

116 - Matt Zemon Full ep.

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SPEAKERS

Matt Zemon, David Sandstrom

D David Sandstrom 00:00
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M Matt Zemon 00:10
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D David Sandstrom 01:09
Welcome to the Natural Health Matters podcast where it's all about maximizing your health potential, so that you can look and feel your best at any age. I'm your host, David Sandstrom, naturopathic doctor and biblical health coach. This is episode number 116.

D David Sandstrom 01:29
Hello, natural nation, David Sandstrom here, I want to give you a little bit of an introduction or a disclaimer, if you will, about this episode. Because this episode is not for everyone. We're talking about the using ketamine or psychedelic medications to treat mental health issues that haven't responded to traditional treatment. Now, if you've listened to the show for a while, you

know that I'm into Holistic Health. I believe that human beings are a spirit, we have a mind, and we live in a body. And each part of who we are is interconnected and interdependent, which means what affects one part of our being will by necessity, all to the other parts for good or bad. So if we want to address our health issues in an effective fashion, we've got to address all three parts to the human condition in this episode was specifically talking about mental health issues that haven't responded to traditional treatment. So I want you to know that I'm not advocating recreational use of drugs, not at all. I'm talking about legally obtaining psychedelics from an appropriately licensed healthcare practitioner that knows how to treat stubborn mental health issues. Issues like anxiety, depression, PTSD, addiction, those kinds of things that are really stubborn and many people struggle with for a long period of time. Now, you might be saying to yourself, but Dave, I thought you were into natural health and you didn't advocate drugs? Well, I don't advocate the use of drugs, except for the case of emergencies. I would recommend that natural lifestyle interventions are far more effective. But we're talking about someone who's already done things like cleaning up their diet, gotten on an exercise program address their sleep, of taking supplements, like five HTP or L theanine or Kava Kava tea, that those kinds of things, and they haven't found a resolution to their mental health struggles. So this is a possible solution for that person. Now, I don't know a lot about this subject. And that's why I brought on as a guest, Matt Zeeman. Matt has a Master of Science in Psychology and Neuroscience of mental health. And he graduated with honors from King's College in London. He's the author of the book psychedelics for everyone, a beginner's guide to these powerful medicines for anxiety, depression, addiction, PTSD, and expanding consciousness. So if you or someone you know is struggling with depression, anxiety, PTSD or addiction, and you've been they've done cognitive behavioral therapy, CBT talk therapy, and you haven't found a resolution yet. Stick around. Give this episode a listen. I think he might find it very interesting. So let's jump into my conversation with Matt Zeeman. Today we have in the show, Matt Zeeman. Matt is the co founder of happy.me, a mental wellness company on a mission to improve people's happiness by providing guided psychedelic assisted ketamine therapy and digital wellness programs at home. Matt, Welcome to Natural Health Matters.

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Matt Zemon 04:36

David, it's good to be here. Thanks for having me.

D

David Sandstrom 04:38

Well, it's a real pleasure to meet you. I've got to admit that I'm a complete novice to your field. And I might be a good idea because I think my audience is probably new to this idea as well. But I'm intrigued with the idea of using psychedelics to treat stubborn mental health issues like anxiety, depression, PTSD, they really plague people. And they tend to stick around even with therapy. So well, why don't you just introduce yourself and, and give us the 35,000 foot view of what you're doing today?

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Matt Zemon 05:09

Sure, David. So I fell into this accidentally I was a non drug user and not even a big drinker. And if about four years ago, I had some friends who offered you had hired a guide and said, We're doing a guided magic mushroom or psilocybin journey. Would you like to join us? I think no, I

don't think so. It's not that's not really what they do. But I appreciate the offer. But um, they they were persistent. They said, Look, you like to travel, you like to learn, this is a great opportunity to travel within your mind to learn about yourself. And, and we think it'd be good for you. So they, I think they knew something that I didn't know. And I went ahead and tried it. And it was absolutely one of the most beautiful, life changing things I've ever experienced. And I emerged emerged from it saying to myself, Okay, I need to understand more about what just happened. What is the psychedelic medicine? How does it work. And I went back to school, got a master's in psychology and neuroscience and dove deep into this world, and then wrote this book psychedelics for everyone with a goal of being able to educate people on kind of psychedelics in general. And then deep dive into kind of the eight most recognizable psychedelic medicines, and what are the pros and cons, things to be aware of as people consider this for themselves or for others?

