

**PSYCHEDELIC SAFETY ALLIANCE**  
NO-BS DRUG EDUCATION FOR RESPONSIBLE ADULTS

## The Psychedelic Safety Quickstart Guide: Installment 3

Hey y'all!

Thank you all so much for the avalanche of questions you've sent in about our Psychedelic Safety Quickstart Guide. It's both exciting and encouraging to see how much you care about taking care of yourselves and the people you care about.

### WHO WE ARE & WHY WE'RE HERE

For those of you just tuning in, the Psychedelic Safety Alliance was founded by people who came of age working in the festival and nightlife industry. In these environments, we began to see a lot of people experience negative outcomes around psychedelics and decided to do something to help.

As nerdy college students, we began a decade-long project of studying all facets of psychedelic safety and assembling a network of experts to help us develop the comprehensive psychedelic safety class we always needed but never had. More about that in a moment.

### THE 5 COMMON PSYCHEDELIC RISK VECTORS

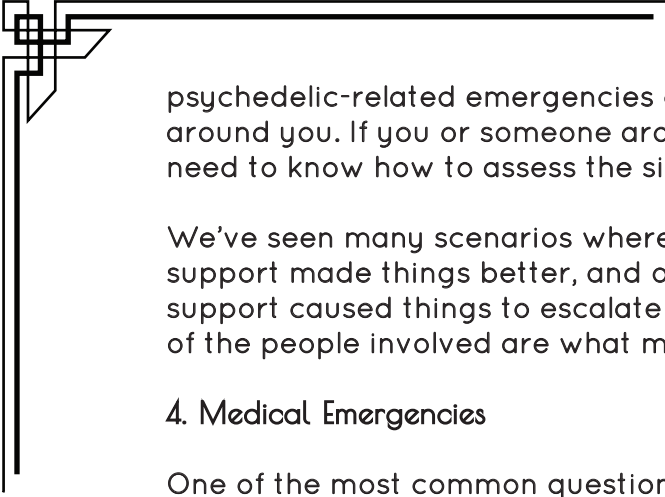
As a quick recap of the first installment, psychedelic safety begins with an understanding of the categories of things that can go sideways and what you can do to mitigate risk in each category.

In our experience, the five most common psychedelic risk vectors are:

1. Incorrect Dosing
2. Harmful Drug Interactions
3. Misrepresented or Adulterated Product
4. Medical Emergencies
5. Psycho-Emotional Crises and Difficult Experiences

In Installment 2, we went over Incorrect Dosing, Harmful Drug Interactions, and Misrepresented or Adulterated Product, and shared some simple tools, skills, and resources which can be used to mitigate risk around these areas.

Unfortunately, even with the best preventative measures possible,



psychedelic-related emergencies can still happen to you or someone around you. If you or someone around you starts to have a hard time, you need to know how to assess the situation and get them the care they need.

We've seen many scenarios where getting someone the correct care and support made things better, and others where incorrect support or no support caused things to escalate and get worse. The skill and awareness of the people involved are what makes the difference.

#### 4. Medical Emergencies

One of the most common questions we've received is, "How do I know if/when I need to call 911?"

Many people having drug-related emergencies are hesitant to call 911 because they're wary of police (justifiably so, especially for POC) and afraid of getting busted for being high or having drugs on them if they call for help.

This concern can lead to delays in seeking medical attention for someone who legitimately needs it, **which can cause dangerous situations to get worse.**

The most important thing you need to know about seeking medical care in a crisis is that emergency medical professionals are not cops. Their job is to keep you alive, not to bust you.

The folks in the ambulance may come with flashing lights, but it's not their job to care about the legality of what brought them there. If you have to go to the hospital, the folks in the ER are not required to call the police on you if you're having a drug-related emergency.

