
Integral Psychedelic Therapy

The Non-ordinary Art of
Psychospiritual Healing

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therapist and client; if left unaddressed, they can lead to impasse and even abrupt termination of the treatment.

Enactments, paradoxically, are a primary source of iatrogenic harm as well as a powerful way in which the client can experience reparative processing and breakthrough insights that help them move toward healing. Central to the catalytic capacity of psychedelics is the increased potential for reparative enactments, particularly in attachment-related trauma, where witnessing, holding, containing, and reparative emotional experience can be deeply transformative.

Because psychedelics significantly modify the relational field, the therapist's responses—along with their conscious and unconscious thoughts and feelings—have greater potential to be deeply impacted and guided by the client's emerging material. These conditions require the therapist to abandon formulaic ways of relating to the client while fostering a “beginner's mind” and attunement to embodied emotional responses to prepare for the spontaneous emergence of enactments. The therapist must be willing to participate as a proxy for a source of the patient's previously unprocessed trauma, as well as their unrealized opportunities for repair and resilience. Taking up this proxy position in psychedelic therapy, where the range of projections is amplified, calls for even more empathy, patience, flexibility, and self-awareness than is typically needed to process unconscious interpersonal dynamics in traditional psychotherapy.

Interpersonal Negotiation

Working with these transference/countertransference reactions and enactments toward expression, repair, and mutual recognition is subtle and complex. The therapist's capacity to withstand moments of intense countertransference and maintain awareness of their internal experience amid a deeply dissociative process opens up the possibility of engaging directly with the relational dynamic at play. Here, the therapist engages in a process of inquiry, emotional honesty, and a willingness to take responsibility for mistakes. They consider the fluctuations and disturbances in the field within the context of the client's history, their own relational wounding, the sociocultural context, and the power dynamics embedded in the relationship. Repair becomes possible as the therapeutic dyad begins to put words to the dynamics playing out.

The therapist should help the client feel permission to express any and all negative feelings about the therapist or therapy process, beginning in preparation and throughout the full arc of the treatment. Remaining sensitive to right timing, the therapist starts by drawing attention to the breakdown of the reflective capacities of the dyad and engaging the client in an exploration of the dynamics present in the relationship. They invite the client to express their here-and-now emotional experience and reactions to the therapist. It is essential that the therapist maintain a non-defensive stance throughout this process.

Whether or not the client is able to name their internal experience, the therapist may opt to self-disclose through honest articulation of their countertransference