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David Sandstrom 06:29

Yeah, that sounds great. Well, I'd like to dive into a lot of that in a few minutes. But the questions on my mind and I think is on a lot of people's minds is how do you do this legally? I mean, up to now the things is these, these drugs have been illegal. But how do you do it legally?

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Matt Zemon 06:46

Yeah, so the ketamine is a legal psychedelic, it's legal across the United States. So any any, every state has doctors that can prescribe it. And that is a great place for people who want to do it legally in America to start, you can go into a clinic where they will give you either intravenous or intramuscular shots. Or you can even do it at home with oral ketamine where you put under your tongue, you let it sit there for about 15 minutes to 10 to 15 depending on what your doctor prescribes. And then you typically put on an eye mask and have about an hour experience in your house. So lots of different ways with ketamine to do that in all 50 states. Coming soon, the FDA has given breakthrough therapy designation to MDMA and to psilocybin so they're not legal yet you can only do them in clinical studies here clinical trials here in the United States, but um, but they should be legal within the next two years for MDMA, three years for psilocybin. And then certainly people have can travel to other countries, Bahamas, Costa Rica, Mexico, Peru, the Netherlands, Jamaica, all have legal psychedelic experiences that people can choose to do.

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David Sandstrom 07:59

Okay, and and what's the source? Is it mushrooms or what's the source of the medication?

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Matt Zemon 08:04

It depends on where you go and in what you do so mushrooms or psilocybin is often or it's often what's used in retreats in the Netherlands, Jamaica, sometimes Bahamas, Mexico, lowasca is founded a number of retreats in in Central and South America. Ibogaine is becoming

more and more popular for people with opioid addictions. Particularly, it's one of the most powerful medicines for getting off of opioids. And yeah, those are those are probably the three main medicines you find it at legal psychedelic retreats

D David Sandstrom 08:47

Yeah. So you would have to have an MD prescribe it to you or a DO?

M Matt Zemon 08:52

it can be in each state is different on who's allowed, who has prescription prescriptive authority, so it can in some places be physician's assistants, nurse practitioners, MDs, DOs just depends on the state. And that's and again, that is only for ketamine. So Academy is the only one that's legal here in the United States for prescription.

D David Sandstrom 09:11

So it's, it's FDA approved and regulated.

M Matt Zemon 09:16

Yeah, but I want to just clarify that it's ketamine is has been FDA approved and used as an anesthesia for since 1970. Okay, it has been used in mental health for almost as many years but it is not technically FDA approved for mental health. So a number of prescribers are using it in what's called an off label manner. But it's not technically FDA approved for mental health.

D David Sandstrom 09:44

Okay, got you a lot. So that's quite common, though, you know, with with a medical license and doctors are authorized to use off label use. I'm thinking of Viagra was originally used for blood pressure. I think it was and ah people started coming on saying, hey, you know, had this interesting side effect from this medication? And, you know, I get an awful lot of erections and then you know, it took off for that use, which was a first off label.

M Matt Zemon 10:11

Yep, exactly. Yeah, I think yeah, it's a pretty large percentage of drugs that are prescribed off label here in America. So this is not uncommon. But this particular medicine, because it's been around so long has a 20,000 papers on its safety. It's one of the World Health Organization's essential medicines. It's, it's a when used medicinally it is a very safe medicine. It still should be treated with respect and follow your doctor's orders. But yeah, it is a very safe medicine.

D David Sandstrom 10:41

D David Sandstrom 10:41

Yeah, I definitely want to get into you know, the mechanisms and method of action on it. But before we do, the thought that's on my mind right now is, is this addictive is like opioids can people get into trouble with addiction?

M Matt Zemon 10:57

So, in clinical use, there has not been a any addictive. It has not been shown to be addictive. In recreational use and in animals and animal trials ketamine has shown have some addictive potential. So we can then in the, we recommend people do it under a doctor's care. And just be aware that yeah, if if you have substance use challenges, this is something that just to be aware of that ketamine Can, can be addictive. It's one of the few psychedelics that has a has any addictive potential psilocybin, LSD, there's, there's really no addictive potential for those.

D David Sandstrom 11:37

Yeah. Okay. And how long if you take a dose? How long does it last?

