

# Ayahuasca and the Unified Integrative Model of Medicine: A Path to Healing and Spiritual Transformation

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**Received:** 02 Jan 2025; **Accepted:** 08 Feb 2025; **Published:** 17 Feb 2025

**Citation:** Nader Butto. Ayahuasca and the Unified Integrative Model of Medicine: A Path to Healing and Spiritual Transformation. Int J Psychiatr Res. 2025; 8(1); 1-16.

## ABSTRACT

*This article explores the multifaceted therapeutic and psycho-spiritual dimensions of ayahuasca within the framework of a unified integrative model of medicine. Ayahuasca, a traditional South American brew with rich ceremonial roots, has gained global recognition for its ability to catalyze profound psychological and spiritual transformations. Highlighting its historical, cultural, and scientific aspects, the paper delves into the physiological, emotional, and spiritual effects of the brew, offering insights into its capacity to address a wide range of issues, including addiction, trauma, and existential crises. The proposed therapeutic protocol emphasizes the necessity of proper preparation, professional guidance, and integration processes to harness the full potential of ayahuasca for healing and self-realization. The article also underscores the importance of monotheistic prayer during ceremonies, reinforcing a connection with divine forces as a cornerstone for achieving balance, personal transformation, and holistic well-being. By bridging indigenous wisdom and contemporary science, this paper presents ayahuasca as a powerful tool for facilitating deep healing, spiritual awakening, and the realization of a unified, harmonious state of being.*

## Introduction

Ayahuasca has a long history of ceremonial use, and its recent worldwide expansion is providing an unprecedented opportunity to study its impact on human health. In recent decades Ayahuasca has gained the attention of researchers in multiple disciplines worldwide due to its acclaimed therapeutic and spiritual qualities. An increasing number of papers suggest reasonable safety and benefits in mood and psychiatry symptoms in the areas of substance use disorders, anxiety and depression.

Originally used by indigenous shamans for the purposes of spirit communication, magical experiences, healing, and religious rituals, across several South American countries ayahuasca has been incorporated into folk medicine and spiritual healing, and several Brazilian churches use it routinely to foster spiritual experience. More recently it is being used in Europe and North America, not only for religious or healing reasons, but also for emotional liberation and spiritual evolution. Ayahuasca is a traditional South American brew which is an admixture of two plants: the harmaline containing vine *Banisteriopsis caapi*, and the DMT-containing leafs from the *Psychotria viridis* bush [1]

and it could include other ingredients that are legally available. It is typically administered by a trained expert in a ritual context. The brew is used as a traditional spiritual medicine in ceremonies among the indigenous peoples of the Amazon basin and is used largely as a treasured sacrament. In the jungle, the plant mixture is the "vine of the soul" or the "vine of the dead". Unlike the short-lived effects of ingesting DMT in a pure form, ayahuasca effect can last up to 10 hours. The psychedelic effects of ayahuasca include visual and auditory stimulation, the mixing of sensory modalities, and psychological introspection that may lead to great elation, fear, or illumination [2].

In the late 20th century, Westerners have flocked to the Amazon for a taste of the region's most notorious elixir and the practice of ayahuasca drinking began spreading beyond the Amazon in the last few decades, reaching around the globe in contexts of religious, shamanic, psychotherapeutic, and hybrid ayahuasca rituals [3,4].

Ayahuasca attracts Westerners for all kinds of reasons. Some are searching for their next big spiritual awakening; some want to be healed of serious illnesses and addictions. Others try it to recover

from debilitating grief, to combat anxiety, or just to get high on the holy grail of drugs. Some are seeking healing: for depression, alcohol-related issues, tobacco and drug addictions, arthritis, diabetes, skin diseases, cancer and more. Others drink ayahuasca because they're curious and want to learn about it, or they're looking for a new direction in life. This has raised increased scientific and lay interest during the last two decades. Scientific interest in ayahuasca has increased greatly in recent decades, so the main directions of its possible therapeutic use have already been outlined. However, legal status of the brew resulting from its DMT content greatly complicates its scientific understanding. Many findings, therefore, come from surveys conducted among members of Brazilian syncretic churches, where the legal use of ayahuasca is primarily for religious rather than therapeutic purposes. There's preliminary evidence that it has the potential to change life attitudes for the better in cases of drug addiction, depression and trauma.

People who work with Ayahuasca in non-traditional contexts often align themselves with the philosophies and cosmologies associated with Ayahuasca shamanism, as practiced among indigenous peoples like the Urarina of the Peruvian Amazon [5]. While many take Ayahuasca for its vivid and realistic hallucinations and the promise of insight into the mysteries of the mind, some are unprepared for the negative side effects of Ayahuasca. These intense side effects virtually guarantee that Ayahuasca will never be a popular psychedelic drug.

Its purgative properties are important physically and spiritually. The intense vomiting and occasional diarrhea it induces can clear the body of worms and other tropical parasites [6]. This purging is considered by many shamans and experienced users of ayahuasca to be an essential part of the experience, as it represents the release of negative energy and emotions built up over the course of one's life [7]. The ingestion of Ayahuasca can also cause significant, but temporary, emotional and psychological distress. The temporary non-Entheogenic effects of Ayahuasca can, depending on dosage, include tremors, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, autonomic instability, hyperthermia, sweating, motor function impairment, sedation, relaxation, vertigo, dizziness, and muscle spasms, which are primarily caused by the Harmala alkaloids in Ayahuasca. Long-term negative effects are not known [8,9]. A few deaths due to participation in the consumption of ayahuasca have been reported, although none have been linked specifically to Ayahuasca itself, but are usually said to be due to other factors [10-12].

Some of the deaths may have been due to unscreened pre-existing heart conditions, interaction with drugs, such as antidepressants, recreational drugs, caffeine, or nicotine (from drinking Tobacco tea for purging/cleansing), or from improper or irresponsible use due to behavioural risks or possible drug to drug interactions [13-14]. Ayahuasca also has cardiovascular effects, moderately increasing heart rate and diastolic blood pressure. In some cases, individuals experience significant psychological stress during the experience. It is for this reason that extreme caution should be taken with those who may be at risk of heart disease [15].

The wide spectrum of ayahuasca's effects makes this plant remedy more interesting and promising for future explorations. However, it's very serious medicine; very deep, very quick. Therefore, the ayahuasca experience can be intense and even psychologically destabilising, one should be careful when choosing a proper ceremonial guide. Shamans and experienced users of ayahuasca advise against consuming ayahuasca when not in the presence of one or several well-trained shamans [16].

While non-native users know of the spiritual applications of ayahuasca, a less well-known traditional usage focuses on the medicinal properties of ayahuasca. When used for its medicinal purposes, ayahuasca affects the human consciousness for less than six hours, beginning half an hour after consumption and peaking after two hours.

Fundamental to ayahuasca's appeal is that, unlike western medicine, it is believed to address the true causes of illness and make no distinction between mind and body. Ayahuasca practitioners see the physical manifestation of some mental, emotional, psychological or energetic disorder. Traditional use of Ayahuasca involves only the curanderos drinking, for divination, such as diagnosing psychosomatic or ethno-specific illnesses with no western equivalent, or for contacting the spirit world.

In the last 50 years, however, Western culture has lost its native spirit. This is the result of a long process of disenchantment that began around the Reformation and continued through the scientific and industrial revolutions. Of course, there were ecstatic revivals, such as Romanticism, but they were counter currents to the mainstream. Regardless of their cultural or spiritual beliefs, people who have consumed ayahuasca report mystical or religious experiences and spiritual revelations regarding their purpose on earth, the true nature of the universe, and profound insights into how to be the best person possible [17]. This is considered by many to be a spiritual awakening and is often described as rebirth [18].

In addition, it is often reported that people feel they can access higher spiritual dimensions and contact various spiritual or extra-dimensional beings who can act as guides or healers [19]. This reveals a world of difference between Western and Amazonian theories of mental illness and healing. Westerners see mental problems as caused by emotions often rooted in family relationships and childhood trauma, and think that healing involves release, acceptance, love, forgiveness, and sometimes an encounter with one's higher self or a benevolent higher power, rather than with a local and morally unambiguous shaman and spirits. Instead of the Amazonian notion of controlling spirits to expose one's secret enemies and seek revenge, Westerners use ayahuasca to identify the traumas or emotional blocks in their psyche and find healing through acceptance, love, perseverance, and surrender to a benevolent higher power.

