

THE USE OF SOUND IN THE PSYCHEDELIC-ASSISTED THERAPY

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Expanded states of consciousness have been used for physical and emotional healing, transformation, and sustenance of well-being for thousands of years. Singing, rhythm, sounds and vibrations have been an integral part of achieving, enhancing, and working with and through these states. Mind expanding substances have been as well used for thousands of years all around the world.

It has been throughout the history that people using sacraments have been persecuted and tried to be controlled by those in power. The extreme of this has been The War on Drugs that has caused a widespread misunderstanding of the nature of these medicines. For many years scientists have been working with psychedelic medicines in research, trying to create studies, and provide data to show the efficacy of these medicines with the goal of them being rescheduled by the FDA and provide accurate understanding of the potential use of these medicines. Incorporating psychedelic medicine in western culture and medicine would represent an opportunity of revisioning the model of the psyche, the model of healing, and transformation.

The set and setting in psychedelic-assisted therapy refers to the mindset of the client as well as the therapist, and to the environment and way the session is conducted. Music and sound have been shown to be essential part of the experience. Music creates the landscape of the experience, as well as it can serve as a guide, something the client can lean into as they are encountering what the inner healing intelligence brings forward. The inner healing intelligence is a term introduced by Stanislav Grof describing one's innate capacity to heal and the unique quality of the psyche to bring forward in the optimal set and setting what needs to be paid attention to.

There are many known and many unknown ways how psychedelics work and how they facilitate the healing, and various scientists lead discussions about what happens in the brain, and beyond, what are the mechanics of healing. An aspect of the experience that most agree upon is that the client enters into more open space in their minds and bodies, their defenses are lowered, and their unprocessed emotions and experience become more accessible.

Sounds and vibrations have been used for millennia and are considered the oldest healing technologies that have been used for healing and transformation. Lots of research now demonstrates the effectiveness through neuroimaging studies as well as studies of brainwaves, HRV, and vagal tone.

What happens when we combine psychedelic-assisted therapy with sound healing technology, and can it deepen and support the healing process?

What types of sound will be most supportive and in what phases of the psychedelic-assisted therapy (PAT) sessions?

Even though PAT is often described as inner-directed and the job of the therapist is to put aside interventions or goals for the session to allow the inner healing intelligence to guide, in the same time the therapist is providing support, being available for processing, and is creating the set and setting including using music playlists. Therefore I would argue that using sound healing techniques, including sound instruments, tuning forks, and even singing could be incorporated in the psychedelic-assisted sessions.

It would be important to discuss this in the informed consent and preparation sessions so the client would know that the therapist might use the sound. It would be necessary for the therapist to understand how the sound can be used at a specific time and be attuned to what the impact of it is on the client. The therapist as well as the client should be able to follow their inner guiding intelligence when using sound. It should be later discussed in the integration session/s how the sound was or was not helpful in order to plan for future sessions.

The times that sound healing might be useful in PAT could be in the beginning of the session when many clients might be experiencing anxiety about the upcoming experience, and the sound might help them in the transition from an ordinary into the expanded state of consciousness. During the session the sound could be used in the time when the client is internally focused and is processing challenging memories and emotions, the sound could help the client in moving through these parts of the experience. Sound could be used to help the client connect with their heart and support their grieving process. And it could be used in the end of the session when the client is coming back to the ordinary state of mind to provide comfort and soothing. I can also imagine the sound healing being used in the integration sessions following the experience, where some area does not get resolved and the client feels stuck with certain feeling, emotion, or sensation.

Songs with words, chants, or mantras can be used in the end of the sessions as the client is getting ready to come back and reconnecting with the outside world again. One of my favorite songs to use in the end of the session is a song using a beautiful mantra by Ram Dass I am Loving Awareness: <https://open.spotify.com/album/5wOVSiCOmjNrOVTwtInfU2?si=yRjmq4j-TzqKZmEwwzEvUA> or <https://open.spotify.com/track/59wrT695wnW81dAL059CJP?si=WZXY-BwATSiS8D4q5wnUEg>