M Matt Zemon 11:44

Well, the actual journey itself with ketamine is about an hour, then the question becomes how long from that dose until you need another one is I think you're asking with that. So the way this works is typically people will take six ketamine sessions within six weeks, so kind of stack up six. And then after that, in some cases, they don't need any more ketamine ever. In other cases, they'll say, Okay, let's do it once a month, once every two months, just depending on when people start to feel a difference. And then for others, it's only when there's triggering events in their life, life moving forward. But unlike traditional antidepressants, where you take them everyday, that is not what happens with so you don't build a you don't build up a dependency on them. And you can you can you don't have all the side effects that come with the antidepressants.

D David Sandstrom 12:36

Yeah, that's really cool. So can you get into without getting too technical? What is the what's the chemical mechanism with which this has a positive effect on mental health?

M Matt Zemon 12:49

Yeah, so So ketamine, biologically, changes what's called glutamate activity, and increases BDNF in the brain, which improves neuroplasticity and synaptic strength. It also works to stifle negative thought patterns by suppressing the default mode network, which can provide relief from worry and other symptoms related to anxiety. The dissociative side effects of ketamine allows patients to unlock subconscious thoughts and repressed memories and emotions. And this helps patients open up during psychotherapy if they're doing that as well to explore underlying causes of their symptoms. And then additionally, ketamine has a spiritual effect on

some patients, which helps them connect to a greater meaning of life around them. It offers and then that by itself offers peace and relief from depressive symptoms and, and feelings of hopelessness.

D

David Sandstrom 13:48

Yeah, that's really interesting. So let's, let's say, let's just kind of roleplay here, you know, I know I have a problem with, let's say, anxiety. Sure. And, and I've been, I've been taking some meds got a little relief, but really haven't experienced the kind of breakthrough that I'm looking for. And I'm looking for some solutions. So I find your your clinic or doctor that skilled in this area, and I call them, what's the process? What does it look like and what does a session look like?

M

Matt Zemon 14:18

Sure. So there's lots of different ways that doctors prescribe ketamine. So I'm going to talk about what I think is the best practice. I like it when a clinic will say to you, okay, first let's let's spend some time and talk let's understand what is your intention? What are you trying to get out of the medicine, what has worked and not work? And let's help make sure you're clear on what your intention is. Then when it comes time to the actual medicine. It's great when the clinic tells you in advance this is, this is how you're going to feel these are the things that may come up. This is how you breathe. This is how your body's going to feel so that you are well aware of what the medicine that the experience is going to be like. What do expect you know what to expect than the medicine itself. I like it when it's comfortable. So even if you're in a clinic, if they can make it feel more like a living room or a home where you have a blanket, and you have some nice headphones, and you're cozy, and you're just comfortable, so it's not a medicinal experience, as much as it is a comfortable experience. Ideally, they would also provide some type of music playlist for you. And I like it when they incorporate some type of ceremony, whether that's lighting a candle, creating an altar, reading a verse or a poem, or something that's important to that person. So they're getting into that mindset, as they're going into their journey. For the journey itself, most of the time, people are left to themselves, they just go through the journey, and they have about an hour of that experience. And then afterwards, ideally, the clinic would say what came up for you, and it's, and whether it's a licensed therapist or a guide, the research shows that that's not that that difference is not that important. What's important is that there's someone there who can just help you. process. What did you see? What did you feel? What did you experience? What did that make you think about? And how are you going to incorporate that into your life moving forward? And all of those things happening are in a good clinic or good telehealth company? Those are the things that you really want them doing.

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David Sandstrom 16:26

Yeah, it's I mean, I don't have any experience with this. But it sounds like the experience could be very, very beneficial, but also have the potential to be a negative experience is that is that true or no?



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Matt Zemon 16:40

So there are people have what we call challenging experiences, or, or colloquially, the bad trip. What Johns Hopkins has done with their research is a show that if you pay attention to your set, your setting and your source, the probability of having a bad trip is very, very low. Now you might have a challenging one you might be, you might have some memories that come up that are that are tough to process. But that doesn't mean it's not going to be incredibly meaningful. It's just challenging while you're going through it. So is it possible to have an experience? It's bad? Absolutely, absolutely. But when you have when you know your source, you have the right mindset, and you're in a place that's safe. And with a with support, supporting the people are supporting you. It's extremely unlikely.