However, the Amazon shaman and the Western tourist meet in the incredible intensity of the ayahuasca ceremony, despite a

'fundamental misunderstanding' and the completely different models of what is happening. But they both go home satisfied. They succeed in part because the ceremony uses music and gestures, while verbal interaction is kept to a minimum. Western or indigenous mediators help translate what is happening into terms that Western clients can accept, such as 'facing your shadow' or 'discovering your true self.'

From a neural perspective, neuroimaging studies have reported activation in areas associated with emotional processing and memory formation after ingestion of ayahuasca. These results suggest that ayahuasca, like exposure therapies, allows for the reliving of emotional events, but with greater vividness and a stronger sense of "reality." Preliminary results on the potential psychological mechanisms associated with therapeutic benefits suggest similarities with mindfulness-based therapy. Ayahuasca appears to improve self-acceptance and decentring, critical aspects associated with psychotherapeutic treatment outcomes for various psychiatric disorders. The ayahuasca-induced state may be beneficial in the treatment of trauma, substance use disorders, impulsive disorders, and certain patients with borderline personality disorder. It is remarkable that no visionary natural substance, including ayahuasca, is addictive. On the contrary, it is used as addiction therapy. Visions seem to be evidence of sufficient cortical integration, of metabolism of the symbolic charge revealed during the experience of altered consciousness. In addition, ayahuasca can be used by therapists and others to increase mindfulness and spiritual development, to be free of emotional conflict, with a state of mind in which they feel able to carry out their projects in life with a sense of love, happiness and freedom. This is the new definition of well-being proposed by Unified Integrative Medicine ideated by Dr. Butto [20]. Therefore, for future studies, it is necessary to create appropriate frameworks and involve clinicians with specialized training to ensure an effective therapeutic effect and the safety of the participants.

### **The Proposed Model**

There is an unmet need for a unifying model that integrates the physical body, the psyche, and the soul. The ideal therapeutic system should be based on a holistic model, which is a systemic model in which multiple biological, psychological, social, and spiritual factors are seen as interrelated and mutually influence. Such a model should be effective in restoring the state of well-being with minimal cost. It will be able to restore the flow of vital energy, strengthen constitutional power, and increase the individual's ability to accomplish life projects according to his path, giving him a sense of fulfilment and happiness. An effective therapeutic system will provide solid, reliable and verifiable results and should be simple and easily accessible to all members of the population.

Dr. Butto, orthodox physician and invasive cardiologist, proposes a unified integrative medicine based on the model of holistic well-being that recognizes the body, psyche and soul as an integrated and coherent whole, with the aim of creating a medicine capable of maintaining health by achieving physical, emotional, spiritual and

social well-being and placing its emphasis on prevention [20]. It presents a new vision of reality based on the relationship between energy and matter, combining relativity and quantum mechanics.

This model implements the WHO definition of health, which states, "Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" [21].

The riddle of the soul is solved when it is said that every human being is a biological complex subject to the energetic forces that direct and guide his physiological, metabolic, genetic and psychological functions, these energies are collectively called the soul [22]. Thus, it pays attention to the integrity of the body by regulating diet, physical activity and breathing, sexual behavior, the quality of rest and sleep, and the nature of relationships with others. It emphasizes love, connections and support for others to find hope, comfort and inner peace. Integrative medicine allows one to examine the quality of a person's inner resources, the capacity to give and receive spiritual love, and the nature of relationships and connections that exist with self, community, environment, and nature. The therapist's task is to help the patient to expand his present state of consciousness, to become aware of his needs, to search for meaning and purpose in order to achieve greater creativity and the elevation of the spirit, to increase compassion and unconditional love in order to give him a sense of liberation, satisfaction, personal fulfilment, wholeness and happiness, and thus well-being and health. The uniqueness of the method lies in the fact that it clearly and completely defines the connection between a mental crisis and damaged organs [23], and to relate the manner of response to the crisis to the specific type of disease of the organ energetically associated with the crisis [24]. In this way, it is possible to understand the nature of the crisis by observing the disease and identifying the type of response that is appropriate for managing the crisis [25].

According to this model, the patient takes a significant part in the cure and healing process, collaborating and sharing data and doubts with the doctor/practitioner to find the most appropriate solution for him/her. His mental state, fears and feelings are considered, which helps him to see the connection between emotional crises and physical diseases. The functional diseases (the so-called non-organic ones), which are common but still not well treated, assume a central importance, since they are considered early harbingers of future diseases and therefore, if well treated, lead to the prevention of organic diseases.

### **The Scientific Models Behind the Ayahuasca Effect The Current Neurological Model**

The current scientifically accepted model of the effects of ayahuasca is based on the effects of ayahuasca on the brain. In this model there is no room for an objective spiritual dimension. From a neural perspective, neuroimaging studies have reported activation in areas associated with emotional processing and memory formation following ayahuasca ingestion. These results suggest that ayahuasca, similar to exposure therapies, allows for

the replay of emotional events, but with greater vividness and a stronger sense of "reality". Classical models of brain dynamics have emphasized bottom-up or feed-forward transmission of information through various stages of increasing processing complexity, from sensory-specific areas to multimodal association centres that combine information from different channels into a meaningful whole. However, more recent views postulate that top-down control also plays an important role in the interpretation of internal and external information. According to this alternative model, the experience of reality would be strongly dependent on prior knowledge and expectations [26].

The more recently proposed model [27] postulates that ayahuasca and psychedelics generally reduce top-down compulsions or expectations and increase excitability in areas involved in sensory, thought, and emotional processing. The reduction in cognitive access by the frontal cortex, combined with increased activation in the aforementioned areas, allows weak endogenous activity to be consciously perceived. Increased excitability in multimodal brain areas such as the temporo-parieto-occipital junction and the medial temporal lobe MTL [28] would explain the rapidly evolving changes in thought content, memories, and new associations reported by users. Stimulation of areas associated with emotional processing, such as the amygdala, insula, and anterior cingulate cortex, would be responsible for the intense emotional nature of the experience. Ayahuasca users often report using ayahuasca to gain insight into personal problems or to gain a new perspective on a particular issue [29].

In support of this assertion, research findings indicate that in the 24 hours following an ayahuasca session, certain psychological abilities such as self-acceptance and a detached view of one's thoughts and emotions are enhanced [30]. These constraints would be present at all levels of the hierarchy of feed-forward and feedback loops, and the entire system would be under the executive control of the frontal cortex. These interesting findings open a path for exploring the potential therapeutic applications of ayahuasca.

### **The Spiritual Model**

The current neurological model cannot explain the psychological needs and religious and spiritual beliefs that are prevalent throughout the world. Therefore, there is no model that can satisfy the deeper spiritual dimension. Unified Integrative Medicine proposes to integrate both models, the neurological and the spiritual, based on scientific physical principles.

Man has attempted to gain a deeper insight into the spirit world, unfortunately with relatively little success. Although it is the object of great curiosity, we should realize that it is the world from which we come and at the same time the world in which we will live forever. Communication with God in prayer or through meditation, visions or dreams should be enough to convince us that it is real. But many people do not consider this "evidence" sufficient. The ritualization of induced changes in consciousness, with or without substances, creates a universal symbolic framework within which these experiences acquire meaning by allowing individuals to

inscribe themselves into a model of cultural integration.

In indigenous groups, then, such experiences are often accompanied by rites of passage, especially during adolescence, which allow young people to appropriate the discourse, images, and myths of the community. It is evident that the fundamental lack of cultural consensus in our fragmented postmodern society, together with the desacralization of the lived interior and exterior and the disappearance of all authentic rites of passage, deprives us of the possibility of integrating experiences of altered states of consciousness into our daily lives. This is one of the main reasons why drug users set out without a compass and map on a path that often ends in drug addiction.

