



## **Transcript of “Rick Doblin: Psychedelic Healing with Marijuana, MDMA, Psilocybin, & Ayahuasca - #200”**

Bulletproof Radio podcast #200



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Dave: Hey, everyone. It's Dave Asprey of Bulletproof Radio. Today's cool fact of the day is that LSD can relieve end of life anxiety. After more than 40 years of no studies of LSD, the first clinical study of the therapeutic use of this stuff in humans was published in the peer-reviewed journal, "Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease". This happened last March.

The results of the study showed that LSD, when used medically, can promote statistically significant reductions in anxiety for people who are facing the end of their lives. This was a double-blind, placebo controlled study, and it was sponsored by the MultiDisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, or MAPS, looking at 12 people who were nearing the end of their lives.

Today's guest is none other than Rick Doblin, PhD, who is the founder of MAPS. He's also the Executive Director. Since 1986, he's been working as a non-profit group to look at what happens on the medical, legal, and cultural front when people use psychedelics and marijuana for non-recreational uses. People who are using these to deal with deep trauma, and things like that. Rick's actually been someone I've wanted to interview since the very first Bulletproof Radio.

Rick: Hi.

Dave: A couple years ago, I sent a note out, and I think we exchanged a couple things.

Rick: Yeah.

Dave: It just never came together, but it's coming together right now because I actually have him on the line. I'm on Vancouver Island. Rick, you're in Berkeley, if memory serves?

Rick: No. I'm actually in Boston.

Dave: You're in Boston. You live in Boston.

- Rick: Yeah. This is where I had to convince my professors at the Kennedy School that I wasn't nuts, so they'd actually give me a Masters and PhD.
- Dave: It's an honor to meet you because you've done some pretty amazing work. I'm enjoying one of the world's oldest smart drugs. This would be a shot of espresso.
- Rick: Oh. Great.
- Dave: I'm really a fan of what you're doing because you're applying science to one of the areas that a lot of science is afraid to look.
- Rick: Yeah.
- Dave: I don't want to say afraid to look ... Not just into politically incorrect substances. As a bio-hacker, I firmly believe that it's my biology, it's my body, and if I want to put any molecule that I can manufacture or find into my body, it's no one else's business but mine. That's my personal take on this sort of thing.
- But, if I'm going to put something in my body, I'd like to know what it does. What you've done for more than 20 years now, is you've looked at not just the politically incorrect substances that mean you have to deal with government regulation. You've also looked at death, which is kind of a scary thing, in and of itself. I want to understand, and I want our audience to understand, why you are doing this.
- Rick: Let me show you this stationary that I just picked up. It was the first stationary for MAPS, in 1986, and it's got a quote from Albert Einstein on the bottom. The quote says, "What shall be required of mankind to survive is a whole new mode of thinking." The sentence that went before that was, "The splitting of the atom has changed everything, except our mode of thinking. Hence, we drift towards unparalleled catastrophe." My upbringing was ... I was born in '53. I was initially from a Jewish family, and was educated about the Holocaust. That was terrifying. Then, I was involved, as a young boy at school, with all these exercises about the Cuban missile crisis, and what to do if the nuclear

arms race falls apart, and we have nuclear explosions. We just go under our desk and we'll be fine. That was terrifying.

Dave: I still have a lead-lined desk, you know?

Rick: Yeah. Then, I was in the last year of the draft for Vietnam. Encountering all of these life-threatening, terrifying aspects of humanity ... I also had the good fortune of a multi-generational struggle. My great-grandparents on side, grandparents on the other, were immigrants to the US. They managed to survive, and then they did well. My dad was a doctor. Then, I had this ability to really focus on deeper issues, other than food and shelter for survival. I was growing up in this way where I was very much privileged, in a way, to have my food and shelter needs taken care of. I was responding to the deeper threats, including trying to figure out what to do about Vietnam.

I started trying to understand how to respond to that. I was growing up in the '60s, and hearing all the stuff about LSD, but I was basically believing the propaganda that one dose of LSD would make you somehow or other permanently crazy. That it would be destabilizing for the rest of your life. I was looking at psychological mechanisms of what was going on in the world, and I felt this dehumanization of the other. The projection of one's difficult parts onto the other. The scapegoating. Those are core problems that could cause people to fear and then work against and kill other people. It started me thinking that this mystical experience of unity. I think what Albert Einstein was talking about with this whole new way of thinking. It made me think that there's some way. If we can help people to experience their sense of connection with everybody, that is a ground for more peaceful discussions, negotiations, and things like that.

Then, when I first read "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest", by Ken Kesey, and was told that part of that was written while he was on LSD, which I couldn't believe, that made me question everything I was taught about LSD. I started experimenting with it in my first year of college. When I did LSD, I started getting these feelings that there was something fundamentally healthy about it, and healing, instead of inherently brain damaging. I had these intimations of these feelings of

connection and feelings of going beyond my ego. It felt like that experience would be something that had major political implications, as well. Both therapeutic and political. I was having a hard time, though, with my LSD experiences, and experiences with Mescaline. Somebody came by campus with 1/2 pound of Mescaline.

Dave: This was in the '70s, I'm guessing?

Rick: Yes, this was '71.

Dave: Right before I was born. Got it.

Rick: Yeah. I bought 1/2 pound of Mescaline, and my friends and I shared it. All these different things. I started getting this feeling that these psychedelics were incredible tools. Then, I started realizing that they had been used for thousands of years. Then, when I really woke up in '71, '72 ... It was when the crackdown had happened. The massive backlash against the '60s. These drugs were taken out of the research labs, and these people were heavily criminalized. Life sentences, sometimes, for people for selling these things. I started feeling like there's an unhealthy social reaction against them.

Then, because I decided to become a draft resistor for Vietnam, I started realizing that I was probably going to go to jail. I wouldn't be able to have a normal career. All of this came together, as an 18 year old, and I decided I want to become an underground psychedelic therapist. Of course, I need my own psychedelic therapy. Then, I'll work towards bringing these things back up from the underground.

Dave: You just said, "Psychedelic therapy".

Rick: Yeah.

Dave: Probably 80% of the people listening to this, driving in their cars right now, are going, "What the heck is psychedelic therapy? This guy's a little bit crazy." I know what it is, but talk about the history. I know you studied with Stanislav Grof. Could you talk about what he did, the number of patients, what you learned from it, and just what psychedelic

therapies are, so that people who know what therapy is can understand how psychedelics could possibly be related.

Rick: Let's go back a little bit further to where we hear about Freud, and the whole idea of psychoanalysis. What Freud talked about was how the dreams were the royal road to the unconscious. In therapy, if you work on people's unconscious material, you can help them make a lot of progress. I think that psychedelic ... The word means "mind manifested". That would encompass dreams. Dreams are psychedelic, in the sense that your unconscious mind comes to the service every night. Many of us remember our dreams in the morning. We all have them at night. They can be a tool for our deeper feelings, urges, fears, anxieties, and hopes and dreams.

Stan Grof has said that LSD is for the study of the mind, what the microscope is for biology, and the telescope is for astronomy. LSD is what he called a "non-specific amplifier of the unconscious". When we talk about psychedelic psychotherapy, what we're really talking about is ... The primary thing is the psychotherapy. There's a lot of non-drugged psychotherapy before and after a psychedelic experience to prepare people for it, and then to help them integrate it. But, under the influence of the psychedelic drug, which would include MDMA ... Not as a classic psychedelic, but it still manifests the mind and manifests things that we've previously suppressed. So MDMA, LSD, even marijuana would be called psychedelic by this definition. Material comes to the surface, and then you can work with it in different ways.

I think for people who have a little bit of a hard time with what psychedelic psychotherapy is, really just think back to the origins of Freud. It's about working with your dreams. It's about material that comes to the surface, that these drugs facilitate. The drugs, in themselves, are not the treatment. It's the drug plus the psychedelic. We actually call it "MDMA or LSD assisted psychotherapy". It's the human relationship that takes place between the therapist and the patient that is really the core. The psychedelic just brings all sorts of material. Different psychedelics do different things.

Stan Grof was a Czech psychiatrist, and in the '50s ... He's 83 now. We're actually going to Israel next week because he wants to talk about the common mystical roots of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity.

Dave: Like Mytherism?