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David Sandstrom 17:32

It sounds like you know, by not really intentionally, but you're making the case for doing it with an experienced practitioner, someone who knows what to expect, knows how to guide you through the process. And it knows the potential pitfalls but knows how to navigate those. Is that correct?

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Matt Zemon 17:49

Absolutely. That's absolutely correct. Yeah, you really need that, that support to, to get through this safely.

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David Sandstrom 17:58

So tell us more about about your clinic and what you're doing with making this more accessible and more available to people online without actually being present in a clinic.

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Matt Zemon 18:08

Yeah, so I mean, the clinics are beautiful. They're just expensive. I mean, typically, you're talking about 4500 to \$6,000. For those first six sessions, when you go into a clinic that's give or take a little bit across the United States, it's similar pricing, and I'm assuming the insurance will not pay for them. And insurance does not pay for it. No, not yet. That's something we're all working on. Yeah, with the with companies like happy, which is my company, but there's there's others out there that are good companies, what we're trying to do is bring the cost down, by letting you do it from the comfort of your home. So we connect people with licensed prescribers and help them do their medical intake. And if they qualify, that medical prescriber, we can help facilitate them, just connecting the dots from the prescriber, to the pharmacy to the patient for the member in our case. And then we provide guides who do all those things that we're just talking about for those for those members and, and then we give digital therapeutics or activities on a daily basis. That are though all the habits so we talked about, let me back up for a moment. When I think about a psychedelic, I try to tell people it's not a cure. This isn't a panacea. It's a catalyst. It's a catalyst for change. And what's most important, the psychedelic medicine is what you do afterwards. So you've had this beautiful experience, you've had this inspirational or inspiring experience, what do you do next? And we provide a

bunch of activities that help you incorporate whatever it is that was that came to you into your everyday life. And it's and it's everything from mindfulness based activities, gratitude based activities, just things to help to help keep it alive in that space when you're not using the medicine. Does that make sense?

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David Sandstrom 19:53

Yeah, it does. But what are those look like? More specifically, so when someone you know does a couple of sessions that have some insights, those more specifically looking to serve the details, as you know, how do they keep the the moving in the in the right direction?

M

Matt Zemon 20:10

Sure. So I got a couple, I mean, one is, one thing we recommend highly is to, to do a gratitude journal on a daily basis. So each day, just take take a few minutes doesn't have to be a long time to write down three things that you're thankful for or grateful for, and why you're why you're grateful for it. And just reminding, just trying to turn your head to the positive, a lot of times when you take a psychedelic medicine, you feel incredibly safe, incredibly loved, incredibly positive. And for many people, that's not their everyday existence. So something as simple as a gratitude journal just helps reprogram that mind towards towards the positive and away from the negative, a mindfulness practice or and maybe for a number of your listeners, a prayer practice would be something that we would incorporate, we would encourage that connect with whatever that is, is your higher power, connect with them on a daily basis. And then you can start connecting the dots. So now you're connecting with them. And now can you be grateful? And can you be grateful with them, and move that around? Loving Kindness, random, random acts of kindness for other people would be something we would encourage and again, just trying to stay positive look for opportunities to be positive. And then just there's a number of these evidence based positive psychology type of activities that we we we offer through this digital app that we give our patients?

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David Sandstrom 21:33

Well, you know, what you mentioned, is fairly well known that is beneficial to mental health issues of all kinds. But I think what we're talking about here is when somebody's stuck, and I think a lot of times when particularly with depression, anxiety, PTSD, people feel stuck, and they they don't, they feel like they can't break out of this, this prison that they're in. So I think what you're describing here is it helps people get get out of the starting blocks, you know, break that inertia, and get things moving in the right direction. And then you just simply encourage that movement and keep it going. Is that what you guys are?

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Matt Zemon 22:13

Right on? Yeah, what happens is, as we get older, we all get into kind of repetitive thinking behavior. So and literally behind the scenes in our brains, our neurons are firing in repetitive patterns. Yes, and what a psychedelic medicine does is for whatever, whether it's a one hour ketamine experience, or a six hour mushroom experience, it's going to allow neurons to fire

together that don't normally fire together, it's going to quiet that ego that narrator and, and, and we remember what life was like before we thought the way we think today. And that can then lead to all sorts of inspirations and, and, and ideas. And then we can keep that going when you're not on the medicine. The other thing that happens on a psychedelic that's just beautiful, is it removed somehow, shame, blame and guilt. Which is, which is really incredible. And for me, at least, personally, I didn't realize how much of that I was carrying around until it lifted. And then it was like, wow, I had no idea that I felt this way. And that's it again, and then from there, it's like, okay, I want to live my life with less of that and more happiness. And how do I do that? on an everyday basis?