Quantum mechanics is non-deterministic, it tells us what the probabilities of the outcomes are. This leads to the fact that measurements of a certain property on two identical systems can lead to different results. The question arises whether quantum mechanics does not hide a deeper reality that can be described by a more fundamental theory that can always predict the outcome of any measurement with certainty. In other words, quantum mechanics in its present form may be an incomplete description of reality. Many people consider feelings and emotions to be mere chemical reactions. They may hold the belief that love is also mainly a matter of "chemistry". Certainly there is some chemistry involved, but at the same time there is something else going on in the heart, some kind of hidden variable. The relationship between soul and body is the same as the relationship between matter and hidden variables. Albert Einstein, the most famous proponent of hidden variables, insisted that "I am convinced that God does not play dice" - meaning that he believed physical theories must be deterministic to be complete. A hidden variable theory consistent with quantum mechanics might be the best theory to explain the spiritual dimension, which would not have to be local and would maintain the existence of instantaneous or superluminal causal relationships between physically separate entities. The first theory with hidden variables was the pilot wave theory of Louis de Broglie in the late 1920s. Currently, the best-known theory with hidden variables, Bohmian mechanics by physicist and philosopher David Bohm in 1952, is a non-local theory with hidden variables. Bohm was surprised to find that once electrons were in a plasma, they no longer behaved as individuals but as part of a larger, interconnected whole, and he often had the impression that the sea of electrons was in some sense alive. Bohm started from an idea that originally came from Louis de Broglie, and posited that both the quantum particle, e.g., an electron, and a hidden "guiding wave" that controls its motion exist. Bohm's basic assumption is that "elementary particles are actually systems with extremely complicated internal structure, essentially acting as amplifiers of the information contained in a quantum wave."

He claims that space and time may be derived from an even deeper level of objective reality. This reality he calls the Implicate Order. The Implicate Order theory contains an ultra-holistic cosmic view; it connects everything to everything else. In principle, any single



element could reveal "detailed information about every other element in the universe" The central underlying theme of Bohm's theory is the "unbroken wholeness of the totality of existence as an undivided, flowing movement without boundaries" The concept is presented most fully in *Wholeness and the Implicate order*, published in 1980. Bohm believes that the implicate order must be extended to a multidimensional reality; in other words, holomovement unfolds endlessly into infinite dimensionality. Within this milieu there are independent sub totalities (such as physical elements and human entities) with relative autonomy. Working with Stanford neuroscientist Karl Pribram, Bohm was involved in the early development of the holonomic model of how the brain works, a model for human cognition that differs drastically from conventionally accepted ideas. In accordance with quantum mathematical principles and the properties of wave patterns, the brain functions much like a hologram; in fact, the brain is a holographic memory network. This model enables important aspects of human consciousness, including rapid associative memory, which enables connections between different stored information, and the non-locality of memory storage (a particular memory is not stored in a particular location, i.e., a particular neuron). Bohm believes that life and consciousness are deeply embedded in the generative order and are therefore present to varying degrees in all matter, including supposedly "inanimate" matter such as electrons or plasmas. He assumes that there is a "protointelligence" in matter, so that new evolutionary developments do not arise by chance, but creatively as relatively integrated wholes from implicit levels of reality. The mystical connotations of Bohm's ideas are underscored by his remark that the implicate realm "might as well be called idealism, spirit, or consciousness. The division between the two - matter and mind - is an abstraction. The ground is always one [31].

The implicit order corresponds to the quantum potential and the spiritual dimension, the quantum state is a state of individual information corresponding to the same concept of spirit. The relationship between soul and body is the same as the relationship between matter and energy. Interference is the best way to explain our interaction with the spiritual dimension. The interference of waves causes the medium to take on a form that is the net effect of the two individual waves on the particles of the medium. In any wave interference, the shape of the medium is determined by the sum of the individual amplitudes of each wave. We often say that the amplitudes add up when waves interfere. Since in destructive interference the positive amplitudes of one wave crest are added to the negative amplitudes of the other wave trough, this addition can look like a subtraction. The shape of the medium is determined by the principle of superposition. This states that when two waves interfere, the resulting deflection of the medium at any location is the algebraic sum of the deflections of the individual waves at the same location. The complete shape of the entire medium during interference is the result of superposition, which applies to every point along the medium. The interference pattern creates a 3D image known as a hologram, which has the same definition as the mind. The interaction between different information systems is based on the resonance principle.

### **Spiritual Interaction**

Each person has an energy field that vibrates with different frequencies that characterize everyone. Each object's natural frequency is associated with one of the many standing wave patterns with which that object might vibrate. For example, the natural frequencies of a musical instrument are sometimes referred to as the harmonics of the instrument. An instrument can be forced to vibrate with one of its harmonics (with one of its standing wave patterns) if another connected object bumps it with one of those frequencies. This is called resonance - when one object vibrates at the same natural frequency as a second object, causing that second object to vibrate. The ayahuasca ceremony facilitates spiritual interaction based on the principle of resonance, which allows people to become aware of their physical, emotional, and mental content, which is highlighted through spiritual interaction. Therefore, everyone will see the inner reality of their own vibration. The higher the frequency of the person, the less he will be bothered by the lower frequency spiritual dimension. This is the reason for the limitations of some foods that can attract low-frequency spirits and disturb spiritual development. Thousands of years of experimentation have taught the indigenous people of the Amazon how to prepare before ceremonies to take full advantage of the experience. These experiences led them to prepare rules and restrictions. However, there is a real science that supports these preparations and restrictions.

You should prepare for the ayahuasca ceremonies with good vitality to cope with the physical, emotional and mental reactions, and with high frequency to avoid the annoyance of the low spiritual dimension. Good preparation allows the beneficial effects of ayahuasca, which are based on the combination of several psychological factors

- a) The non-identification with the content of the visions, which they consider "safe" (i.e. decentring)
- b) the imaginary exposure
- c) acceptance

Acceptance can occur in this positive context. Therefore, ayahuasca can enhance acceptance and engagement with thoughts and sensations in a detached context. These psychological mechanisms suggest that ayahuasca has the potential to treat trauma-related illnesses and other disorders such as borderline personality disorder [32-34] obsessive-compulsive disorder and phobias in a structured, safe, and comfortable setting. Therefore, prior to the ayahuasca ceremonies, some food and behavioural restrictions are necessary. In our program, the preparation process aims to reduce stress and increase vitality. Therefore, before the ceremony EWOT (energy and emotional wash-out technique) [35] are performed according to individual needs.

### **Unified Integrative Medicine Educational Program**

Years of experience in therapy and teaching allowed the development of a training program for doctors, psychologists, therapists, complementary and alternative therapists and others [36]. During this program the scientific-spiritual theoretical basis of the method will be explained, and the model for a unified integrative medicine based on physical and energetic principles

will be presented. Furthermore, explores the relationship between psyche and energy from ancient cultures, such as meridians and chakras and the relationship between psychological conflicts, energetic blockages and physical body diseases. As a part of the diagnostic model is the human code. It is a code capable of characterizing an individual, directly examining and analysing facial morphology, and stratifying the total population into different subgroups, each with common but unique characteristics. It makes it possible to use external body markers to determine individual characteristics, personality traits, health status, mental health, personal psychology, vulnerabilities, and talents, strengths, aptitudes, and abilities. It provides not only a framework for understanding human life itself, but also very specific knowledge about everyone.

The therapy is based on three therapeutic techniques: FEEL (fast emotional Elaboration and Liberation) TTRT (Trans-Temporal Regression technique) and Energy Wash Out technique EWOT [35].

The method FEEL assumes that for every traumatic event involves a learning process. To complete this process, one must go through four phases, like digestion. These four phases are: Digestion, Absorption, Metabolism, and Assimilation FEEL therapy works to discover the real cause of psychological distress, work it out to facilitate access and processing of traumatic memories, and bring these traumatic memories to a positive resolution to release the emotional blockages. In this way, the psycho-neuro-somatic-energetic short circuit is opened, and the blocked energy is made available for the learning process. The experience is stored with appropriate emotions that can adequately guide the person in the future in personal self-realization and alleviation of the accompanying physiological arousal.

The TTRT (Trans-Temporal Regression) technique, which helps people with phobias or other mental disorders related to past life experiences to relive the traumatic experience, process the information, and complete the learning process without the need for hypnosis. The third therapeutic method the Energy Wash Out technique EWOT.

This technique aims to restore the flow of energy in each cell and throughout the body, renewing the natural flow of energy in the four phases of life: excitation, expansion, contraction and relaxation. During the energy washout therapy, emotionally pent-up energy is released, which manifests itself in the form of crying, screaming, and laughing until a tremor occurs, indicating the presence of a continuous energetic passage in the body. It is important to know that the patient remains fully conscious throughout the treatment, is aware of everything that is happening to him, and can remember afterwards the details that occurred. The treatment itself takes about an hour and allows the body to clear, release and open blockages and mental blocks (inhibitions) from the patient's subconscious into his consciousness, and the result is immediate. The body is filled with a feeling of pleasant release of love, often resembling an orgasm. Patients often refer to

this feeling and say, "I have been reborn." Once the energy in the chakras and along the meridians begins to flow again, the person feels clean, relaxed and free in spirit.