Furthermore, if you're in the US, one result of the American opioid overdose crisis has been that all states have enacted some kind of "Good Samaritan" laws, which protect you from prosecution for drug possession if you are in the act of getting medical attention for someone having an emergency. These laws were specifically passed because lots of people were dying unnecessarily because the people they were with weren't sure whether they'd get busted for getting help.

So: When in doubt, CALL 911 ANYWAYS. With legal protections in your favor, it's better to be overly cautious than totally fucked.

Here are some quick and easy ways to assess whether someone in a crisis needs medical attention:

In an emergency, respiratory issues are the first thing to check for. If someone isn't breathing or their breathing is slower than 10 breaths per minute, call 911 immediately. If they aren't breathing, **perform CPR** until



medical assistance arrives.

Another starting point for assessing whether someone needs medical attention is to run a PWD check to see if their skin is Pink (under fingernails or inside the lip for folks with darker skin tones), Warm and Dry. If someone is blue, cold, overheating, or sweating profusely and can't stop, call 911.

As we mentioned in Installment 2 of our guide, psychedelics from underground markets are now sometimes adulterated with the ultra-powerful opioid fentanyl, which can kill you quickly in extremely small amounts.

This means that, in addition to testing their product for fentanyl, every psychonaut should now also be prepared to assess and reverse an opioid overdose using a drug called naloxone (also known as Narcan). Most first responders now carry Narcan, but we also recommend getting your own, which can often be procured for free at needle exchanges. (HOT TIP: If you're in California, [NEXT Distro](#) will send Narcan to you in the mail!)

To learn the basics, we recommend that you familiarize yourself with the [CDC Guide to Opioid Overdose](#) and watch [this video](#) for an overview on how to use naloxone.

If someone having a hard time on psychedelics is breathing, passes the PWD test, and is able to talk to you, they may be having a psycho-emotional crisis.

## 5. Psycho-Emotional Crises and Difficult Experiences

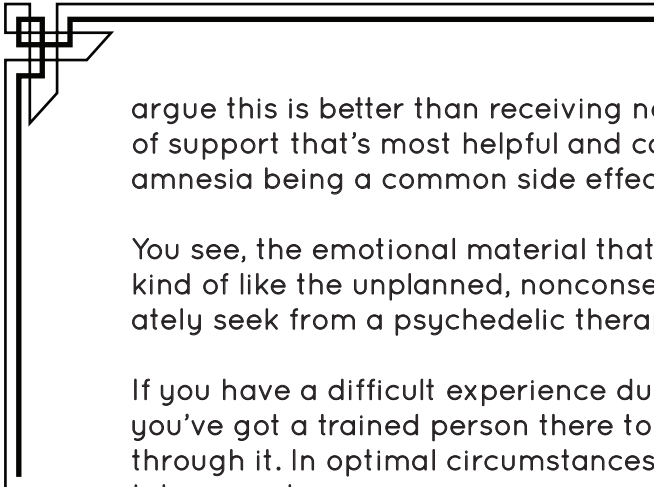
One of the unique things about a psychedelic-related crisis is that the voyager's experience can have an intense psycho-emotional component. In some circumstances, this can lead to intense, overwhelming, and difficult experiences colloquially known as "bad trips."

These types of experiences can include reliving past traumas, scary hallucinations and shifts in perception, and can even lead people to feel like they're dying. This can make things confusing when someone's having a hard time and you're trying to determine whether to call 911 or not.

Pro Tip: People who can tell you they're dying are probably not dying.

You need to know how to differentiate a medical crisis from a psycho-emotional crisis because they require different kinds of support.

Most first responders are not trained to deal with psycho-emotional crises. If you come into an emergency room having a difficult trip, standard procedure is usually to give you benzodiazepines (anti-anxiety drugs) to knock you out and monitor you until the psychedelics wear off. One could



argue this is better than receiving no help at all, but it's not actually the kind of support that's most helpful and can even complicate things later due to amnesia being a common side effect of benzodiazepines.