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David Sandstrom 23:32

Yeah. Can you share some more of your personal experience on and what you what you went through and the breakthroughs you experienced personally?

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Matt Zemon 23:40

Yeah, I mean, the two that I talked about the most is on that first experience. My mom died when she was 49. I was 22. And on that very first, and I've missed her for a long time. And that first experience, I felt her there like she was right beside me and I can pull almost I took about like a string from her to meet him my children. And in an instant I realized, okay, I'm she's not gone, she's just somewhere else. And I can, I am carrying her energy forward And my kids are carrying this forward from me and I could see it all in a way that I didn't, I could see how scared I was of dying. Because I didn't have a connection with the higher power I didn't believe I couldn't I didn't have any concept of how we could live this this afterlife, but this could be like, until I experienced it. And then I was okay. I can see how this makes sense. And and that was that was a game changer completely changed the way I looked at the world. Um, another experience that I talked about that was profound is when I was an early teenager, I had some inappropriate sexual contact with a family member 10 years older, and and I put it into a drawer and never talked about it was mortified. And on one of these experiences you talked about challenging trip, there I was, I was right back in that experience. And and I was able to, without needing to forgive or condone the behavior. I could see her as somebody who was in desperate need of love was hurting, who was dealing with her own substance use issues, who was rejected from her father feeling very alone in the world. And I could see her as a human and I could have empathy for her for where she was not, again, not forgiving, you're condoning what she did. But I could, I could understand her as a human. And right after that, it just I healed I what I don't carry a hole there, I don't get embarrassed talking about it anymore. It's, it's just something that happened. Yeah. And that's incredible. I didn't even know I needed to heal from that, I just thought it would work by keeping in the drawer.

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David Sandstrom 26:00

Well, you know, on the show here, we talk a lot about about forgiveness to those that have hurt us. And, you know, of course, the person that the perpetrator may benefit from our offering forgiveness, but they may not, they might not even know, they may not even be alive, yet we can still forgive. And one of the most important components of forgiveness when you leading someone through that process, is to understand that they're a human being full of flaws, just

like you and me, and full of life experience that, you know, could be very challenging and lead them to behave the way that they did. And it sounds like you've kind of connected the dots there. And it's been very, very freeing for you.

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Matt Zemon 26:40

Absolutely, and something I I wasn't willing to tackle. Otherwise, actually, it was gonna be willing to David, it wasn't one of my intentions. It just happened on this experience. So yeah, and I hear stories all the time about people who have really healed some some deep, traumatic events through this time of medicine. And we talk about that treatment resistant depression and anxiety and PTSD. The statistics on PTSD are really almost unbelievable. This is there's a phase three clinical trial that just finished with a with a medicine called MDMA, or we all knew it as ecstasy when we were kids. They're using people who have like, like veterans, first responders, victims of sexual assault people whose no medication has worked, no talk therapy is war. And with three MDMA sessions, 67% no longer qualifies having PTSD was a big, big number. That staggering, staggering. And this isn't like some tiny little trial. This is a phase three clinical trial. The ethics, this is why the FDA has given us breakthrough therapy designation. This is why it has bipartisan support. This is why it's getting donors from across the political spectrum. It's a big deal. These medicines, we are really doing some incredible, incredible healing. And and for people who need them, it should be in their iPad, it should be in their toolbox for professionals to use.

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David Sandstrom 28:15

Well, you know, that brings up another question that I had for you. And that is, with any emerging technology, there's going to be people that are trying to jump on the bandwagon and may or may or may not be qualified to offer that service. Is there any type of certification board that people can go to to establish the fact that they are, you know, have some training in this and have some experience?

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Matt Zemon 28:41

So it's a tricky question. There are a number of organizations that offer certifications. But so far there isn't a certifier of the certifiers. So it's it's hard for the consumer to know if I have this certification versus that certification, which is better. There are also people who, who don't necessarily believe in this from a medical model perspective, but are more approaching this from a spiritual perspective. And they're looking for healers and people approached with more of a spiritual lens that might not have the certifications, but have a lineage of of history and experience. So it's a little tricky right now. There is a board being created. That's that does seem to have some funding, that is trying to find a way to certify both people on the medical side and give credit for those who have a lot of experience but are approaching it more from a spiritual side.