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EWOT includes four perspectives:

1. Subtle-energetic - involves the two main poles, charkas, meridians and the magnetic field around the body
2. Mental-emotional - reduction of stress reactions, mental-emotional stability and mindfulness/centeredness
3. Physical-body - reduction of stress and increase of vitality, leading to recovery from serious illnesses, injuries and disorders
4. Deep-spiritual - renewal of well-being, self-realization and spiritual revival the final part of the training program includes the experience with ayahuasca ceremonies, mainly in Peru and later in Brazil, have made it possible to develop a training protocol for therapists to teach and apply the method.

The basic concept of the ceremonies is based on the physical theory of resonance and synchronicity. More than seventeen years of teaching and experience alongside Amazon healers have led the author to develop a therapeutic training protocol and therapeutic method that utilizes the controlled alteration of states of consciousness through the drinking of ayahuasca. The program accepts groups of no more than twenty-five participants who have passed the previous seminars. The venue is located in the middle of the jungle or another appropriate place. The seminar is based on a four-part method that includes a preparation period of at least one month, one and a half days after arrival for the theoretical seminar, four days for the ayahuasca ceremonies, and at least two days to recover before going home.

### Preparation Before the Sessions

Proper preparation for ayahuasca is crucial to ensure deep learning and spiritual development through ayahuasca medicine. All the physical and psychological toxins accumulated in everyday life are the first thing that ayahuasca addresses and attacks. Cleansing the body and psyche of toxins jump-starts the ayahuasca experience. If you cleanse these toxins in advance, ayahuasca can work more easily in the body. If you follow the diet, you can make the most of the experience and reach deeper levels of psycho-spiritual understanding. The plant diets are designed to rid the body, psyche and soul of toxins to help a person achieve three main points:

1. Increase vitality
2. Increase soul frequency
3. Avoid foods, common medications and drugs that can have severe interactions with the brew
4. Vitality is needed to better control the inner journey for the

healing experience and to increase the soul frequency to prevent interaction with lower frequency spirits. This allows one to connect with the spirits of plants and develop new healing abilities, vision and sight quieting or purifying the body to achieve a spiritual state will be familiar to anyone who has practiced yoga. Like the effect of the asanas in yoga on meditation, the physical preparation of the ayahuasca pre-diet goes hand in hand with the ability to psychologically prepare for the healing experience anything that can decrease vitality is prohibited, such as lack of sleep, ejaculation, emotional conflicts and stress. The foods that can decrease vitality are sweets (empty calories), salt and alcohol.

Foods that have a low frequency and therefore lower the soul frequency are forbidden, such as red meat and pork, seafood, and all foods that are considered aphrodisiacs, as well as hot spices.

Sexual activities, including masturbation, have both effects: On the one hand, it reduces vitality, especially when accompanied by ejaculation, and on the other hand, it reduces the soul frequency by activating the second chakra, which is considered the second lowest frequency after the first chakra and has to do with material and territorial conflicts. It is recommended to continue the diet for at least a week after the retreat to give the body and mind time to adjust and slowly and gradually get used to everyday life and diet again. One may also find that a new lifestyle does not necessarily require everything one ate before the retreat. Taken in a ritual context, such as that offered in ayahuasca shamanism or within the Brazilian ayahuasca church União do Vegetal, ayahuasca consumption appears to be safe and may even contribute to better mental health among Brazilian youth, according to a 2005 study published in the Journal of Psychiatric Drugs.

### **Contraindications for Ayahuasca use Foods and Drugs Interaction**

Ayahuasca contains MAOI's (monoamine oxidase inhibitors) generally in the form of harmine and harmaline. The entheogenic tryptamines are orally activated by the inhibition of the enzyme monoamine oxidase in the intestine by the MAOI's. The orally inactive tryptamines are orally activated in the presence of monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOI) derived from the Banisteriopsis vine. The mechanism of MAOI can be used to potentiate most classes of tryptamines as well as many other classes of drugs. We strive to reduce harm and promote safety by pointing out potential contraindications of MAOI with food and drugs. Therefore, all medications containing MAO inhibitors (MAOIs) are known to cause dangerous side effects when taken in conjunction with ayahuasca and should be suspended individuals being treated with antidepressants and similar drugs are not permitted on this trip. The drugs that are prohibited before drinking ayahuasca are: amphetamines, cocaine, MDMA, opiates, barbiturates, decongestants and allergy medications, cold medications, diet pills, methylphenidate, asthma inhalers, meperidine, levodopa, dopamine, carbamazepine, certain antihypertensive medications, sympathomimetic amines (direct and indirect acting) including pseudoephedrine and ephedrine. Of particular note, use of MAOIs

within five weeks of discontinuation of the selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI) fluoxetine (Prozac) can lead to coma and death [37].

SSRIs block the reuptake of serotonin in the brain, and because MAOIs inhibit the breakdown of serotonin, the combination of MAOIs and SSRIs can lead to excessive levels of serotonin in the brain. SSRIs are much more common than MAOIs, which are found in some antidepressants. Other prescription medications should be discontinued (including antibiotics), antihistamines, phenylalanines, systemic vasoconstrictors or decongestants - both natural and synthetic formulations, commonly used for colds and flu, asthma inhalers, high caffeine medications, sedatives and tranquilizers, analgesics such as meperidine, anti-Parkinson's medications, SSRIs (any selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors), appetite suppressants (diet pills). These medications generally must be discontinued for at least two weeks before drinking ayahuasca non-prescription medications such as antihistamines, dietary aids, amphetamines and derivatives, and some natural herbal medicines, i.e., those containing ephedrine, high amounts of caffeine, or other stimulants, may also cause adverse reactions. We recommend discontinuing all such medications, drugs, and herbs for at least one week before and after working with ayahuasca.

In addition, all recreational drugs are prohibited, especially MDMA/XTC, 2CB, cocaine, heroin, crack, mescaline or phenethylamines, opiates, and amphetamines for at least one week before and after taking ayahuasca. Also, do not drink alcohol the day before and after the ceremony. In addition, the use of herbal remedies for depression such as St. John's wort (which also affect serotonin levels) is prohibited.

### **Dietary Guidelines for MAOI Compatibility: Foods to Avoid Before a Ceremony**

The goal of a diet compatible with taking MAOIs is to avoid tyramine-containing foods, which are generally fermented, dried, ripened, or overripe. Cheese, avocados, L-tyrosine, liver, broad beans, dry sausage, beer & ale, chocolate, sauerkraut, ripe avocado yeast extracts, caffeine, raspberry jam, certain nuts, dried fruit, banana peel, soy products, vermouth, cognac, sherry, chianti, smoked meats, poultry & fish, protein supplements, meat extracts and tenderizers. All these things should be strictly avoided at least 48 hours before the ceremony, but actually two weeks is the rule.

### **Diseases and Conditions with High Risk**

All persons who suffer from high blood pressure, have a heart condition, or are under treatment for any other health condition are examined by the doctor before drinking ayahuasca. Contraindications to taking MAOIs include severe liver and kidney damage, severe or frequent headaches, uncontrolled hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and cerebrovascular disease. Of course, people with pre-existing psychiatric conditions, especially previous psychotic episodes, should avoid entheogenic substances unless referred by a professional. Diseases that pose an additional risk are: Unstable diabetes mellitus, Addison's disease, severe renal disease, epilepsy, severe

neurological disorders, circulatory disease (angina, myocardial infarction, pheochromocytoma, liver disease, and blood dyscrasias). Recent brain or cardiovascular surgery chronic disease and/or gastrointestinal ulcers, infectious diseases or pregnancy.

### **The Retreat and The Program (Set and Setting)**

Our model is based on integrated techniques that include retreat, medicinal plants, and natural methods for detoxification, sensory stimulation, and sensory deprivation. This retreat program seeks to combine ancestral knowledge with contemporary psychotherapeutic practices while working under the guidelines of ethical considerations and the demands of the Western mindset. The preparation process prior to the sessions, the distance from home, the dedication to the spiritual work, and the cost create the conditions to select the prepared individuals for the spiritual work. Every detail of the retreat is carefully planned to rid the body of discomfort, work through past conflicts, and allow for spiritual development. To create an appropriate setting, the place is kept constantly clean and harmonious, the center is an alcohol and drug free zone. It is a clean and safe place, surrounded by beautifully landscaped gardens and the lush Atlantic Forest. Every aspect of the retreat is well thought out and planned to help you achieve a state of harmony.

