

# Why Do I Take Psychedelics?

**Daniel Elder**

A FEW MONTHS AGO, I had a moment of terrifying doubt that was in turn part of a turbulent sequence in my life. Every moment found me asking myself that most eternal question, “Who am I?” For so long, I had used psychedelics as a guiding tool, a way of defragmenting my overloaded mental hard drive in order to gain a clarity of perspective on myself in the larger scheme of things. But now, disconnected from my love who was halfway across the world on her own adventure, and from my father who had supported me for so long, in a moment when guidance was my greatest need, I began to doubt whether anything could help me, even psychedelics. I thought of them often, and I began to ask myself, “*Why do I take psychedelics at all?*”

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I took out my few remaining psilocybin-containing mushrooms and pondered them. Though it may seem counter-intuitive, I soon came to understand that the clearest way to ask that question and receive an answer was to ingest them. I have always found it beneficial to go into any psychedelic experience with a focused question on the mind. While I never receive an answer in clear plain English, in the days following the experience I come to understand how the experience held relevance to the question in my mind. Sometimes I forget the question once the trip takes hold, but then the next morning I realize that the hours spent contemplating a penny did indeed show me how to understand and come to terms with the dualities of our human existence, for example.

For all that I had asked these substances in the past—and I am indeed a well-traveled psychonaut—it had never occurred to me before to ask them of themselves. But now, in my darkest moment, it was all that I could think to ask. I set a kettle to boil and arranged my apartment for the trip with low lights and

calming music. I sat and cleared my mind of all but the question at hand. The kettle whistled and I brewed the mushrooms into a tea, sipping it slowly.



The question slipped slowly out of my mind as the sensory aspects of the experience became gradually overwhelming. I slowed my breath to calm my quickening heartbeat and tried not to let myself become too distracted by the visual flurries that began to permeate the physical world around me. I grew heavier, and, completely overwhelmed, sank to the floor. I