You see, the emotional material that can arise during a difficult trip can be kind of like the unplanned, nonconsensual equivalent of what people deliberately seek from a psychedelic therapy session.

If you have a difficult experience during a psychedelic therapy session, you've got a trained person there to provide support and help you get through it. In optimal circumstances, you might even emerge with beneficial takeaways!

If you have a difficult experience at an event with quality harm reduction services, you might end up in a quiet tent with someone who can sit with you, keep you safe, and provide comfort and reassurance until the drugs wear off.

When you have a difficult trip in an unsupervised environment you have none of this, and that's not great. Without the right support or follow-up, the emotional material that arises during a psycho-emotional crisis can be traumatic and can even lead to lasting emotional and/or mental health issues.

Our first responder friends have seen a lot of difficult trips which resulted from people taking too much or being in a situation where they probably shouldn't have taken psychedelics in the first place. This is why precise dosing (covered in Installment 2) and tracking your **set and setting** are super important.

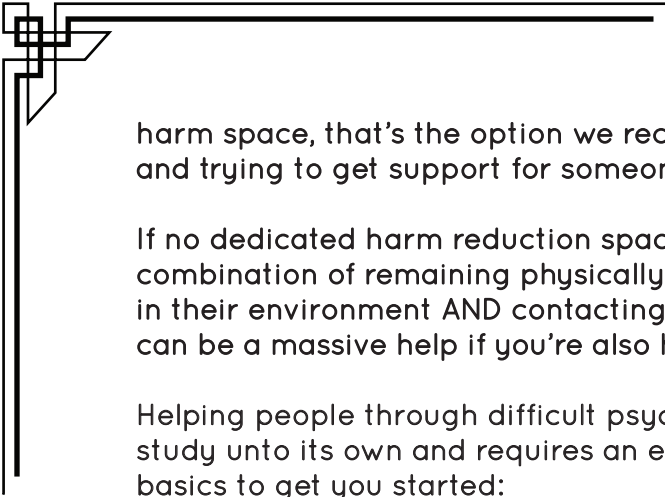
Even with the best preventative measures and planning, psycho-emotional crises can still happen.

If you don't know how to support someone through a psycho-emotional crisis, things can escalate in ways that put the voyager's physical health and safety at risk. Thus, knowing how to support somebody through a difficult trip is a critical psychonaut safety skill, especially if you take psychedelics with other people.

If you or someone you know has a difficult trip and does not need medical attention, your options for care are:

- 1) Yourself (not always possible, especially if you're high too)
- 2) Whomever else is around (no guarantee they'll know what to do)
- 3) A dedicated psychedelic harm reduction space (usually only found at events)
- 4) A remote peer support service (trained assistance, but no in-person supervision)

If you or someone you know has a difficult trip at an event with a dedicated



harm space, that's the option we recommend, especially if you're also high and trying to get support for someone else.

If no dedicated harm reduction space is available, we recommend a combination of remaining physically present to ensure the voyager is safe in their environment AND contacting a remote peer support service, which can be a massive help if you're also high.

Helping people through difficult psychedelic experiences is an entire field of study unto its own and requires an entire class to teach, but here are some basics to get you started:

To learn how to support someone having a difficult psychedelic experience, we highly recommend Adam Rubin's [Psychedelic Crisis 101](#) guide for a quick primer, or the [Zendo Project Training Manual](#) if you really want to get into the finer points.

To access free remote support from someone trained to hold space for you during a difficult experience, [TripSit offers 24/7 online chat support](#).

Most exciting to us, the brand-new [Fireside Project](#) has a number you can call or text (6-2FIRESIDE/623-473-7433) to get in touch with a trained person who can help support you through your experience. (If you have a psychedelic experience you need help integrating or making sense of, you can call them afterwards and they can help you with that too!)