Rick: Bahai. Yeah. It's more the idea that mysticism is the anecdote to fundamentalism.

Dave: Mysticism came from those little mushrooms that were red with white dots on top, right?

Rick: Yeah. For a lot of people. It's got thousands and thousands of years. Even in the history of western civilization, the Greeks had the longest running mystery ceremony for 2,000 years. The Eleusinian Mysteries. That was a potion that they drank called "kykeon", that had a psychedelic component to it. That was ended in 396 by the church ... The Catholic church.

Stan was basically a psychiatrist in the '50s, and Sandoz pharmaceutical company, which developed LSD ... Albert Hoffman, in 1938, he invented it. In '43, accidentally took it and figured out what it was. They sent it around to psychiatrists around the world to figure out what to do with it. They thought it would be helpful in training psychiatrists to work with people that were psychotic or schizophrenic. They initially saw it, in a way, as a temporary madness. They later learned that isn't really a good way to describe it. Stan ended up working with thousands of people with LSD into the '50s.

Then, when the Russians came into Czechoslovakia in '68, he escaped to the United States and worked at Johns Hopkins. I wrote him a letter in 1971 ... Actually '72. I wrote him a letter because I was so disturbed by my psychedelic experiences. I wasn't really capable, emotionally, of processing the material or opening up and surrendering to it. I went to the guidance counselor at New College, in Sarasota, Florida, and said I'm having problems with my LSD trips. It was a time in America where you could say that to your guidance counselor, and they wouldn't immediately kick you out of school. It was great.



Dave: A very different world than today.

Rick: Very different. He ended up giving me a manuscript copy of Stan Grof's "Realms of the Human Unconscious".

Dave: Wow.

Rick: It was incredible. When I read that, that's when it all came together for me. This was a report by Stan about the LSD research that he had done, both in the Czech Republic and Johns Hopkins, with heroin addicts, alcoholics, cancer patients ... All sorts of people. He felt that he was able to describe a new cartography of the mind. He could map the unconscious, and that's what he meant by "LSD is for the study of the mind, what the microscope and telescope are". It brings things to the surface.

When I read this book, I was really thrilled because he was coming at it from a rigorous, scientific perspective, but looking at religious and spiritual things. But, he wasn't a philosopher. He was looking at it from a therapist point of view. How do you actually help people get better from suffering of any number of different kinds. Yet, at the same time, he had this discussion about mystical states of experience ... How they were correlated with therapeutic benefits ... And I felt here was where my whole world came together. I thought, "This is it. This is what I want to do." It really brings science into spirituality and therapy, coupled with psychedelics. This would be a way in which to move forward.

I think many of us associate the '60s with the Beatles and "Make love, not war". The Beatles were very much into psychedelics. So was Ken Kesey and the Grateful Dead. This whole idea-

Dave: An Steve Jobs, Sting, and many other greats magically, somehow did a little bit of this, right?

Rick: Yeah. It's like with gay rights. Everybody knew somebody was gay; they just didn't know somebody was gay because people were keeping it in. If we could have a day where everybody who'd done psychedelics, and it's influenced their lives, could speak about it, people would be shocked

at the range of people who have been influenced by psychedelics. It felt like, since they were so demonized, and the American system and President Nixon was so focused on stopping all the research and throwing all these people in jail ... It felt like a revolutionary act to try to bring psychedelic therapy back. I also felt, personally, that I needed it.

I felt like another way to say it is that we have- What Albert Einstein was talking about- We have developed our technology, our rational mind, to a miraculous extent. We have incredible tools, but we've not sufficiently developed our emotional or spiritual capabilities so that we can handle the technologies that we have.

Dave: What did Stan do when LSD became illegal? He shifted his methods a little bit. Can you talk about that a bit? I think listeners would love to hear about that. That's the drug-free trip that also has healing experiences.

Rick: Yeah. There was this general sense that when the Controlled Substances Act was passed in 1970, and criminalized all these substances, most of the people who were involved with psychedelic research went into looking at non-drug alternatives. How do you anchor this? Then, we see the rise of meditation, yoga, and all sorts of biofeedback ... All different ways to try and really anchor and ground these experiences.

What Stan recognized is that the tool that's been used for thousands of years is breathing. From his experience as a psychiatrist ... A lot of times when people come to the emergency room with a psychiatric condition, they're hyperventilating. Therapists and doctors are instructed to calm them down. Stan recognized that if you could hyperventilate and not try to suppress what happens, but try to bring to the surface what happens, that would be an alternative to psychedelics. What he used to say was that nobody could ever make breathing illegal. But, he was actually wrong. It turned out that in France, they have these laws against cults. They decided that the Holotropic Breathwork that he was developing- this hyperventilation- was a cult. They criminalized it.

Dave: Wow. Only in France, I guess.

Rick: Yeah. It was shocking. Many people have gone through this Holotropic Breathwork, and have felt that the experiences that they had were as deep or deeper than the experiences that they had with psychedelics.

Dave: That was my experience. I've done Holotropic Breathing three times, and two of those times were with Stan, himself. Stan's the inventor of this stuff, and really, it's an ancient Ayurvedic yoga technique that he adopted. He's added some music, and there's a whole set-in setting, like you would have with psychedelics.

I've also tried Ayahuasca with Shamans in South America, and been in the jungle drinking stuff, and throwing up, and the whole experience. I've had more healing from Holotropic Breathwork than I have from ... The few times I've used psychedelics, it's always in a healing, therapeutic context. I think it's foolish and dangerous to go to a party or go to Disney Land. It might be fun, but there are things that can happen.

I've witnessed people on Holotropic breathing have deeper healing and awareness than people who I've also seen on other substances, who suddenly realize "Oh my God. I was molested for 10 years, and I didn't know." Because our powers of self deception is so high.

Rick: Yeah.

Dave: It's shocking, but there are multiple gateways into the brain. I'm paraphrasing here, and tell me if I'm wrong. But, my perception of your work with MAPS is that you're looking at ways to use these psychedelics as tools, rather than as recreational substances. These are as tools for personal development. For healing trauma. Am I on the right vibe there? We have a lot of parents, right now, who are going, "Oh my God. How could Dave have this guy on Bulletproof Radio? He's pushing drugs." No. This is an anti- Don't walk into these psychedelics because they are big, and you had problems with your own experiences. You had to go seek help for them.

Rick: Yeah. I think the main point here is that, if you think about MAPS as a non-profit pharmaceutical company, trying to develop psychedelics and marijuana into FDA approved prescription medicines. We're trying to

work within a very rigorous scientific context, trying to make these drugs available as prescription medicines. But, not as take-home medicines, like the current antidepressants that we have, where you're supposed to take them every day, take them for the rest of your life, and make the pharmaceutical companies a load of money. These are meant to be given only a few times, and they're meant to be given under supervision.

I think what you were describing before, with the Holotropic Breathwork, is that it really is the feeling of safety, and the feeling that you can be supported. People know these states, and if you are letting up new material ... Things that you've been scared of, or suppressed in the past ... If you feel safe and feel supported, then you can let things come to the surface. The kind of context that Stan creates in the Holotropic Breathwork is very supportive. People, when they've done LSD in recreational settings, a lot of times they don't feel as safe. They're trying to navigate in the physical world, so part of their mind has to be making sure that they find their way home, or they don't run in traffic. There's a lot of individual support.

The other thing with the breathwork is that you can start and stop it on your own. It's not like when you take a drug and you're in for the ride. There's advantages and disadvantages to that.

The other thing that Stan did, that I thought was elegant and beautiful about the breathwork, is that there are all these breathing techniques that are very sophisticated. They've been developed for thousands of years, about "Breathe in this nostril a certain number of times. Breathe out that nostril." What Stan has done is he's boiled it down. He's basically said, "Breathe faster and deeper."

Dave: Exactly.

Rick: That's it. And find your own way. It's not cluttered with a lot of dogma.

Dave: There's a warning, though, that would go with that. I don't recommend people practice Holotropic Breathing by themselves until you know what you're doing. Even then, having someone with you, usually a

therapist or someone who's trained in this, is a really good idea. One of the things that helps when you're doing something like this ... Whether it's psychedelics or breathing that also produces these profound, self-awareness, altered state ... It's that you're laying there, and you want to be able to leave your body like I've done during Holotropic Breathing, and it's a scary experience. But, knowing that a friend, or someone you trust, is there to take care of your physical needs, makes it easier for you to push the limits of what you're hiding from yourself, or whatever it is that you're working on. Doing it yourself in your dorm room is going to be a very different experience, and you might not like the results.