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David Sandstrom 29:40

Well, you know, when it comes to the spiritual side, the first time I ever heard about psychedelics being used in this fashion was on was Ben Greenfield and his podcast Ben

psychedelics being used in this fashion was on was Ben Greenfield and his podcast Ben Greenfield life and he had a guy on it was similar background to you. And they were talking about this and he's a follower of Jesus Christ. Ben Greenfield is a follower of Jesus Christ as I am. And that was the first time I heard someone that was, you know, a Bible believing Christian that said, hey, you know, this, this is worth looking at. This is very, very promising. And that was first time I heard that. And then when I when I when you reached out to me, I thought, you know, this is this is a conversation probably worth having. Speaking to that, is there anything that you would recommend websites or books that you recommend people if they want to learn more?

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Matt Zemon 30:24

Yeah. So certainly what I've tried to put together is something that anybody can read. It's not written for somebody with a science background, but I did have every chapter medically reviewed, for accuracy. So I'm psychedelics. For everyone. I have a book of the audio book. I love Michael Pollan's work. So if people are readers how to change your mind is a great book. And then there's a four part Netflix series. So if you don't want to read, you just want to kind of get a good overview. That's, it's really well done. And that's a great, great place to start. I think there's

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David Sandstrom 30:58

what's the do you know, the, you know what the Netflix series is called

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Matt Zemon 31:01

it's called how to change your mind as well. It's the same title as the book. And that's on Netflix so highly recommend that.

D

David Sandstrom 31:08

Very good. And just to make sure, I want to be clear that your book is called psychedelics for everyone, a beginner's guide to these powerful medicines for anxiety, depression, addiction, PTSD, and expanding consciousness.

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Matt Zemon 31:20

Yes, exactly. I think Dr. Carl Hart's book is a great place to start as well. He has a book called drug use for growing up. So he's a, he's a professor at Columbia. He's been working in, in addiction space for 20-30 years, and came out and wrote this book and said, Look, here's here's the real deal on drugs. Here's the things that you need to understand. here's the here's the incentives for us in academia, in journalism, and police, and how kind of the War on Drugs has been thought. And here's some real information. So I think his book is also a fascinating book.

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David Sandstrom 31:55

So can you give us any, any examples, any testimonials from from your experience in your clinic of people that have come in, you know, and experienced breakthroughs? Any any that come to mind? Any highlights?

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Matt Zemon 32:08

Oh, my goodness. Wow, I mean, so many, there's, as I think about people that I've, I've, oh, my goodness, that's it's such a, normally I have, like, 10, I have a younger person who who talks about before his psychedelic experience, he thought life was a joke, and therefore his life was a joke. And after a psychedelic experience, he felt that he sees that there's a purpose that he believes in, there's a God, and that he can do better. And I've watched him in the last couple years completely change his life trajectory. Using the psychedelic became a wake up call for him.

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David Sandstrom 32:55

I've had it just going from not not acknowledging God to acknowledging these systems of higher power, they can do a lot right there,

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Matt Zemon 33:01

they can do a lot. And I think that's, again, that caught me off guard, it's one thing to be told or like, Oh, we're all brothers and sisters, or it's nothing to feel and to feel in a way that's like, of course, of course, you feel it in your DNA in your in your soul, right? Meaning, it gives life a lot of meaning, a lot of meaning. And the idea that you it's not just I mean, it's connected to every human it's connected to nature differently, it's connected to the ground, it's it's and for lack of better word connected to energy, you can see again, this idea of, okay, if we can leave at some point our physical bodies and become just a soul or a spirit or whatever, whatever word people would like to use, how can that exist? And and many of these psychedelic medicines, you can, you can see it, because you've separated from your body for some period of time. And you've habit in some other, you're operating on another plane. Yeah, it's super powerful.

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David Sandstrom 34:04

Can psychedelics help people with grief?

