more clinical trials at [clinicaltrials.gov](https://clinicaltrials.gov). This site lists most upcoming, ongoing, and completed clinical trials in all 50 states in the US as well as in 200 additional countries and you can search by condition, treatment method, and location. You may also find a few psychedelic-specific trials at the [psychedelic support research page](#).

**I grew up in a gang in Los Angeles which led me to being in-and-out of prison. I suffered from drug addiction and PTSD because of long term damage created by the consequences of a child trying to survive in a world. I want to focus on the huge PTSD that is being overlooked on the vast numbers of ghetto, inner city youth who are suffering from poverty, lack of education, and healthcare.**

Thank you for sharing your story. You've gone through so much growing up in the streets of Southern California. I'm sorry that you're going through difficult times, but I'm happy that you're seeking alternative treatments for healing.

I wanted to share this article from The Verge about a neuroscientist, Chris Medina-Kirchner, who went to prison for selling drugs and is now a graduate student at Columbia University doing research with MDMA.

"...as perhaps the only scientist in the field who has experienced the impact of those laws from within the prison system, he's also creating a pipeline to help other formerly incarcerated people transition into scientific research."

Medina-Kirchner studies under Dr. Carl Hart, a neuroscientist who grew up in an impoverished area in Miami dealing drugs as a teenager, who now focuses his research on drug addiction, drug abuse, and its impact on the inner city communities.

Additionally, there's a gang rehabilitation and re-entry program in Los Angeles called The Homeboy Industries. If you're not in Los Angeles, Homeboy Industries created a Global Homeboy Network so that former gang members can find community-based organizations near their own neighborhood.

Lastly, here's a video about the Compassionate Prison Project,

"The Compassion Trauma Circle is where the men and women step inside the circle for each traumatic event they have experienced in their childhood, roughly based on the Adverse Childhood Experiences test created by Dr. Vincent Felitti and Robert Anda of the CDC."

and an educational TED talk on "Adverse Childhood Experiences."

"Childhood trauma isn't something you just get over as you grow up. Pediatrician Nadine Burke Harris explains that the repeated stress of abuse, neglect and parents struggling with mental health or substance abuse issues has real, tangible effects on the development of the brain."

I hope these educational resources give you some clarity and self-compassion for your upbringing. Many people with similar stories like yours are using their experience to become experts in their field to help others and themselves. Thank you for the work that you do in your community and for your courage, perseverance, and strength to keep going.

*The AskMAPS article is for informational purposes only. MAPS cannot provide legal, medical, or mental health advice, nor do we advise on the use of any prohibited substance outside of the approved clinical study setting. Always seek the advice of your physician, mental-health professional, or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition. These emails have been edited for length and to protect the senders' anonymity. Visit our website at maps.org or email askmaps@maps.org for specific questions about psychedelic healing, therapy, or research.*

GRACE CEPE serves as the Communications Associate for MAPS. She has a B.A. in psychology from the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC). At UCSC, Grace was a research assistant for the social psychology department's Sexual and Gender Diversity Laboratory, instructor's assistant for the Introduction to Psychology course, and residential counselor intern for at-risk youth. Before joining MAPS as Community Engagement Associate, Grace volunteered with MAPS and the San Francisco Psychedelic Society and has been an activist with Decriminalize Santa Cruz. Since attending MAPS' Psychedelic Science Conference in 2017, Grace's interests in psychedelics evolved from a primary focus on the clinical applications of psychedelics and into Indigenous ways of life and ceremonial uses, human rights, social justice, and increasing inclusivity and diversity in the field of psychedelics. Outside of her psychedelic work, Grace loves getting involved with her community, spending time in nature, hip-hop and salsa dancing, and getting lost in a good book.