Rick: Yeah. Just for an example, as I said Stan is very idealistic in some ways. We're heading off to Israel next week, and we're going to have a Holotropic Breathwork workshop- A two day workshop, as well as lectures in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. The way that they're structured is that people divide up into pairs. Everyone who's breathing has a "sitter", who is there with him to protect his space, to remind them when he or she stops breathing. In addition to having somebody there, sitting with you, observing how you're doing and helping you, there's trained facilitators. We're having one trained facilitator for every 10 people that are breathing, to rotate around. In addition, there's Stan. So that this is a very heavily supervised and supported context.

It's surprising, but just through hyperventilation, you could end up triggering an incredible experiences that you would have never predicted ahead of time would come up. It's an amazingly powerful technique.

Dave: This shares a lot in common with what happens when you have a therapeutic use of these different substances. In my experience of them, in healing context, they get in the way of all the stuff you think about all the time so you stop about it for a while. Then, when you go in and you think about what's left, that's where you can do amazing things for your ability to change yourself.

Even something as simple as a float tank. I mentioned before we started recording, at the new human hacking facility here on Vancouver Island, I

put a commercial grade float tank in there for that exact reason. I think you have some experience with floating, as well.

- Rick: Yeah. At the same time that I was ... 1972 ... That I was doing LSD and reading Stan Grof, I was also reading John Lilly. John Lilly was the inventor of the flotation tank, and he had written this book "Programming and Meta Programming in the Human Bio-Computer". That book was about research that he'd done in the '50s and '60s that was funded by the US Navy, where he developed this flotation tank. Partially, they were thinking about what happens when people go into space, and they tried to eliminate all the sensory input. Eventually, he started doing LSD inside the tank, and started trying to think about the brain as a computer. Which parts of his brain and experiences were being catalyzed.
- Dave: Some elements of bio-hacking in that thinking, for sure. Hacking the human body. Cool.
- Rick: Yeah. Friends and I experimented with our own isolation environments, and eventually built our own flotation tank. I have a tank at my house that I've had for years. I've done LSD in the tank, marijuana in the tank, and nothing in the tank, I've spent a lot of time floating in the tank. At the same time, I find it tremendously helpful. Absolutely very helpful because ... Initially, the flotation tank, to me, looks like a coffin.
- Dave: Totally.
- Rick: You're getting into this coffin. Then, when you're in it, there's only 10 inches of water ... Heavily salted water so that you can float. You can completely relax, and you can even fall asleep in it. The water is above your ears, but below your eyes, nose, and mouth. You can relax your neck muscles, and it's amazing to realize how much tension we're constantly keeping in our neck. You're able to actually relax so much that it changes from a coffin to infinity. You're floating. You don't touch anything. You don't feel anything. The temperature of the water is similar to the temperature of your body and the air. It's just a remarkable environment. You get comfortable with yourself, and with your thought process. It's very deeply relaxing.



I was experimenting with both, but looking back on my life, there's a cautionary tale about John Lilly. There's a difference between John Lilly and Stan Grof. I think Stan was focused on healing. That was the primary thing. He was using non-ordinary states of consciousness, using LSD, using Holotropic Breathwork. But, his mission, in a sense, was healing. Whereas John Lilly had this more intellectual focus on understanding. Also, I think once the crackdown came, Stan was able to move from working with LSD to developing Holotropic Breathwork, while John Lilly felt like it was "stupid people, stupid world". He got an arrogance about him, and he ended up getting very involved with Ketamine. Ketamine is called a dissociative anesthetic, and in lower doses it's like a psychedelic that you can remember. He escaped into what seemed to him like this more spiritual, higher plane. But it was actually escape.

You could say that I had, sort of, these two heroes. Stan and John Lilly. LSD and the flotation tank. I really learned a lot from both of them, but I felt like with John Lilly, it was really tragic how his life ended and how he became more about running away. I do attribute that, in part, to this arrogance and impatience that he had. It's a terrible disappoint ... These incredible tools ... When the backlash squashes them all, it's just brilliant when Stan was able to go forward with the Holotropic Breathwork.

Dave: I think he brought something of great value to me. There are times in my life when I probably didn't realize that the world was as emotional and spiritual as it because I didn't really like that. But, when I did Holotropic Breathing, I'm like, "Oh!" Maybe I hadn't noticed that before, but it can cause some profound shifts in your perception.

Rick: What didn't you like about it?

Dave: I grew up in a very science-based family. You read the Skeptic Enquirer, and you look at everything as a truth table. I studied Computer Science. The world should be logical. My perception now is that I have a logical part of my brain, and I have a hugely irrational part of my meta operating system, my body ... The irrational and the rational both exist inside my consciousness at the same time, depending on what level I'm at. Neither one is superior to the other, but by having awareness of both,

I'm actually happier, I can perform better, and I can help other people more.

It was that awareness that I had to at least acknowledge the existence of the irrational. That might be important. Then, the value of it. That was just my own ego. But Holotropic Breathing did paint a very different picture of reality for me than what I thought was real. Having that sort of awakening experience, whether it comes through therapeutic use of these things ... Whether it comes from a drumming ceremony with a Shaman in South America ... Whether you're drinking from the twisted vine ... All of those experiences can lead to some sort of thinking of "I need to pay attention to that." When I do pay attention to that, my abilities in this world are different than they were before, and that's a great gift. However it comes to you, it's a powerful awareness. But it comes with responsibility, and that's one of the things that I wanted to ask you about.

Much of the history of the evolution of consciousness is intertwined with our plant entheogens, but what do you say to people who say, "John Lilly was funded by the Navy. Did the CIA dose Russian Operatives with LSD?" Isn't there a bit of a ... These things can bring up things, but don't they have a dark side, as well?

Rick: Definitely. In fact, I think the best way to think about these things is that they're tools. Some people want to make them into entheogens. The new word for psychedelic is "entheogen; to bring out the God within". I never use that word. I don't like that word at all. I think it's too positive, the same way the word "hallucinogen" is too negative, like it's a delusion and it's not real. The surgeon's knife can save your life, or the same knife can kill you.

It's why we say it's MDMA assisted psychotherapy. These drugs are dominated by therapy, or by culture. They're not automatically illuminating the truth. If you look at the Ayahuasca churches that you're talking about, that work down in Brazil ... They're homophobic, they're hierarchical, they're patriarchal. They're trapped in their own cultural sense. We're all struggling to get out of our own subjectivity. Out of our



own cultural programming. These tools can be helpful for that, but they're just tools.

I think the big problem with prohibition is that we've made drugs ... There are good drugs or bad drugs. We've invested properties into the drugs, whereas it's really about the relationship that we make with the drug. I think by criminalizing certain things, we don't focus on the relationship. LSD is either the demon drug, or the tool to mystical awareness. Whereas, it's really about how it's used, how you prepare for it, and even more importantly, what do you do with the experience once you're had it.

When we go back to talk about psychedelic psychotherapy ... To give you an example ... Our approach with MDMA, we're working with veterans. So, that's another connection with the military. We have a 3 1/2 month treatment program, and during those 3 1/2 months, people get MDMA only three times, once a month. They have weekly non-drug psychotherapy for about 3 weeks before they have the first MDMA experience. We have our experiences during the day. They start at 10 in the morning, and they go until around 6 at night. People stay in the treatment facility, they stay overnight, and they have hours of non-drug, integrative psychotherapy the next day. Then, they go home, and we call them on the phone everyday for a week. Five, ten, fifteen minutes, just to help them do the processing and the integration.

Then, they come back once a week for about 3-4 weeks, for non-drugged psychotherapy. Then, they have the second session. That repeats again for their third session, and then there's weeks and weeks of integration afterwards. This is essentially a psychotherapeutic process that's punctuated, occasionally, by these powerful experiences with MDMA, or with LSD, or with Psilocybin, that bring experiences and things to the surface. What you do with them is really the key.