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Matt Zemon 34:07

Yeah, in a big way. I mean, the So John, so a lot of research on this. And the research is done typically with people in palliative care. So their their end of life. Johns Hopkins is doing some great studies with people with terminal terminal illness. So let's see what happens. You have a terminal illness. So you of course, you're it's very natural that you would have you'd interned in depression, you know it turn to anxiety, you'd have a fear of the unknown. You have trouble

connecting with your family because you're scared. All that makes sense. And many of these people who are able through in the research side in clinical trials to get access to a psychedelic medicine and have a significant psychedelic experience. The depression lifts the anxiety becomes reduced. They have less fear because of all the things we've been talking about. out, they they may have connected with a higher power in a way that they haven't previously, they may understand that there can be life beyond their physical body in a way that they didn't. They do feel connected to their loved ones in a way that is significant. And yeah, so I think it can sort of looking at that person looking out. Absolutely. And then I'll use I'll use me again looking at I mean, I didn't think of it as grief. But I missed my mom profoundly. I understood what really I understood the low point of my register when she died. And in a single psychedelic session, that was all lifted. And I just, I wish I did it 20 years ago.

D

David Sandstrom 35:44

And was that a guided session with a professional? Yeah,

M

Matt Zemon 35:47

yeah, I definitely. When you're taking large doses of psychedelics, you are very vulnerable. You're in a, you're in an altered state. You really need to have somebody who is keeping you safe, and also knows what to do and what not to do. And other not to do. They're not there to give you an opinion. They're not there to stop you from crying, they're not there to tell you to do anything. They're there to just keep you safe, and let you know that someone's there with you. But your body will you should be able to process this medicine and come to your own realizations without somebody telling you Oh, this is what that meant.

D

David Sandstrom 36:31

Yeah, I got you. So the people generally have their eyes closed or wear a mask during the session.

M

Matt Zemon 36:38

different philosophies I like what, again, Johns Hopkins has done were used these masks that have the eye holes cut out, so it's still black, but your eyes can stay open. And in that darkness. I've seen the most beautiful things I've ever seen in my life, and the biggest things I've ever seen in my life. But it's just astounding. Yeah, it's like this Technicolor TV set. But it's essentially all blackness, your your mind is is making it all happen.

D

David Sandstrom 37:10

Wow, that's interesting. I'm thinking about you know, I make my bedroom very dark, because we sleep better when it's dark out. And I have blackout curtains and my bedroom at night is very, very dark, I can't see my face in my hand in front of my face. And there is a different

experience to total darkness with your eyes open. Then with them closed, it is a different experience for sure.

M

Matt Zemon 37:32

It is these masks that really do. I mean, the goal is total darkness but your eyes open. And then typically, especially in the academy, it's an hour. Yeah, just keep your mask. But for the six, seven hours psilocybin journeys, it's it's the first few hours to be at the mask is lovely. And then typically people will take them off. And if you're around nature, experience some of that or, or not. I mean, the mask is beautiful to stay in that inner journey as well. Yes, you have options.

D

David Sandstrom 38:04

Do you offer retreats for people?

M

Matt Zemon 38:07

Do I personally know that's not, again, until it's legal here in the States? That's a challenge. There are nice retreats that are out there that are that are legal that you can find in different countries. And then there are underground retreats that are out there. But you just kind of have to know somebody who knows somebody to find them. It's harder. And then and then that is where it's also I encourage if you're gonna go that way. I mean, there's some beautiful retreats out there. I've certainly done a number of them. It's a ask the questions, how many people are going to be there? What is the background of the person delivering the the medicine? Where do they get their medicine from? What happens if something does go wrong? Is there a what is your what is the medical protocol? And then also checking on dogma and there's a lot of a lot of these are spiritually based, which is beautiful. But is it a? Is it an inner healing? Is it a is it tied to a specific faith? Or is or is there a dogma or is it no we just just your you're gonna allow the believe whatever you believe we just believe that this is a a sacrament or communion with God. Great. But if there is a dogma, knowing what that is ahead of time is helpful.

D

David Sandstrom 39:24

Yeah, yeah, it'd be good filter. Yeah. See if that's a good fit for you. Exactly. Yeah, got that. Yes. Any other questions? So much of those are great questions, by the way, but any other questions that someone might want to ask before choosing on a practitioner or retreat?