### **Pre-session Guidelines**

The person or team organizing the session should be aware of the following points

1. Know the strength of the ayahuasca and what ingredients were used. No preparation should be administered that has not been previously analysed or tested by the person in charge
2. Have enough helpers ready to take care of all participants. It is not advisable to hold large sessions without help.
3. Choose a safe place with enough space, drinking water, and restrooms for the group that cannot be disturbed yet is not too remote.
4. Ensure the physical safety and comfort of participants by preparing the environment for their needs (e.g., remove dangerous items, make it comfortable, provide mats, bowls, paper towels, etc.)
5. Create an emergency plan for different scenarios. Make sure the entire team knows it

Retreats include ayahuasca ceremonies, meditation, dance, and eating together with healthy vegan and vegetarian food. One and a half days of theoretical preparation about the spiritual world and meditation, four days of drinking ayahuasca and three days of rest.

The first day and part of the second day a frontal seminar on the nature and essence of the spiritual dimension and the relationship with quantum physics. The hierarchy of angels, jinns and demons in different religions and cultures. Special attention will be given to the role of prayer and its effect on the different spirits. The ceremony begins at nine o'clock in the evening and lasts 6-7 hours. The ceremonies are led by an experienced therapist who actively participates in the ceremonies and drinks ayahuasca along with the

rest of the group and at least two facilitators. Each ceremony is divided into four parts: the preparation, which includes

1. meditation and dance,
2. the drinking and experiencing of the ayahuasca, and
3. the sharing the next morning.

Before drinking ayahuasca, participants gather in a circle after the dance session, where each person publicly expresses their intention to define the purpose of the session. The ayahuasca dose is determined individually, considering each participant's biological constitution and psychological status. During the ceremony, all participants remain seated, as lying down is not permitted. The ayahuasca ceremony is accompanied by specially curated music that reflects the four phases of life: Excitation, Expansion, Contraction, and Relaxation. The first phase is calm music that quickly becomes tempered and exciting, the second part is the expansion phase in which the rhythm of the music accelerates, using North Indian music, characterized by rhythmic drumming, chanting, and flute melodies. The third part introduces contracting and unpleasant music, featuring the deep, resonant chanting of Tibetan monks. This phase is designed to evoke challenging emotions and confront inner struggles, allowing participants to face suppressed feelings or unresolved issues. The unique harmonic overtones and guttural chants characteristic of Tibetan monk music create a sense of tension and introspection, providing a powerful opportunity for growth and transformation during the ceremony. The fourth phase features relaxing, paradisiacal music, designed to bring peace, calm, and a sense of harmony. This phase incorporates soothing classical compositions and traditional Chinese music, known for their delicate melodies and serene tones. Chinese music, with its use of traditional instruments like the guzheng (zither) and dizi (flute), evokes a connection to nature and spiritual balance. Classical music often features gentle string instruments, such as violins and cellos, creating an atmosphere of tranquility and emotional release. This phase provides a restorative and meditative conclusion to the ceremony, encouraging participants to reflect on their journey and embrace a state of inner peace. The music acts as a bridge to help integrate the experiences from earlier phases, allowing participants to feel a sense of completion, relaxation, and connection to themselves and the world around them. The end of the music signals the conclusion of the ceremony, allowing participants to lie down, relax, and fall asleep. This period of rest is an essential part of the process, as it helps the mind and body integrate the experiences of the ceremony. Participants typically wake up between seven and eight in the morning, feeling refreshed and ready to reflect on their journey. Before breakfast, a joint sharing session begins, where everyone is encouraged to openly discuss their experiences from the night before. This group sharing fosters a sense of community, understanding, and emotional support among participants. During the session, individuals reflect on their journey and articulate their thoughts and feelings. This process helps participants to translate and interpret the insights gained during the ceremony, integrating them into their lives in a meaningful way. It also allows for a deeper exploration of personal inner experiences, encouraging growth and self-awareness. Following the sharing session, breakfast is served



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at nine o'clock, providing participants with nourishment and an opportunity to ground themselves after their reflections. The sharing and breakfast together form an integral part of the healing process, helping participants move toward spiritual liberation, satisfaction, and happiness.

### **During the Session**

The experience during an ayahuasca session is deeply personal, varying significantly from one participant to another. It often brings remarkable positive effects on the mind, soul, and body, such as heightened clarity, emotional release, and a reconnection with one's true self. On a spiritual level, ayahuasca facilitates profound processes, including awakening, deeper understanding, emotional healing, and the attainment of spiritual wisdom. However, these outcomes are not left solely to the effects of ayahuasca.

A critical component of this transformative journey is the active involvement of the facilitator or guide during the session. The facilitator intervenes at key moments to clarify specific ideas, assist participants in recognizing and releasing negative influences, and teach them how to navigate these experiences independently. This approach ensures that participants do not passively rely on the medicine but instead engage in a guided psychotherapeutic process under its influence. The facilitator's role is crucial in helping participants complete their learning process, understand their insights, and integrate them meaningfully into their lives.

When combined with a healthy lifestyle, spiritual preparation, and ongoing practices such as meditation or mindfulness, this guided approach to ayahuasca work fosters profound transformation. It enables participants to manage their inner world more effectively, equipping them with tools to sustain growth and apply their newfound understanding long after the session ends. This holistic integration process lays the groundwork for lasting change, deep healing, and spiritual evolution.

Medicinal plants play the central psychotherapeutic role, while caregivers provide guidance and ensure safety. Participants are guided into liminal or symbolic transitional experiences, wherein they explore spiritual dimensions populated by symbolic representations of angels and demons. These entities reflect their inner consciousness and spiritual state. Such experiences engage the participant's psychological state, emotional sensations, and full spectrum of perceptions. They often bring existential questions to the surface, requiring active engagement and reflection.

This guided, cathartic process enables individual to overcome habitual mindsets and access somatic memories that may have been inaccessible through previous techniques. It represents an initiatory journey, demanding internal structural changes rather than superficial external behavioral shifts, which are often temporary and unsatisfying. Ultimately, this is a semantic experience, rich in meaning, that completes the emotional and mental processes initiated in previous work or seminars. At its best, it allows individuals to transcend the ego, facilitating a healthy dissolution of egoic attachment. This leads to reconciliation with

human nature, acceptance of our place in the vastness of space and time, and a profound sense of humility and connectedness.

### **During the Session: Guidelines**

The person or team organizing the session should estimate the correct dose for each participant based on factors such as age, gender, experience, health status, and individual needs. If there is any uncertainty, it is always safer to administer a lower dose to prioritize the participant's well-being.

Ensuring the physical safety of participants is crucial. This includes removing any dangerous objects from the space, preventing participants from driving during or after the session, making sure no one accidentally sits on another person's mat, and avoiding situations where participants might run away or engage in unsafe behaviours. Equally important is ensuring the emotional safety of participants by providing the necessary emotional support, avoiding harmful interactions between participants or assistants, and actively monitoring their overall well-being throughout the session.

Participants should never be left alone under any circumstances. Their privacy and security, along with the integrity of their interactions, must be always protected. Additionally, no participant should leave the session until it is officially concluded. Before ending the session, each participant should be individually screened to ensure they are in a stable emotional and mental state. If emergencies or difficult situations arise, the organizers should seek the appropriate help and be prepared to delegate responsibilities effectively. Safety must always come first, even if addressing a situation might involve navigating legal concerns. To maximize the potential benefits during the session, participants should maintain a seated position rather than lying down. This helps reduce the risk of choking during vomiting and allows facilitators to quickly notice and respond to fainting or other physical issues. If a participant experiences emotional difficulties, non-pharmacological techniques such as focused breathing, active listening, or providing a calm, supportive presence should be used. If medication is necessary, it should be prescribed by a qualified physician and used only as a last resort.

By following these guidelines, the session can be conducted in a safe, supportive, and effective manner, ensuring both physical and emotional security for all participants.