I think that's a major distinction between recreational use, where people are going for the experience itself. They're looking to have just a narrow slice of the experience. They only want to have a great experience. They only want to be happy. With therapy, we're looking at, not so much what happens- Although, it's crucial what happens. But

we're looking at what people bring back, and how we can anchor and ground it so that there is therapeutic change.

We've talked to people that have taken MDMA, Ecstasy, at a rave or at a party ... Women. And they've said, "While I was there, I remembered having been raped. I remembered sexual abuse, and I was with a bunch of friends and they only wanted to party. So, I felt like I had to stuff my feelings down, and I ended up feeling worse and was disturbed for months afterwards."

Dave: I can tell you, fully 3/4 of the times that I've used hallucinogens in a group with the intent for healing ... Not a party group, but often times it's quasi-recreational ... Everyone is there, not to have a good time and dance under bright lights, but we're sitting in a quiet place and doing it. Just about every single time, at least one person has an awareness like that. If there isn't a group of aware people to support them, it is really traumatic as all hell.

Rick: Yeah.

Dave: Being able to sit there and walk someone through realizing that the story of their life, the way they played it, isn't actually what happened ... It's seriously ungrounding, but it's also healing, and it allows them to change their behavior in a very meaningful way. But, if you don't have the right friends there, and they're not there to listen, and you don't feel safe talking to them, don't go try it a party. Especially if you've never had any of this stuff. It's just a bad idea.

Rick: Even the idea that you're going to take this drug for only one slice. If your intention is, "I'm only going to take this for fun." You're setting yourself up for a problem. A lot of times, when difficult stuff comes up, if you attend to it and work through it ... It's like grief. If you let out the tears, a lot of times you'll feel better. It doesn't even take that much time, but it takes courage and a willingness to do it. If you're defending against it ... What we found, actually, with LSD and with other drugs, is that the more open you are to it, the shorter the experience. The more it goes through you. The more resistance there is to what's emerging, the longer it takes. I think that if people have this narrow sense of "This is a

fun drug. I'm only going to take it for fun", and then something difficult happens, they could really end up a lot worse off.

One of the things that we're doing is what we call our "Zendo Project". It's psychedelic harm-reduction, and we do this at festivals all over the world. At Burning Man and Boom Festival in Portugal-

Dave: I've seen you guys at Burning Man, and I saw all the people you were helping. That's valuable work, so thank you for that.

Rick: Yeah. We're sending a whole team down to Costa Rica for Envision Festival. Basically, the idea is that a lot of people, at these festivals, will use these drugs for fun. Then, something deeper happens and they're not prepared for it. The normal response is that they get taken to a medical staff. They either get tranquilized or, if they're really disruptive, they get arrested. Then, it becomes a long term problem. But, if we can offer supportive care by people who are trained and know that suppressing is not the thing ... Letting it out is the approach ... Then people can benefit from these experiences and even go back into the party if they want.

We're trying to create a model for a post-prohibition world. We're also trying to educate people about how there's more depth to these experiences than people might be anticipating or preparing for. In a sense, prohibition is a terrible, counterproductive idea, but legalization doesn't eliminate all the problems either. That's where this idea of providing support for people, and getting across ... It's different in the United States. The Rave Act has criminalized harm-reduction. It's made it so that it's a sign and you know drugs are being used. If you're a promoter, you could go to jail and you could have your assets seized if the police want to come after you for harm-reduction efforts. It's perverse, but in Europe it's different. At Boom Festival, they do on-site drug testing. They end up telling people what they're getting, so that everybody knows and the dealers are on notice.

Dave: You mean you can have your drugs tested before you take them? That's what on-site drug testing is?

Rick: Yeah.

Dave: I love that. That's so different than the US.

Rick: It's thin layer chromatography. It's not just with a chemical pill, liquids ... To see the reaction-

Dave: Wow.

Rick: They tell you exactly what's in it. Not only what you think is in it, but everything else that's in it.

Dave: Wow.

Rick: It's incredible. One time we were there and somebody collapsed on the dance floor. It was shortly after he'd taken something, and we were able to find out that it was LSD. He wasn't poisoned. We just needed to sit with him, and eventually he came around and was okay. It was psychological. But, having that ability to know what people take ... One of the biggest problems with prohibition is that drugs are adulterated. People don't know what they're taking. There is this human urge to change your state of consciousness, to try to reach these other, more profound emotional states.

You talked about how you're both irrational and logical, but a lot of us feel like we're trapped in the logical part, and we're disconnected from our feelings. We're scared of them, and once they come to the surface, they're going to take over in a way. That's like keeping a dog chained and in a cage in your basement. When it comes out, it's wild. But, if a dog is treated with love ... Eventually you make friends with the irrational parts of your brain and the emotional parts of our self. I think bringing these emotional energies to the surface is the healing aspect to it, even though they're really powerful.

Dave: I'm amused that you chose dog as the analogy. In the [Bulletproof Diet book](#) ... It just hit the New York Times Best Sellers list ... I talk about the three Labrador brain behaviors you have. These are there irrational parts of the body, but one of the things you can do is you can train the dog if you can see it.

Rick: Yeah.

Dave: Suddenly, the rational parts get easier, and the irrational parts make more sense. It's just funny that you chose that analogy because it's one that works.

Rick: Yeah. As part of my early times when I was experimenting with LSD and with the flotation tank, I raised a full-bred Alaskan timber wolf.

Dave: Oh, wow. That is some serious, heavy duty training.

Rick: Yeah. For two years, and the amazing part of it was that ... Wolves are born with their eyes closed for the first few days. I was in Sarasota, Florida, at New College, and that's the winter home of the Ringling Brothers circus. Also, carnivals are there, and there's people that breed wild animals for carnivals. This one person was breeding, wolves, lions, tigers, and stuff, and wasn't taking care of them. The Humane Society shut them down, and the female wolf was pregnant with a litter of eight. The zoos were full. The sanctuaries were full. Their natural habitats were under attack. So, they just put an ad in the paper, like "Wolf cubs for sale". You had to be interviewed by the Humane Society, and you had to build a 6-foot high fence. But the point was that these wolves were taken away from their mother when they were born and bottle fed. When they opened their eyes, they bonded on people.

I got this wolf at eight weeks, and I lived with him until he was two years old. Eventually, I found a sanctuary that opened up and had a female wolf that needed a mate. I howled with him, I could run ... I built my house in Florida, at the edge of town. Hundreds and hundreds of acres of empty land, and I could run with him off the leash through the woods.

Dave: Wow.

Rick: It was fantastic. But, people's image of a wolf is this ravenous, Little Red Riding Hood killing, grandmother killing, merciless hunter. Actually, they're tremendous family animals. They babysit for each other's cubs. They're very social. They don't attack humans. I learned a lot from this

wolf. One of the things that persists with me to this day is that, when I would walk with him through the woods and run with him, he had so much energy that he would run through things or over things. I got this idea ... This straight-ahead thing. If there's an obstacle, it's just an opportunity for exercise, rather than "Let's go the easy way around".

I think everyone who's listening can imagine, wherever you live there's sidewalks and there's all sorts of ways where we're channeled to go a certain way. That's not always the direct way. I find that whenever I walk across a lawn, or step off the path, trying to go the direct way, that's my wolf. That's what I've learned from the wolf.

Dave: Wow.

Rick: It's the same for mental things. We're so channeled into habits and patterns, that we don't notice a lot of the world going by.

Dave: What was your wolf's name?

Rick: Phaedrus.

Dave: Why did you name him that?

Rick: There was a book called "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance." Did you read that book?

Dave: Yeah, it's a famous book.

Rick: Yeah. I've got this young woman who's 23 and works for MAPS, and I was just talking to her today about this. I asked her if she knew the book, and she had never heard of the book.

Dave: Oh wow.

Rick: Hopefully she'll read it. It's a fantastic book. Phaedrus is really a character in the Plato dialogues. It's a character who's from the country, and the dialogue with Phaedrus is about the taming power of love. I thought that would be a really appropriate name for this wolf. The same with our unconscious, and these urges, and the irrational ... If we can

approach them with love and acceptance, they can be tamed. They can become our friends, rather than our enemies.

Dave: Wow. That's amazing. What a fitting name.

Rick: Yeah.

Dave: Do you have enough time to go for about another 40 minutes?

Rick: Yeah. Sure.

