

Flowing with **Fire**

By Hana Theobald



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There have been numerous times when psychedelics elevated my focus, meditation, and creative processing. These essential aspects of the psychedelic experience have been eternally helpful as an integrative tool into my practice as a performer of fire arts. As a fire dancer, I credit much of my inspiration, movement, creativity, and style to psychedelics and the significant insights they have given me.

Psychedelics allow for profound creative breakthroughs, be it through the visualization of complex geometric patterns, the new appreciation for nuances previously unseen, or, possibly the most significant, the facilitation of “flow.” In my own words, flow is a state of focused relaxation and meditative inspiration, completely immersing oneself in the expressive spontaneous energy of the Now. It is letting go of oneself entirely, allowing the mind, body and soul to collectively operate only by improvisational creative instinct. This organic art of the psyche becomes especially heightened and easily accessible on psychedelics.

In loving memory,
I dedicate this article to
Flow Master Dan, for being
an amazing inspirational fire
guru and for teaching me
how to hone my flow.
Your positive spirit will live on
and burn brightly in all of
the lives you touched.

...time becomes
heavily dilated.
This slow-motion effect,
in combination with
increased visual
acuity, lets me analyze
the slightest nuances in
my movements.

One of the many ways I utilize flow is through fire dancing. There are many different forms of fire dancing with a plethora of props such as staff, poi, whip, and hoop. My preferred fire prop is poi, a pair of weighted balls on the end of two chains about the length of my arm. With one poi in each hand, they are spun in sync to generate circular patterns, leaving beautiful geometric tracers when used with fire or glowing light. Generally I practice poi flame-free, using a pair of weighted socks or glowing LED balls on strings. Spinning poi in an altered state has proven to be inspiring and stimulating for the mind-body connection, thanks to the perceptual shifts that occur on psychedelics.

Not unlike my pupils, time becomes heavily dilated. This slow-motion effect, in combination with increased visual acuity, lets me analyze the slightest nuances in my movements. I can easily recognize my faults or missteps, and figure out what must be changed to perfect that particular technique. By focusing on and repeating one specific movement, I find myself uncovering countless variations of it simply by altering the speed, direction, or timing.

The trailing of vision is an enormous advantage when practicing poi spinning. With glow poi especially, the tracers of colored light work like a paintbrush on a canvas. I can lucidly visualize a pattern in my head then effortlessly

recreate it in reality, drawing and manipulating perfect poi shapes trailing through fluid open space.

I find that I am much more in tune with my body, and more sensitive to kinesthesia, on a low to medium dose of LSD or psilocybin mushrooms. I experience increased coordination and balance, more flexibility, more dexterity, and more overall potential for free-flowing movement. It's easy to focus and center my breathing. I can move my body in ways I'd never considered before, and analyze the sensations of different movements with a fresh perspective. The weight of the poi becomes a part of me, perfectly united with my body as if the chains are extensions of my arms, creating a sense of oneness with the dance. On one mushroom trip, I recall having a powerful mind-body epiphany of the flow of my poi manifesting as a fractalized expansion of my soul.

As I mentioned earlier, the facilitation of flow is probably the most influential aspect of the psychedelic experience in terms of my fire dancing. In general, I believe the best way to practice and polish your skills - with any creative hobby - is to just free-flow and see what you come up with. On psychedelics especially, surrendering to the flow allows you to clear your mind and discover new and completely organic movements and ideas. Novel concepts

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become obvious and easy instead of requiring complex analytical thoughts. I've definitely had some of my greatest breakthroughs of personal expression and creativity while spinning poi on psychedelics.

I have only ever danced with fire under the influence of psychedelics once in my life, so far. However, I must insist upon the obvious danger of playing with fire in an altered state; you could potentially hurt or burn yourself and others around you. I recommend sticking to non-flammable forms of light for your trippy dancing enjoyment. Still, I do not regret it. Taking two potent hits of LSD one night at a tribal fire gathering turned out to induce the most memorable, transforming, revelatory poi sessions I have ever experienced.

As soon as I started spinning, I was locked into a powerful energy force, fueling the synchronized flow of my body and mind. I wasn't just seeing but feeling the patterns around and within me. Surrounding me was an infinite glowing grid holding the fabric of reality in place, upon which I drew perfectly symmetrical circles and exquisite figures, reminiscent of harmonic resonance patterns, with the echoing tracers of the flame. I was performing tricks I had never accomplished before, with a newfound sense of fearlessness and complete trust in my flow. I was overwhelmed with visual inspiration and could barely process the excess of sensations, emotions, and ideas surging through me.

The beat of the nearby drum circle was resonating with my own internal vibrations. I felt each muscle and bone in my body moving in sync with the music. My ego had been temporarily switched off; I could dance freely without thinking or criticizing myself. My world existed of nothing but me and my flow. My movement was meditative and my breathing was calm, strong and centered. My spirit was uplifted and energized; I felt rejuvenated and totally inspired, as if I could accomplish anything.

After what felt like hours but was merely a few minutes, the flames burned out and I sat back down in front of a roaring campfire. Ten or so other fire spinners were arranged

within the circle; I watched them dance from a distance in awe. I soon realized I had developed an extrasensory psychedelic ability to tap into peoples' mental frequencies. It's difficult to explain; I was vicariously experiencing their movements and physical sensations in my own body, visualizing the fire patterns from their perspective in my mind, and understanding exactly how and why they moved in the specific manner in which they did.

More than ever before, I had an overwhelming admiration and respect for everyone's unique sense of flow. I could look into a person's eyes and instantly comprehend their movements on a deep kinesthetic-cognitive level. I felt like I could pick up any fire prop and master it simply by feeding off other fire



Photo by
Jacqui Whitlock

artists' positive creative energies. The LSD renewed me with a sense of confidence and curiosity for fire arts and body movement in general.

That psychedelic experience in particular has been the source of major inspiration for my regular practice sessions and performances. It left a powerful imprint in my memory, and I now aim to get into the same meditative creative mindset I was in that night every time I spin. Psychedelics have helped shape me into a more confident and more expressive fire dancer and performer, and have elucidated the significance and awesome potential of grasping the moment and honing my flow.

Whatever your creative forte may be, I encourage you to experiment, with or without psychedelics, to find your inner flow. There is infinite untapped potential waiting to be released from within. •