M

Matt Zemon 39:42

Yeah, I definitely check on the amount of people and check on the sleeping arrangements. Many of these retreats have communal like bunk rooms, single sex bunk rooms, which is which is fine, but you should just at least know what you're going into. I love the group work I think I think retreats have 10 to 20 P people are beautiful there's there's a collective energy, there's a there's a collective healing, there's a collective journey and it's it can be beautiful. But um, but other retreats people believes there are other people who believe that 40 is the right number

others believe 80 is the right number. I don't but that's not my I don't, it's just not for me, but at least people should know going in. What is this I also like when there's some type of code of a code of conduct, like we're all agreeing we're gonna stay in this place for this time that there's gonna be no sexual contact, there's gonna be there's gonna be no opinions offered. Just, just just love and questions.

D David Sandstrom 40:49

Yeah, speaking of which, I know that the you may make reference to northstar.guide. And that website has a listing of the principles that it will pledge to, I think that that's a useful resource.

M Matt Zemon 41:06

It's a great and they do really beautiful work and and definitely checking out their principles and, and those principles. You can be Christian, you can be Jewish, you can be Muslim, and these principles do do not, do not interfere with anyone's specific faith. These are just Yeah, towards psychedelic experiences.

D David Sandstrom 41:27

I've read through them. And, you know, it's a lot. It's a strong commitment to integrity, ethics, and legal, you know, in a supportive fashion, it all sounded really good to me. I encourage people to check that out.

M Matt Zemon 41:42

It is good. And there's groups like them. There's another group called the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies that has some best practices other stuff group called chick Chacruna, are you in a that has some great best practices as a good resource. There are organizations out there that are really trying to provide some harm reduction based yeah philosophy so that people can make better decisions. And then again, that's what I've tried to do in my book as well. Michael Pollan has tried to, I think, is done. And I think in many ways, this is just trying to help people go with their eyes open to have the best possible experience for them.

D David Sandstrom 42:25

Yeah, I'll make sure to put links to all that we mentioned in the show notes.

M Matt Zemon 42:29

Perfect, David. Yeah, this is where I really appreciate the types of questions you're asking. These are, these are, these are solid, solid questions, and hopefully, your listeners, if this is something that they're considering for themselves, or for a loved one can, will hear that there

are options, and there's information out there for them. And that this isn't a it's so funny. I mean, we've lived our anyone born 1970. And after we've lived our whole life after Prohibition, so all we know is drugs are bad, they're gonna fry your brain, you're gonna get addicted, there's no medical use. And none of that was based on science. So hopefully, if your listeners still listening here, 45 minutes into this thing, that, um, there's something that's drawing them to this, and that they can do, they can find some information and go help themselves or someone they love, or with whatever they're looking for.

D David Sandstrom 43:19

Yeah. So if someone is listening right now, and they want to get a hold of you, what's the best way to do that, Matt?

M Matt Zemon 43:25

Matt zeeman.com is my website. There's a direct form. Like to me, I'm on LinkedIn, as well, and Instagram. So either way, feel free to reach out, I'm here to serve. So happy to answer any questions anyone has, feel free to reach out.

D David Sandstrom 43:40

Excellent. All right. So if you want to do summarize the most important thing you'd like people to take with them, what would it be?

M Matt Zemon 43:48

Think if I had to pick one thing is that we have been what we've been told about psychedelic medicine for 50 years is simply not true. That was based on political reasons, not science. There's 300 academic institutions studying psychedelics right now. Lots of research. And they are helping many, many people who had nowhere else to turn. So if I had to pick anything, that this is a powerful medicine, that can really help people. And I hope that again, whether it's for you or someone you love, that being open to the idea of psychedelic medicine is, I think, important for all of us.

D David Sandstrom 44:27

Excellent. That's a great word. Well, Matt, thank you so much for sharing your wisdom with an explanation today. I appreciate it.

M Matt Zemon 44:33

David, I appreciate what you do. And thanks for having me on.

D

David Sandstrom 44:36

For more, go to the show notes page at davidsandstrom.com/116. There you can find links to all the resources that we mentioned, as well as a video and an audio version of the podcast. And I always include some type of a content upgrade to help you go deeper with that subject. If you're enjoying the show, you sure would appreciate you telling a friend about it. The number one way someone finds a podcast is that a friend tells them in this information. is hard to come by. So I bet a few of your like minded friends that they would appreciate you letting them know about the show. Thank you in advance for your support. I appreciate you and I'll talk with you next time be blessed.