Dave: Let's do that. We'll end up doing a double episode. If you're listening to this, this is one of those cool things ... I'm going to end up flaking on a couple other people I was supposed to call, but this is way more fun and more interesting. This is the end of the first half of the interview, which is awesome, with Rick Doblin from MAPS. What we've just talked about here is some of the reasons you might consider legalizing and using psychedelics under settings for healing, not just all willy-nilly here. What we're going to talk about is specific psychedelics, what they do, and why you might want to use them.

The first one is maybe a little bit more legal, spiritual ... Why? What's our reason behind this. And our second conversation will be us talking about the specifics and the nitty-gritty. This is an amazing opportunity to talk with a guy who's spent many, many years doing things like training wolves, which is awesome.

Rick: He trained me in a lot of ways, too.

Dave: There you go. Fair enough. So, Rick, would you share where people can find information about your work? URLs and things like that.

Rick: Yeah. People can go to MAPS.org. M-A-P-S, like maps of the world, .org. The website has got an enormous amount of information, and they can learn about all that we're doing with all the different drugs, and also about our psychedelic harm-reduction projects. We're a non-profit organization, and we exist entirely based on donations. If people wanted to make a donation, that would be particularly appreciated. Tax deductible donation.



MAPS ... Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies. The name actually came from a book by Ralph Metzner. Ralph was one of the people with Ram Dass and Tim Leary at Harvard, that was part of the original group at Harvard that brought in Psilocybin and LSD. The book was "Maps of Consciousness". When I was trying to start a non-profit, I knew I wanted the word "psychedelic" in it. I was looking at my book shelf and there was Maps, and I thought, "Okay. It's got a 'P' in it! I can work with that!" So, MAPS.org.

Dave: Okay. MAPS.org. Stan Grof's work ... He's written "The Holotropic Universe", and many things that we've talked about a lot. I'll put links to his stuff into the show notes. When you come to the website, you'll be able to see that. There is a "Cool Fact of the Day" at the beginning of every show, and I just asked Rick for a cool fact of the day, so that I didn't have to make one up. I didn't know we were going to do a double-header here. Rick, go ahead. Tell us your cool fact of the day.

Rick: The LSD study that we recently completed in Switzerland ... The first LSD study in 40 years ... The cool fact is that, of the 12 subjects who were in that study, 11 of them had never done LSD before. It's not a bunch of aging hippies that are facing life-threatening illnesses, and now they're turning to things they did when they were young. We're trying to mainstream psychedelics. In that study, we were able to reach out to a new generation of people, and get 11 of the 12 people who'd never done LSD before, to volunteer for the most highly demonized and feared of all the psychedelics.

Dave: That is an amazing piece of info. People are more afraid of death than they are of hallucinogens. It makes sense.

Rick: Yeah. That was part of the political ... I guess I need to explain. I have my PhD from the Kennedy School of Government, at Harvard. My Masters, also. And I focused on the regulations and medical use of psychedelics, but I learned a lot of political strategies. When you're dealing with something that's demonized as much as LSD and other psychedelics are, when we try to bring it back from the underground ... From the suppression ... We have to pick therapeutic purposes that the mainstream people will be willing to accept. People are more afraid of



dying than they are drugs, so if we can show that psychedelics can help people who are anxious about dying to be less anxious, and to appreciate more of their lives while they still have them, that's one door way into the culture.

The other is people who are traumatized. We have great respect in our culture for soldiers, for veterans, and for people who have sacrificed for their country and now are suffering. MDMA for post-traumatic stress disorder in veterans, or women who've been sexually abused as a child or raped as an adult, or even any of us who are caught in a natural disaster ... We have to get beyond the "us" and the "them". This is the "them". Everybody's going to be dying, and we're all worried about that to some extent. We all could be traumatized. Those were the key clinical indications that we decided to use to bring psychedelics back into the mainstream.

Dave: Cool. I love the way you put that. It's so much better than the cool fact of the day that I was thinking about. Thank you for that. In our last episode, when you were talking about training a full-blooded wolf, you talked about Little Red Riding Hood. My cool fact of the day was going to be that one interpretation of the red hood in Little Red Riding Hood, is actually a reference to psychedelic mushrooms. When you look back at a lot of these fables, there are obvious clues to the fact that psychedelics were a part of these attempts to tell a story of what's happening inside your subconscious mind. I was kind of blown away when I read that. I'm like, "Yeah. It does make sense. Why did she have this bizarre, odd experience in the middle of the forest? It clearly isn't real." Maybe it's because she was talking about an inner experience, versus an outer one.

Rick: Yeah.

Dave: But, yours rocked.

Rick: I think people don't really understand that our culture is a historical aberration. The whole idea of prohibition is not something that's been wide-spread throughout human history. It's about power and domination. Most cultures of the world have found a way to integrate psychedelics, the non-ordinary states of consciousness, and the

irrational, into their understanding. Their religion. Their healing methods. We're struggling against this unusual situation. I think, in some ways, by separating the rational from the irrational, it's produced an enormous explosion in knowledge, and this massive development of our intellect and all of the technology that we've been able to do.

It's kept out of religion. We had that with Galileo and Copernicus, where the sciences and religion started clashing, and they were separated. But, now we really need to bring them together. I think that's one of the really exciting things.

There's actually an experiment that's being done in Switzerland with lifetime meditators. They are given high-tech brain scans before and after a meditation retreat, and during the meditation retreat they're given Psilocybin mushrooms. They're looking at how that might deepen their spiritual experiences, deepen their meditation, produce altruism, and positive pro-social things. What are the political implications? It's a way where science and religion are coming together now, in a way that they haven't for 400-500 years. I think that's going to end up with the psychedelics being welcomed back into our culture.

Dave: I certainly hope so. It's funny that you brought that up, because one of the first things I wanted to ask you about in this episode ... Where we go through each of the substances ... Was about Psilocybin, or so-called "Magic Mushrooms". We've always thought that most of the hallucinogens, or psychedelics, are stimulants. But, it maybe isn't quite that simple. What else did we learn from looking at brain scans with people who were using these medications, or these medicines.

Rick: Yeah. There's a woman name Amanda Fielding, who, in England has started what's called "The Beckley Foundation". Her interest has been in understanding what happens with psychedelics and blood flow in the brain. Her view was that for the last 40-50 years of her life, that psychedelics stimulate the brain. They will cause more blood flow in the brain, and that will be somehow related to more awareness. One of the things that I respect tremendously about Amanda, is that she sponsored a study using fMRI with Psilocybin ... Functional Magnetic Resonance ... What was discovered contradicted the theories that she'd been working

with for the last 40 or 50 years. But, she was able to wrestle with it and accept that that's what happened.

What she found ... This was Robin Carhart-Harris, at Imperial College ... David Nutt was involved with these studies. What they discovered is that Psilocybin actually reduces blood flow in certain parts of the brain. These are the parts of the brain that are known as the "default mode network". What that means is ... The default mode network is your resting state. Your basic state. It's been identified, in some ways, with the ego. With who we think we are, watching and looking for survival-based things. It's our default that we refer back to ... This sort of ego awareness.

What Psilocybin does, is it reduces the activity in this default mode network. What the default mode network is doing is ... There are so many perceptions that our sense are bringing all the time, through hearing, through sight, through smell ... All sorts of stuff that's happening, and we cannot pay attention all of it. We narrow our focus, and we pay attention to those things that relate to our self, our survival, our enhancement, our pleasures. We have this narrowing of consciousness to what's relative to our ego and self.

What Psilocybin does by weakening the blood flow to these default mode networks, is it permits a flood of sensations to come to awareness. That's why a lot of times, people feel that time is speeding up, like there's so much happening in a moment. There is always that much happening in a moment, but we're only focusing on a portion of it. Instead of psychedelics contributing to more blood flow in the brain, they contribute to the weakening of the part that filters, and we get this unfiltered flood of material that helps us realize how much is going on. It helps us feel the connections between everything. It's a tremendous insight, and it's completely contradictory.

That's where I think this idea of science and religion and therapy coming together, is going to really be the tool to a massive healing, and also to the introduction of new approaches in our society for spiritual experiences. A new understanding of what this spiritual, mystical experience is.