### **Physical Effects of Ayahuasca**

After a latency period of approximately 35 to 40 minutes, the consumption of ayahuasca induces an intense altered state of consciousness that typically lasts about 4 hours [38]. The effects vary from person to person and depend on several factors, including physical condition, stress levels, vitality, and the degree of preparation before the ceremony.

Ayahuasca acts on all four levels of the human being: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. On the physical level, ayahuasca begins to influence the body, which, according to Unified

Integrative Medicine, is regarded as the soul's tool for experiencing the physical dimension. Through the body, the soul navigates the realms of space and time, enabling the individual to undergo change, acquire knowledge, and grow. This process facilitates the development of the soul, fostering evolution and transformation. It helps individuals become better versions of themselves, capable of understanding the deeper essence and true meaning of life. By working holistically across all dimensions of the human experience, ayahuasca opens pathways for profound healing and personal growth.

Distressing somatic symptoms, such as dizziness, diarrhea, nausea, and vomiting, may occur during the ayahuasca experience and are often considered an essential part of the process. These symptoms are associated with a subjective sense of purification and relief. In the shamanic cultures where ayahuasca originated, these gastrointestinal manifestations are seen as signs that the medicine is cleansing the body, mind, and spirit of impurities and toxins. If the individual is able to surrender to this challenging initial phase, it is often followed by a sudden transformation of the experience into one characterized by transcendental insights, profound reflections, a changed worldview, and/or a renewed focus on life. Some participants may also experience additional physical effects, such as sweating, tremors, increased blood pressure, and a heightened heart rate. These effects are likely related to DMT intoxication, as DMT, even in its pure form, can induce hypertension, restlessness, dilated pupils, dizziness, and muscular incoordination. Unlike most hallucinogens, there is little evidence that DMT causes tolerance or physical withdrawal symptoms, and researchers generally do not believe it is addictive. Furthermore, studies have not found evidence that using DMT on a long-term basis significantly changes or damages the brain. However, it is important to note that DMT can cause psychological dependence when used repeatedly to escape reality. Some DMT users view the substance as a form of therapy and take it regularly to feel better, highlighting the importance of mindful and intentional use.

According to therapists and ritual participants interviewed, the intense detoxification experiences induced by the non-ordinary states of consciousness during ayahuasca ceremonies can significantly support both physical and psychological healing. These experiences often help release tension, physical blockages, and psychological stress, leaving participants with a subjective sense of relief, inner peace, and mental clarity. The process of purging, though uncomfortable, is regarded as a crucial step toward achieving emotional and spiritual balance.

### Emotional Effects

The effects of ayahuasca evoke profound psychodynamic mechanisms and psycholytic effects that enhance access to preconscious and unconscious memories. Both therapists and ritual participants often describe ayahuasca as an "inner mirror," allowing individuals to confront and accept previously denied aspects of their psyche that are challenging to address through conventional therapeutic methods.

The ayahuasca brew has a unique ability to lower psychological defenses and expose ego defense mechanisms, enabling repressed unconscious material to surface into conscious awareness. This process can release the emotional charge associated with past traumatic experiences, erasing their lingering impact on the individual. By facilitating this emotional release, participants can temporarily experience previously unknown emotional states and cognitive patterns, gaining clarity on the adjustments needed to improve their lives. The release of repressed emotions catalyzes profound healing processes by helping individuals resolve trauma and break free from dysfunctional habits, including those that underpin the dynamics of addiction and other behavioral challenges. Furthermore, the psycholytic processes triggered by ayahuasca foster awareness of the likely future outcomes and personal consequences of maladaptive behaviors. This heightened awareness can serve as a powerful motivator for personal change, encouraging participants to adopt healthier habits and a more adaptive approach to life.

Purging during the ayahuasca experience is often accompanied by the sensation of releasing psychological burdens such as guilt, negative emotions, negative attitudes, and negative thoughts. This process is frequently followed by a profound sense of relief, a fresh start, and an increased sense of responsibility for one's health and well-being.

The emotional intensity of ayahuasca experiences often follows a sine curve. Initially, participants may enter a "contractile anxiety state," where they confront their innermost fears. These fears may include the fear of madness, fear of death, paranoid thoughts, or a deep sense of cosmic loneliness and alienation. This state can induce profound emotional experiences such as anxiety, fear, and paranoia, often accompanied by intense depersonalization. While these effects can be deeply unsettling, they serve to make participants more receptive to emotionally charged memories and unresolved past traumas. Repressed memories often surface during this stage, leading to emotional catharsis and paving the way for abreaction, relief, and alleviation of psychological distress.

This process helps unburden the individual's conscience and provides motivation to confront personal difficulties and inner demons. By diving beneath the veils of ordinary consciousness, participants gain access to deeper layers of their psyche, exploring avenues that lead to the core contents of their soul. This journey facilitates a profound understanding of oneself and fosters significant psychological healing. The profound and, at times, disturbing nature of these experiences has led medical practitioners and researchers to explore the psychiatric and therapeutic value of ayahuasca. However, it is crucial to recognize that without a safe environment and the presence of trained companions or facilitators, these intense effects could become destabilizing and potentially harmful. The guidance of skilled professionals ensures that participants are supported throughout their journey, allowing them to process their experiences constructively and safely.

The ayahuasca brew has shown significant potential in treating anxiety, fear of death, and chronic addiction. Ayahuasca

experiences often reflect psychodynamic effects that contribute to meaningful therapeutic outcomes by connecting participants to significant aspects of their past and bringing repressed memories into consciousness. These memories, once surfaced, can play a crucial role in psychological healing through cognitive and emotional restructuring.

During an ayahuasca ceremony, deep psychological dynamics often rise to consciousness. However, their therapeutic potential relies heavily on the presence of trained guidance to help participants process and integrate these experiences. Traumatic life events, which may underlie individual psychopathology, can be revisited from a new perspective and functionally integrated into a healthier mental framework.

Successful treatment with ayahuasca requires the involvement of an experienced facilitator who can provide structure and guidance. This guidance ensures that the vision, therapeutic goal, and evolving nature of the experience across sessions align effectively. Without skilled support to facilitate full integration, even significant insights or transformative experiences may not lead to lasting benefits.

Under the right supportive circumstances, ayahuasca has the potential to provide profound insights and personal meanings that can address the underlying dynamics of addiction. It can trigger visions of emotional states and traumatic imprints, allowing individuals to explore and process these deep-seated issues. This process not only helps resolve past traumas but also provides a pathway toward emotional healing, self-understanding, and long-term psychological well-being [39].

A fundamental effect of ayahuasca on mental processes is the confrontation with oneself, which fosters greater personal awareness and allows for the reconstruction or restructuring of one's sense of self [40]. Ayahuasca temporarily reduces critical mental functions and distinctions, facilitating the cathartic expression of emotions. With the aid of psychotherapeutic work, these experiences can correct the faulty formation of emotional expressions and ideals. This exploration of the inner universe uncovers rich psychological material and provides something indescribable: a sense of compassion, connectedness, and spirituality.

A prospective longitudinal study of a large group of regular ayahuasca users showed no evidence of cognitive impairment, nor were there any negative effects on coping strategies or overall mental health [40]. Ayahuasca-induced insights promote self-reflection and lead to changes in self-perspective, triggering psychodynamic realizations that address personal issues underlying maladaptive lifestyles. By providing conscious insights into psychological patterns and behaviors, ayahuasca can help resolve personal conflicts, including those linked to pathological behaviors such as substance abuse and addiction.

The psychological therapeutic benefits of ayahuasca focus on inducing introspective, dream-like experiences characterized

by vivid visions, autobiographical and emotional memories, and enhanced mindfulness [41]. These experiences also bring intellectual and spiritual insights that contribute to personal growth and healing. Ayahuasca accelerates cognitive processes, enhancing attention span and the depth of mental concentration.

During an ayahuasca experience, perception, spatio-temporal orientation, beliefs about reality and the self, and cognitive and emotional processes can shift significantly. These altered states of consciousness offer a profound response to the soul's quest, providing clear goals and non-threatening means to achieve them. By enabling individuals to access these deeper dimensions of consciousness, ayahuasca facilitates transformative healing and fosters a greater sense of purpose and direction in life.

Ayahuasca experiences are characterized by a constant flow of spiritual content where knowledge is acquired through intuition rather than logic. These experiences often exhibit a high degree of overall coherence. They can enhance or evoke various aspects of the human psyche, including self-reflection, memory, ethical sense, prosocial behavior [42], creative thinking [43], and a sense of redemption [44].