## IT TAKES AN ENTIRE MASTERCLASS TO COVER THIS ALL IN DETAIL

If you learn and consistently apply the skills and awareness we've shared in our Quickstart Guide, you will be better at psychedelic safety than most everyone you know. That said, this guide is far from comprehensive and there's more you need to know if you want to assuage that pre-trip anxiety about things going wrong and truly protect yourself and your people.

That's why we've spent the past 5 years developing a clinically-informed psychedelic safety masterclass, which is designed specifically for people who use psychedelics on their own.

This masterclass is a complete brain dump of everything we know about psychedelic safety, and includes 7 different modules, take-home resources, Q&A sessions, and over 10 hours of video content to help you stay safe and take care of the people you care about.

**The masterclass will begin July 6th and will be delivered via 7 live, biweekly webinars on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 5:30pm PT/ 8:30pm ET.** (We know folks are busy, so a video recap of each module will be available for anyone





who's unable to watch it live.)

We're not sure when we're going to offer this masterclass again, so we wanted to give you an opportunity to get in now, before Hot Vaccine Summer is over.

**Early registration for the course runs from June 28th through July 1st and we'll be offering a personalized Q&A bonus module for people who hop on board during that time.**

There's more to say about the masterclass, but that's not really what we're here to talk about today, so just a heads-up for now.

## THE PSYCHEDELIC SAFETY QUICKSTART GUIDE: IN SUMMARY

Over the course of this guide, we've given you a brief survey of the 5 most common psychedelic risk vectors and what you can do about them.

Though there's a lot more to learn if you wish to level up your psychedelic safety skills, the information in this guide applies to more than just psychedelic drugs and is a valuable addition to any responsible adult's life toolkit. In a world where drugs are ubiquitous and unregulated underground markets thrive, the skills and awareness we've just taught you are the best way to protect yourself and the people you care about.

There's also a big caveat to all this:

**We can't protect you from human nature.**

Doing all the research and applying the safety practices in this guide takes time, more than most people want to spend. We get it. Humans dislike inconveniences, and that means we get lazy, cut corners, take shortcuts, and make assumptions, all in the name of getting to the fun stuff faster. It's just how we're wired.

The best antidote we've found to this is advance planning. Doing all your preventative measures the night before an event is better than trying to hack it together on your phone, in the dark, 5 minutes beforehand. Reviewing your crisis response skills prior to a journey with friends is better than frantically searching your inbox for the link to this guide when someone urgently needs help.

Psychedelic safety is a lifestyle shift. Your willingness to consistently follow these recommendations is what makes this information valuable. We invite you to embrace your inner drug nerd and get into it.

Thanks again for taking the time to read this guide. We appreciate your interest in our work and we hope we've given you a good head start on your own psychedelic safety journey..

Until next time, may the cosmos be ever in your favor.

Love,  
Dax & Ally  
Co-founders, [The Psychedelic Safety Alliance](#)

**Obligatory Disclaimer:**

The Psychedelic Safety Alliance does not provide mental healthcare, medical services, or individual consultation on cases. The Psychedelic Safety Alliance is not a substitute for drug treatment or similar services, medical, psychological, or psychiatric diagnosis, treatment, or advice.

Content produced and distributed by the Psychedelic Safety Alliance is for informational and educational use only. Publications and trainings produced by the Psychedelic Safety Alliance are living documents and may have some outdated information; we do our best to keep resources up to date with the best of our knowledge.

Using psychedelics can pose serious risks to your mental and physical health, and in some cases, using psychedelics can lead to addiction or death. The Psychedelic Safety Alliance does not condone or condemn the use of psychedelics, nor do we encourage you to begin or continue taking psychedelics.

Do not disregard or delay seeking professional advice because of the availability of services or educational materials offered by the Psychedelic Safety Alliance. If you are in a crisis or if you or any other person may be in danger or experiencing a mental health emergency, immediately call 911 (USA) or your local emergency resources. If you are experiencing a medical emergency, please seek medical attention.