- Dave: That's very well said. I've been studying the default mode and active mode in the brain, and even working on some new technology to allow you to be more aware of what's happening in the default mode. Creativity, and intuition, and all this unseen stuff is in there. If you can fish stuff out of there, often times that's the name for your new product. That's intuition. That's figuring out the structure of- The helical structure of DNA came from a dream. Making that bridge more accessible is pretty interesting. If it turns out that a substance can be used as a tool to help you have less default or active mode ... And those brain states produce better performance, healing experiences, whatever they are ... It just seems like those are technologies that we ought to know about, given that we own this hardware in our heads and we can do something with it.
- Rick: Yeah. I think it was actually the Benzene ring that came from a dream. The helical structure of DNA came from Francis Crick. In the '50s-
- Dave: I love that. You're totally right, by the way, so keep going-
- Rick: Okay. In 1953, Francis Crick ... Now, he never said this when he was alive, but after he was dead, a friend of his said this ... They were using LSD in low doses for creativity. In fact, there's a lot of people doing that now, today-
- Dave: Oh yeah. I know a few.
- Rick: What he claimed is that on one of these LSD days, Francis Crick had the idea of the helical structure of DNA. We know that polymerase chain reaction, which is how we replicate DNA now ... It's the key to DNA analysis ... Kary Mullis was the fellow that developed that, and he won a Nobel Prize for Chemistry for that. He says that he was influenced by marijuana and LSD when coming up with it, and that it was part of his creativity. In fact, I reached out to him shortly after he got his Nobel Prize, and we had a communication. He sent me this quote that was absolutely fantastic, that we've used a lot in the MAPS bulletins. What he said was, "I think I would be stupid, in some respects, if it weren't for my psychedelic experiences."

We have this unusual connection between psychedelics and DNA, and the understanding of how we operate. I think there's this intuition that many people have that, somehow or other, we have this incredible technological development. We don't have the emotional or spiritual development, and psychedelics can play a role in bringing things into balance.

Albert Hoffman, who invented LSD, had that sense. That there was a similarity in time between the first chain reaction and the discovery of LSD. In fact, some of the major dealers and chemists ... Particularly Nicholas Schou, who developed Orange Sunshine and has created a quarter of a billion doses of LSD in his career ... His father worked on the Manhattan Project-

Dave: So did my grandfather and grandmother, by the way.

Rick: Really?

Dave: Yeah. They actually met on the Manhattan Project in Chicago before they moved out to Los Alamos.

Rick: Wow.

Dave: She is a nuclear engineer, and he's a PhD chemist. Yeah. The Manhattan Project had all sorts of strange stuff going on, didn't it?

Rick: Yeah. What do they say to you about the irrational parts? When you talk about making friends ... What did you get from them? I'm super curious.

Dave: You know, engineers are engineers. The prototypical engineer is driven by the logical part of the brain.

Rick: Yeah.

Dave: If I talk to my grandmother now, it is very much ... Almost Asperger-like. It's like, "No, this is the way it is. It's cut and dry." And I find that sometimes I'm two things. I could see it from this perspective ... My body feels this way, but my mind feels this. But, it's not stressful because I recognize that they're different phenomena. I don't think that my

grandparents experience the world that way because they really worked hard to line up the rational brain as being in charge. They forced the emotional stuff to fit, even if it didn't always fit.

Rick: Okay.

Dave: I have great respect for them, but -

Rick: All right. When I was 10 years old, around the Cuban Missile Crisis and the nuclear arms race, what did your grandparents think about that? Did they feel like the world can handle this technology? Or -

Dave: I'm paraphrasing from my grandmother, but one of the great frustrations that I remember as a child sometime in the '80s, was that she was asked to testify before some Congressional panel about the use of either Pebble Bed or Breeder Reactor ... Some kind of reactor that would eat up spent nuclear fuel, recycled it, and could create earthquake-safe reactors.

Rick: Wow.

Dave: She said, "The science has changed so much since 30 years ago. If we could just make safe ones, we could power everything and there wouldn't be any waste." When she went there to talk about this, the Congress or Senate panel ... Don't ask me what-

Rick: Yeah, yeah.

Dave: what they told her was, "You have a vested interest because you come from the industry. We don't believe anything you're going to say." And she's like, "I'm a scientist. Who else are you going to ask about this?"

Rick: Wow.

Dave: She was really frustrated by that because she saw this huge opportunity, not for blowing stuff up, but an opportunity for pumping water to deserts. An opportunity for fixing climate change, and reducing fossil fuels. She's always been working for a better world from those fronts, and devotes huge amounts of her time and energy to that. Even now, to

a smaller extent ... She's getting quite old, but she still has that desire to help.

Rick: Wow.

Dave: It's very interesting, though, to look at the creation of this ... It was also to win a war, etc. ... Onto energy. It's a fascinating question.

Rick: Yeah. That's where I was inspired by Albert Einstein. That's what we started the first hour with, was this idea that the technology that we have threatens the world and we need this new mode of thinking. I think that is this "wrestling with the irrational", and somehow or other, taming the wild beast that causes us to fear and hate other people that are different than us. How do we do that? I think, for me, we talked about how breathwork is really helpful. I think non-ordinary states of consciousness ... Psychedelics, breathwork, meditation ... Any number of different ways, I think, are really what's going to be needed to balance the logical parts of our species.

Dave: Yeah. There's definitely a big difference emotionally between killing something in anger or fear, and killing something with intent but consciousness. When you talk with a very elite Navy Seal, Special Operations guy, it's a different vibe than that angry soldier or movie perspective that's portrayed there.

Rick: Yeah. Right.

Dave: You can do it in anger, or if you're at that state, you're doing it without the huge, emotional stress that happens there. This is all very hard to express in words because a lot of this is internal feelings. What I'm feeling, you're not feeling at the same time. So we can't both say "that's the color blue". That's why half of spiritual literature makes no sense whatsoever. It's someone trying to explain something they felt, but you don't have words for.

There is something to be said around our capacity for violence, and those inner parts of our subconscious that are there, making sure the species survives. Even if that means eating and killing everything



around you to do it. But, if you let that be in charge, instead of letting you be in charge, you're not going to like what happens.

In my own life, I understand that when that part of me is in charge, I'm probably not going to know it, unless I'm constantly vigilant and well-trained. That's really important, and that allows me to be in situations where normally I'd be like, "You know what? Let's throw down." But I'm like, "All right. No. I'm going to adjust things because I can tell this is not what I'm choosing to have happen. This is something that's happening in my body." You can learn that, but without something to make you pay attention ... Whether it's Holotropic breathing, or whether it's neurofeedback, which has been a huge impact for me. Neurofeedback's been the most impactful tech-

Rick: Oh, great.

Dave: Without something to teach you that stuff ... Even just heart rate variability training ... You're probably going to do things you regret, and then you're going to feel guilty about it. You spend a huge amount of time and energy doing that stuff, instead of doing something useful, or at least fun.

Rick: Yeah. I think people are also into patterns. When it comes to adjusting our patterns to accommodate new information, that's often really difficult. I think that's where this openness to the new, and openness to the change is the hallmark to successfully taking a psychedelic, or even doing the breathwork. You're voyaging into the unknown, and you really have to let go of the known, and open to whatever is going to emerge. If you can do that, the discoveries can be remarkable.

Dave: Let's talk a little bit more ... We mentioned Psilocybin already. Psilocybin and smoking addiction, does it work?

Rick: First off, I would say that the research that's been done with Psilocybin and smoking addiction is ... Again, let's not focus too much on the drugs. It's Psilocybin, plus a cognitive, behavioral approach towards reducing nicotine addiction. When you combine those approaches, they have remarkable success. It's really remarkable how effective they are.



But, it's not just, "Here You're a nicotine addict. Take Psilocybin and then you're not going to be."

Dave: You don't get a mushroom patch, and then you're done with smoking?

Rick: Yeah. Actually, one of my wife's closest girlfriends married a fellow that worked for Pfizer, and he developed Chantix, which is the anti-smoking drug. It works pretty well to help people get over those cravings, but even then, it doesn't work as well as this combination of Psilocybin and the cognitive, behavioral therapy. But, again, that's more labor intensive. That's people that are more self-selected. They're open to the Psilocybin experience.