When consumed in an appropriate setting and ritual context under the guidance of an experienced therapist, ayahuasca has been shown to promote and enhance self-reflection, ethical awareness, prosocial behavior, creative thinking, redemption, and mindfulness skills. Additionally, it fosters intellectual and spiritual insights, leading to increased self-awareness, vitality, and a profound sense of aliveness [45]. These outcomes demonstrate the potential for ayahuasca to serve as a powerful tool for personal growth and healing. The effects of ayahuasca appear to activate psychodynamic mechanisms and psycholytic effects, improving access to preconscious and unconscious memories. Furthermore, some users report accessing what is often described as Akashic information, which they perceive as providing insights and discoveries relevant to various scientific fields, such as chemistry, physics, and mathematics. Adolescents who regularly consume ayahuasca in supervised settings demonstrate fewer signs of anxiety and greater levels of optimism, confidence, persistence, and emotional maturity compared to their peers. A prospective longitudinal study of a large group of regular ayahuasca users found no evidence of cognitive impairment and reported no negative effects on coping strategies or overall mental health [46].

### **Social Effects**

Ayahuasca experiences often bring various psychological blocks and denials to consciousness, illuminating them from different perspectives. This process allows participants to gain insight into their maladaptive behavioral, emotional, and cognitive patterns. The psychodynamic content revealed during these experiences is frequently accompanied by a heightened inner moral stance, compelling participants to confront deep thoughts and feelings about past misbehaviours, self-deceptions, and lies [47].

The visionary state of consciousness induced by ayahuasca can also

prompt reflections on personal relationships, providing motivation for the changes necessary to resolve interpersonal problems. These reflections can lead to therapeutic insights that become crucial turning points in the recovery process. Such insights often include shifts in perspective and enhanced empathy, improving the quality of relationships with family members and significant others. This process facilitates forgiveness, reconciliation, and improved interpersonal communication, contributing to positive emotional feedback that counters the isolation often associated with addiction. The communal and sustained social contact typical of ayahuasca treatments provides opportunities to develop the social support networks critical for recovery from mental illnesses, including addiction. The shared collective experience of ayahuasca promotes group cohesion and serves as a catalyst for positive social processes. Participants often report increased participation in peer group activities that uphold positive, health-oriented values, fostering personal growth and enhancing a sense of self-efficacy and awareness of personal strengths.

In church-based ayahuasca ceremonies, participants often provide each other with social support for stress management, creating a sense of belonging that motivates lasting behavioural change. Ayahuasca strengthens inner moral attitudes, compelling participants to face their deep thoughts and emotions regarding past transgressions, self-deceptions, and untruths. This confrontation enables participants to accept previously denied problems and dysfunctional patterns, which is essential for personal growth and healing. Long-term use of ayahuasca has been associated with positive behavioural and lifestyle changes, particularly for individuals struggling with addiction. It has demonstrated anti-addictive effects, helping individuals who previously abused alcohol and drugs to develop healthier lifestyles. The ceremonial context fosters bonding among participants, facilitating therapeutic processes by providing social support and enforcing social norms that encourage abstinent and health-promoting behaviours. These dynamics underscore the powerful role of ayahuasca in addressing social and interpersonal dimensions of healing.

### Spiritual Effects of Ayahuasca

Participants frequently report visions of beautiful visual landscapes, often accompanied by elements characteristic of the "ayahuasca world." These include encounters with ayahuasca beings, power animals, spirit guides, tropical motifs, and vivid geometric patterns that are well-documented in the cultural anthropology literature on shamanism. These visual and symbolic experiences contribute to a transcendent and mystical state of consciousness.

Ayahuasca is known to produce "peak experiences" that promote a profound connection with the divine, a spiritual force, or existential values that provide meaning to life. These experiences often bring a sense of relief from confusion, fostering feelings of wholeness, inner balance, and a redefined vision of the world. Participants often develop new perspectives on life, leading to transformative changes in attitude and behavior. Such experiences can have therapeutic effects on internal, developmental, or existential wounds, helping individuals overcome deep-seated challenges.

However, it is important to recognize the phenomenon of spiritual bypassing, where individuals use repetitive spiritual practices to avoid confronting psychological blocks and unresolved emotional issues [48]. True spiritual healing requires balancing the mystical with personal accountability and integration.

A significant dimension of the spiritual experience involves the transformation of personal consciousness, often eliminating the desire for addictive substances. Mystical or spiritual experiences reported during ayahuasca ceremonies frequently have a life-changing impact, inspiring individuals to embark on a spiritual mission or purpose [49]. The psycholytic processes induced by ayahuasca also promote awareness of potential future outcomes and the personal consequences of maladaptive behaviors, providing a powerful motivation for change.

Ayahuasca can also induce "death experiences," in which participants feel as though they are dying or envision themselves as deceased, sometimes as a result of substance abuse. These experiences often lead to profound insights that radically transform behavior, serving as a catalyst for significant lifestyle and personal changes. Participants frequently report newfound acceptance of previously denied problems and dysfunctional patterns, fostering deeper self-awareness and healing. By eliciting psychodynamic mechanisms and psycholytic effects, ayahuasca enhances access to preconscious and unconscious memories. These deeply transformative experiences can be so profound that individuals often feel they are no longer the same person, marking a clear shift in their perception of self and the world around them.

### The Role of Prayer During the Ayahuasca Ceremony

Prayer plays a transformative and essential role in ayahuasca ceremonies, deeply rooted in spiritual traditions yet adaptable to the context of monotheistic faiths. Far from invoking spirits or entities, prayer during these ceremonies focuses on God, angels, and divine forces as recognized in monotheistic religions. These prayers, such as **Ayat al-Kursi** from the Quran, **Our Father in Heaven**, **Ave Maria**, and **Shema Yisrael**, connect participants to God and divine forces, fostering a sacred and transformative experience. Unlike invocations directed toward spiritual entities or ambiguous forces, these prayers are firmly oriented toward the Creator and angels, ensuring that the experience remains anchored in divine wisdom and grace.

For these prayers to be effective, participants must hold a genuine belief in God, as faith provides the foundation for the spiritual connection and healing experienced during the ceremony. By focusing on God and angelic forces, the participants align themselves with a higher moral and spiritual framework. This sacred space becomes a sanctuary where participants feel safe and supported as they navigate the transformative effects of ayahuasca. Research on spiritual practices shows that prayer enhances a sense of security and spiritual connection, facilitating openness to healing and change.

Prayer serves as a tool to articulate and align personal intentions



with God's will. Participants are encouraged to pray for clarity, strength, or specific guidance related to their struggles, using monotheistic prayers or personal conversations with God. This intentional focus provides a moral and spiritual compass during the ceremony, guiding participants toward healing and redemption. Prayers to God and angels, such as asking for protection or forgiveness, serve as an anchor during the intense emotional and spiritual states induced by ayahuasca. These prayers ensure that the participant's focus remains aligned with faith-based values, emphasizing transformation rooted in divine grace and wisdom.

Prayer provides a critical avenue for emotional release during an ayahuasca ceremony. As repressed traumas and fears surface, participants may turn to God in prayer, surrendering their pain and seeking solace. This act of trust and surrender aligns with monotheistic beliefs, where healing is seen as a gift from God. Monotheistic traditions often emphasize the cathartic power of prayer, as seen in biblical texts such as Psalm 34:17, "The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; He delivers them from all their troubles." This connection to divine compassion and mercy allows participants to process their emotions in the presence of God, fostering deep emotional healing. One of the most profound aspects of prayer during an ayahuasca ceremony is the deepening connection to God and angelic beings. Participants often report feeling God's presence, a sense of divine love, or visions of angels providing comfort and guidance. Such experiences align with the teachings of monotheistic religions, where God is seen as the ultimate source of healing and wisdom. Prayer fosters a sense of surrender to God's plan, allowing participants to transcend their ego and access deeper truths about their existence. Studies on the role of prayer in psychedelic-assisted therapy suggest that connecting to a higher power during such experiences leads to greater spiritual awareness and long-term psychological benefits.