I think there's remarkable potential for Psilocybin, for LSD, for Mescaline, Peyote, and for Ayahuasca in the treatment of addiction. Where I indicated that we're primarily focused on end-of-life anxiety and post traumatic stress disorder, addicts tend to be the other, and we demonize it. That's coming along really well. I think it's very important, the work that's been done with psychedelics and the treatment of addiction. It helps people see that it's not the drug. These drugs are considered "drugs of abuse", so it's "How do you cure drug abuse with a drug of abuse?" It's how it's used, and I think that's very, very important work.

There was work in the '50s and '60s with LSD for alcoholism. In fact, Bill W., who started AA, had his first experience with Belladonna that got him to stop alcohol. He had a psychedelic experience ... Somewhat disturbed ... But that woke him up. Later, once he was sober in the '50s, he tried LSD, and he felt that LSD would have a tremendous potential for the treatment of alcoholism. He even tried to introduce it into AA.

Dave: Wow.

Rick: In fact, there's a book, the Bible of AA, called "Pass it On". It's by Bill W., about his life. There's even some chapters about his experiences with LSD. I met the people that gave him LSD, and heard about his experiences. I read his own writings about it.

What we have with addiction, in most cases, is that people are running away from stuff, and they're denying what's going on. They're not looking at what's going on. They also feel isolated and alone a lot. This is more so for heroin, cocaine, and other things, rather than nicotine.

There's this two-phase aspect for the healing potential of psychedelics for addiction. In the same sense that, where the default mode network is weakened, things that you're not wanting to look at will come to the surface. In a supportive environment with Holotropic Breathwork, or psychedelics, or biofeedback, or the flotation tank ... If you sit with it, you can see and wrestle with the things that you've been trying not to see.

The other part of it is that psychedelics can give you a sense of connection to your self and to the world around you. It's an anecdote to the isolation and loneliness that, a lot of times, drives people to drug addiction.

Carl Young was actually approached by Bill W., and talked about what to do for alcoholism, and he said that the cure for dipsomania, which is alcoholism, is religomania. A lot of times you see that AA is a little bit like a religion, in many respects.

We look at the Native American church. There are 500,000 people in the United States that went to the Supreme Court and won a major victory that says that they can legally practice their religion in the United States. One of the main uses of Peyote, with the Native Americans, is in the treatment of alcoholism and other drug addictions. We also see that in South America, with Ayahuasca. A lot of times, Ayahuasca is used for helping people deal with addictions. There's a center in Peru called Takiwasi, which is focused specifically on helping people with addictions.

I think the Psylocybin nicotine addiction study that was done by Matt Johnson and others at Johns Hopkins, with remarkable results ... There's now being work with Psilocybin in the treatment of alcoholism. We're trying to get back to the leads that came from the research in the '50s and '60s.

There's something different for each drug. Psilocybin is a little bit different than LSD, a little bit different than Mescaline, a little bit different than Ayahuasca ... But they all have a lot more in common than they have different.

Dave: Let's talk about Ecstasy, or Molly, or MDMA. I know there's a connection with anxiety ... Even with Autism, PTSD in vets. Walk a little bit through about what the therapeutic uses of MDMA might be. This is in combination with therapy; not just as a daily thing you take. What should we be researching that we're probably not researching enough?

Rick: You mentioned Autism. We had a study at Harbor-UCLA, which is for Autistic adults with social anxiety, with MDMA. This was not a study that we came up with the idea on our own. It turns out that there are a lot of young people who are on the Autism spectrum, on Asperger's, who've gone to raves and parties, taken MDMA, Molly, or whatever, and said "Wow." Now they can understand body language more, and they can understand their own emotions, and they can understand other people's emotions. And it had a lasting effect.

A woman, Elisha Danforth, did a PhD dissertation gathering together all these stories, contacting as many of the people as she could, and their families and doctors, and verifying that these stories were really true. And we use that as the basis for trying to get permission, which we did, for a study of Autistic adults with social anxiety. We're focusing on the social anxiety, and helping them to operate more in a social context.

We've got a study that we're about to start in San Anselmo, California, with people with life-threatening illnesses, with MDMA. We're primarily doing research all over the world ... In Israel, Switzerland, Canada ... In Vancouver, we're doing a study ... In Boulder ... In Charleston ... With MDMA for post traumatic stress disorder.

Basically, though, what MDMA does is different than the classic psychedelics. First off, MDMA does work on serotonin, dopamine, norepinephrine, but in different ways. What it does do, is reduces activity in the amygdala, the fear-processing part of the brain, and

increases activity in the frontal cortex, which is where people put things in context.

At the same time, it stimulates Oxytocin and Prolactin, hormones of bonding, love, nurturing ... Nursing mothers have a lot more Oxytocin. What it also does, is that it helps ... To think about MDMA, it's basically halfway, chemically, between Mescaline from Peyote, and Methamphetamine. Methamphetamine is a stimulant, and it keeps you awake, but it doesn't make you jittery. Mescaline is a psychedelic, which affects your perceptions, your logical train of thought, but MDMA doesn't really do that in the same way. It has the psychedelic properties of Mescaline without a lot of the perceptual changes, so people feel like they're still in control. It has the stimulant property of Methamphetamine without being jittery.

I should say that Sasha Shulgin, a chemist, and others have developed hundreds and hundred of molecules, trying to find these different properties. MDMA is the one he felt was the most therapeutic. It's almost perfectly designed for the treatment of trauma, or the reduction of anxiety, in any number of different ways.

Dave: What about the damage to the serotonin receptors? That's a drug that I've considered, given that I've dealt with the trauma that everyone else has, but I've dealt with my own in lots of other modalities. I'm concerned about losing serotonin sensitivity and all. Is there some risk with using MDMA?

Rick: All drugs have risks, and I think it would be inappropriate and wrong for me to say that MDMA has no risks. But, I would also say that the risks of MDMA neurotoxicity have been vastly exaggerated.

Dave: Okay.

Rick: Right now, if you go into Medline, or Pub Med, which is the repository of the world's scientific literature in medicine since about 1965 ... If you put in "MDMA" or "Ecstasy", there are over 4,900 papers, produced at a cost of roughly \$350 billion, we guess. These are mostly funded by governments of the world, looking at the risks of MDMA, and a lot of it

was on the same question of neurotoxicity. We have an enormous body of information.

To go back just a little bit, when I started MAPS in 1986, there was very early research that was done by Dr. George Riccardi, at University of Chicago, with MDA in rats. He felt that there was some evidence that it would reduce serotonin. On the basis of that, the DEA emergency scheduled MDMA.

Then, I worked with George Riccardi as my major relationship, professionally, and I bought him the first monkeys, to try to use species that were closer to us. We did a study that was called "Looking for the No Effect Level". NOEL ... No effect level. What we did was ... MDMA was given at 2 1/2 mg per kilogram, every two weeks, for eight weeks. I mean every two weeks for four months, so eight times. At 2 1/2 mg a kilogram, there was no effect on serotonin.

Once the doses get higher and higher, then there is an effect on the serotonin system. But, the key thing is what are the functional consequences. We don't know ... Brains are changing all the time. In our therapy study, where people get MDMA three times in a 3 1/2 month process, we've done neurocognitive tests before and after, and showed no change from MDMA. There's no evidence, in a therapeutic context of pure MDMA taken in roughly 125 mg, plus two hours later, half of that ... 62 1/2, so roughly 187 mg ... That taken during the day when people are not overheating, they're not exercising, they're lying down ... In those contexts, there is no evidence, whatsoever, that there is any neurotoxicity.

We since have done studies in monkeys and studies in humans. There's an enormous body of evidence that is pretty clear that at the therapeutic doses that we're talking about, the risks are minimal compared to the potential benefits. You see all these ads on TV for pharmaceutical drugs, and you see this long list at the end of what are all the risks-

Dave: Yeah.

Rick: I think that the best evidence for MDMA neurotoxicity, is the fact that for many people, they report that over time, MDMA loses its magic. Loses its sparkle. There is something that is changing. I would say for marijuana, if you don't smoke it once a day or you only smoke it once a week, you can smoke it your whole life and every time you smoke it, you're going to get high in a similar way.

There is no loss of magic or loss with marijuana. We don't know if that's true for other drugs like LSD, but with MDMA, there is this loss of magic. It happens to different people at different times. For me, it happened after 50 or 60 times. I still find that it's useful, it's just not as profound, and as deep, and as peaceful as it was initially. That is, I think, the best evidence that there is some sort of brain change that makes it so people- But it doesn't mean that I'm less happy. It doesn't mean that people are less happy or more depressed. It just has that highly specific thing, and it's actually a safety factor.