The role of prayer extends beyond the ceremony itself. Participants are encouraged to continue praying in the days and weeks that follow, asking God for guidance as they integrate the insights gained during the ceremony. Prayers of gratitude and supplication help individuals maintain their connection to divine wisdom, enabling them to apply the lessons learned to their daily lives. By praying to God and relying on angelic guidance, participants sustain the spiritual momentum initiated during the ceremony. This practice nurtures a sense of humility, gratitude, and purpose, essential components of lasting transformation. Prayer during an ayahuasca ceremony is often communal, bringing participants together in shared devotion to God. This collective prayer fosters a sense of unity and mutual support, reinforcing the values of faith and community central to monotheistic religions. As participants pray together, they create a powerful spiritual energy that amplifies the ceremony's transformative potential. Group prayer in monotheistic traditions, such as reciting Psalms or other canonical texts, emphasizes the interconnectedness of individuals under God's guidance. This shared act of devotion strengthens bonds among participants, fostering a sense of belonging and spiritual fellowship. In summary, prayer is a cornerstone of the ayahuasca ceremony, enhancing its spiritual, emotional, and psychological

impact by aligning the experience with monotheistic principles. By invoking God and angels through canonical prayers, participants create a sacred space for divine intervention, align their intentions with God's will, and facilitate emotional and spiritual healing. Prayer serves as a guiding light throughout the ceremony, anchoring participants in faith and trust while enabling profound personal transformation. The communal and individual acts of prayer during and after the ceremony deepen participants' connection to God, fostering long-term healing and growth. Far from merely a ritualistic component, prayer is a dynamic and essential tool that bridges the physical and spiritual realms, offering participants a path to redemption, purpose, and inner peace.

### Sharing Experience

Before drinking the ayahuasca brew, each participant expresses a personal intention, such as seeking healing, guidance, instruction, or a solution to a personal problem. These intentions provide a critical foundation for the experience, offering an underlying structure to the unconscious material that surfaces during the session. They also create a narrative framework that aids in interpreting and integrating the experience. The morning after the ceremony, participants share their experiences with the group. This process helps them explore, digest, absorb, and assimilate the insights they gained, facilitating the integration of new information into their lives. By doing so, they develop better tools to navigate life's challenges and events more effectively.

The psychotherapeutic impact of ayahuasca depends not only on the phenomenal content and depth of the experience but also on how effectively participants integrate the insights into their daily lives. Sharing the experience the day after the session is a crucial step in this integration process. Without proper integration, even profound experiences lose their therapeutic potential over time. Sometimes, psychedelic experiences may create a false sense that significant psychological changes occurred during the session itself. However, this perception can be illusory and potentially harmful if participants are distracted from the essential work of true integration. The act of sharing allows participants to ground their experiences in reality, fostering genuine change and growth. Through the process of sharing, participants learn to dissolve their ego, connect with others, and serve the collective well-being. This practice often fosters a deep sense of love, connection, and happiness, helping individuals realize the true meaning of these qualities in their lives.

### Guidelines for the Time After the Session

The person or team organizing the session should adhere to the following guidelines to ensure the participants' well-being and successful integration of their experiences:

1. Provide participants with adequate time to recover before they leave the premises. Ensure there is a comfortable space for recovery, such as their beds or the ceremonial space, where they can remain until morning if needed.
2. Ensure that emotional and physical support is available for participants who may need assistance after the session concludes.
3. Set up an integration area where participants can use creative

materials like paper, pencils, and crayons to process their experiences individually or collectively.

4. Allow all participants the opportunity to share their experiences with the group. Sharing helps in better understanding and integrating the insights gained during the session.
5. During group sharing, listen actively without judgment or interpretation. Avoid imposing your own understanding or conclusions, allowing participants to derive their personal meanings from the experience.
6. Assess the physical and emotional state of all participants before they leave the group to ensure they are stable and prepared to re-enter their daily lives.
7. Provide participants with contact information, including phone numbers or email addresses, to offer continued support if needed. Be available for follow-up communication.
8. If the level of support required exceeds what you can provide, refer participants to qualified professionals for assistance during their integration process.
9. Ask participants to complete a health questionnaire a week after the session to monitor their emotional, psychological, and physical state.
10. Have a questionnaire ready for participants to provide feedback on their experience. This feedback can help improve future support and refine the integration process.
11. Use validated questionnaires to measure the long-term impact of the session on participants' daily lives. Consider sending follow-up questionnaires one week after the session and again after two months to monitor progress and integration.
12. Be mindful of your role as an assistant or facilitator. Avoid taking undue credit for participants' profound experiences or allowing them to view you as a spiritual guide. While offering help and support, remind participants that they are ultimately in control of their own process and responsible for their growth, discoveries, and insights.

By following these guidelines, organizers can ensure that participants feel supported, understood, and empowered to integrate their experiences effectively into their lives.

## Conclusion

The number of people seeking out ayahuasca ceremonies is growing year by year. Given the uncertain legal status of ayahuasca in many countries and the fact that the number of therapists familiar with handling such unusual experiences is generally very small, scientific research and professional training in this regard is crucial and requires attention. The ideal scientific evaluation of ayahuasca therapies is admittedly lacking, with double-blind clinical trials posing a practical challenge. From a medical and research ethics perspective, the lack of such studies should not be considered a reason for an absolute ban on ayahuasca treatments. Ayahuasca is capable of treating many ailments, as both physical and psychological ailments may be due to unconscious psychological conditions. Psychedelics help by bringing these dynamics into consciousness and initiating a process of liberation from these influences [47]. Therefore, the psychological effects produced by ayahuasca, such as increased insight, reorganization of cognitive

structures, heightened imagination, and cathartic emotions, promise potential for the use of ayahuasca in psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy by facilitating interventions based on insight-oriented, cognitive, guided affective imagery, and cathartic techniques [43]. According to various scientific publications, the consumption of ayahuasca is safe and may even be beneficial under certain conditions. However, ayahuasca is only an instrument, a tool.

The potential outcome may be beneficial or harmful depending on the different variables. The subjective experience, and therefore the therapeutic value, of ayahuasca depends on three factors: the drug, the setting, and the environment. Variables related to the ayahuasca include quality, composition, and appropriate dosage. Variables related to the participant or "set" include the absence of contraindications, psychological readiness to undergo deep states of consciousness and to be confronted with denied aspects of the psyche, preparation for the experience, and individual ability to integrate it. The anti-impulsive, prosocial, and cohesive effects of ayahuasca should be tested in detention centers for addicts and in post-traumatic stress related to combat. Variables related to context or "setting" include the quality of the ritual, the quality of the music, and the skills and sensitivity of the facilitator. A beneficial ayahuasca experience requires a context that provides a sense of boundary to the experience, a context that allows patients to surrender by providing a therapeutic or spiritual focus within ethical guidelines. Well-guided rituals serve this purpose. Ayahuasca therapy, therefore, should be understood as a ritual-based intervention and not merely a pharmacological.

In addition to the drug, set, and setting, support for integration, complementary therapeutic interventions, appropriate frequency and spacing between ayahuasca-assisted interventions, and appropriate follow-up and a supportive social environment were elements that were found to be influential in treatment outcomes. Integration of the experience can best be supported by psychotherapy provided by an expert in ayahuasca ceremonies and in the elaboration of psychological processes. Re-evaluation of the past provides the basis for an experience of purification from past events and the basis for new perspectives on one's behavioral patterns. Repressed memories can surface and produce an emotional catharsis that opens the way to abreaction, relief, and alleviation. In such cases, post-traumatic growth becomes possible. The theoretical and practical model proposed and presented in this paper is based on individual clinical expertise with the best available clinical evidence from systematic research, which is the premise for the practice of evidence-based medicine. The model is based on a holistic model that integrates body, psyche, and spirit and can be a good foundation for professional program guidelines and for personal spiritual growth. According to this model, therapeutic effects are attributed to a variety of factors, including both pharmacological and psychological, but especially the interactions of the biological and personal levels with the spiritual dimension, giving critical importance to the spiritual aspects of human experience as part of therapy. The combined physiological and ritual elements of ayahuasca that seem to have the impact on treatment outcomes. This allows ayahuasca to transform into

a very effective means of achieving complete health. Complete health is reflected in a complete balance between mind, body and spirit, leading to a complete physical, psychological and social well-being. In this state, everyone will feel able to carry out their life projects with a sense of love, happiness and freedom. According to this model, future doctors play an important role in changing the perception of the disease and modifying their attitudes. Pure spirit, patience and love will be the guidelines of the future doctors.

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