The drugs that people get addicted to are those drugs that, once you develop a tolerance to, then you just take higher and higher amounts to get to the same effect. But with MDMA, if you develop this loss of magic, you don't get the feelings back by taking higher and higher amounts. You get more of the stimulant, Methamphetamine-type properties. There's a built-in safeguard. We know there are loads of people who can be addicted to heroin or addicted to cocaine for decades. There are people that overuse MDMA, but usually that's short-lived ... Six months to a year ... Then their affect flattens, they give it up, and after six months to a year, they're back to normal. I think there is a risk of MDMA, but in therapeutic context, and even in most recreational context, there really is no risk.

What happened with George Riccardi is that this understanding was developing. Even though NIDA, the National Institute of Drug Abuse, was trying to say that one dose of MDMA caused permanent neurotoxicity with major functional consequences. You should never do it, even in research. It was too dangerous. That view was being eroded, in many different ways, by scientists all over the world.



George then did this study at Johns Hopkins with monkeys, and he claimed that somehow or other, he discovered that it really effected the dopamine system. He published a famous paper in "Science", the preeminent journal in the world in science, that said one single dose of MDMA could potentially cause Parkinson's like symptoms. You take MDMA, it's going to reduce dopamine, and it can cause Parkinson's. The editor of "Science", Dr. Allen Leshner, published an editorial about this article, saying how important it was and that MDMA was like Russian Roulette.

There was something about this research that didn't seem right, and that was that there was a high number of animals that died in their study. As I said, we previously funded MDMA research in monkeys. I even got spinal taps twice, myself, with George Jicardi, and have gotten a bunch of my friends to get spinal taps because before brain scans came in, the best way to understand about neurotransmitters, was to take spinal fluid and look at neurotransmitter metabolites in the spinal fluids.

Dave: That's horribly painful. I've had that done, and you have to be dedicated to science to get a spinal tap. Let's put it that way.

Rick: I felt that there was a war on drugs, and I was fighting on the part of drugs. On the part of MDMA, and if people could go to war over what they believe, then I could get a spinal tap. I did, and it was to say, "I don't feel damaged. Prove it."

What happened with this study about Parkinson's is that we challenged it. We wrote a letter to the editor of "Science", and said "The doses that you're using aren't equivalent to human doses, the route of administration isn't equivalent, the animals are dying ... Something about this doesn't make sense. But they were losing faith that they could stop research by talking about serotonin damage. Now, this was dopamine.

Then, what happened about a year and a half later is that they retracted the study. It was a tremendous scandal, because it turned out that they

had switched the bottles. They were giving the animals Methamphetamine, instead of MDMA.

Dave: Oh man.

Rick: Yeah. It's one of the biggest scandals in science over the last multiple decades.

Dave: Human error, right there.

Rick: Something happened, and they were so zealous to find problems with MDMA that they overlooked the fact that none of the previous research showed problems with dopamine. Our spinal tap study showed no effect on dopamine. They ended up actually ... They were quiet for a year and a half, because they kept trying to replicate the studies. They couldn't find dopaminergic neurotoxicity. They kept trying to say, "We're going to give higher doses of MDMA. We're going to increase the temperature of the animals because temperature is a co-factor for neurotoxicity. We're going to crowd them together. We're going to do all sorts of things." And they couldn't find it.

Then they figured out, "Maybe something went wrong." That's when they did an autopsy of one of the animals, and said, "Oh my God. That had Methamphetamine, not MDMA." So they had to retract that. That was around 2004. That was the high water mark of paranoia about the neurotoxicity of MDMA.

Dave: All right. I think listeners will be served by learning that stuff. There's things in there that I absolutely haven't known about it. I'm relatively careful with my brain, despite what people who know of my biohacking experiments with electricity think. That's really helpful.

We have a few more minutes and there's three different substances I want to ask you about.

Rick: Okay.



Dave: We won't dive as deep in those as we have. One of those is cannabis. Let's talk about some of the potential medical, or therapeutic uses of cannabis. But we've got to go quick on this one.

Rick: Yes. MAPS, I stated in 1986, so that's roughly 28 1/2 years. We've never had a government grant. It's always been donations by individuals and family foundations. We just recently received our first government grant from the state of Colorado. \$2.1 million, to study marijuana for post-traumatic stress disorder in US veterans with chronic, treatment-resistant PTSD.

We believe that MDMA helps people ... In a sense, a cure. I'm reluctant to use the word "cure", but often times it can cure PTSD, and have a durable remission on symptoms. Marijuana, for PTSD, helps people sleep through the night. They don't have the nightmares. It focuses them more on the present.

We have the endocannabinoid system that responds to the cannabinoids ... To THC and CBD and other ... In a whole incredible variety of ways. Medical marijuana has an enormous number of applications. PTSD is just one of them. Pain, epilepsy ... We've seen this on Sanjay Gupta. He's actually working on "Weeds 3". "Weeds 3" is going to talk about our PTSD marijuana study in veterans. There's roughly 8,000 veterans, every year, that commit suicide. A fair number of them are from post-traumatic stress disorder and marijuana can help. Yet, we've had enormous problems in getting this study started.

There's a government monopoly on the legal supply of marijuana that you can use in research, and it's held by the National Institute on Drug Abuse. They don't want to give it to you if you want to find out what's good with marijuana. We have to end that monopoly, and that's one of the things that we're doing.

Marijuana is good for nausea control for cancer and chemotherapy. For appetite stimulation. Everybody talks about the "munchies". Well, during the AIDS epidemic, when people were dying of AIDS, they would use marijuana for appetite. For cancer chemotherapy, people lose their appetite. There's just an enormous amount of ...

Most importantly, and then we'll go on to the other things, is that we're now discovering that the cannabinoids have anti-tumor properties. Marijuana does not cause lung cancer. You talked about your lungs. Tobacco clearly causes lung cancer. Marijuana does not cause lung cancer. There's epidemiological studies that show it, there's been NIDA funded research by Dr. Donald Tashkin at UCLA, the world's expert. Marijuana can cause more colds, more infections, or certain things in your lungs, particularly for heavy smokers. But, there's anti-tumor properties that protect from lung cancer. It's just incredible what the cannabinoids can do.

Dave: I would add, though, that if you're cannabis is moldy, it probably can cause lung cancer.

Rick: No, it can cause other things. I don't think so because we would see that.

Dave: Yeah?

Rick: Mold causes other kinds of infections, but not cancer.

Dave: Oh, okay. We can have a much longer conversation ... A pub driven conversation about that one, but we're not going to do that now.

Rick: Oh, okay. I'd be into that later. I believe that there's no epidemiological evidence, or scientific evidence of marijuana, but certainly avoid moldy marijuana.

Dave: There you go. I hear you there. I'm thinking more about Aflatoxin being the most cancer-causing chemical we know of, which is a directable-

Rick: Oh, okay.

Dave: If you have that kind of stuff in there, which tobacco unfortunately does sometimes, it does increase carcinogenicity. However, if anti-cancer effects of what's in the marijuana when it's vaporized and inhaled, if they counteract that, I have no idea. I just know if you've got mold in there, it's bad news. And the more mold you have, the more likely your cancer risks. You shouldn't smoke moldy pot anyway. It's bad.

Rick: Right. Okay.

Let me just add one thing, which is that the concentrations that you need of the cannabinoids, to really kill tumors, are greater than people normally get by smoking. I'm not trying to say "Smoke pot and you're not going to get cancer." What I can say is that with certain kinds of brain cancers or other cancers, you need more direct administration.

Dave: Like CBD oil?

Rick: Yes. Exactly.

Dave: If you're listening in your car, I just held up a little thing of CBD oil, which is basically the bioactive components of marijuana. This one is actually without reasonable amounts of THC. You don't feel it, but it has those anti-tumor properties.

It's awesome, especially on that front, to see that there is real science being done. It's not about "these are good" or "these are bad". It's just that these are tools.

Rick: Exactly.

Dave: As a biohacker, every tool on the planet is my right. To say, "Don't use those tools. We don't like those." Sorry, we're not in high school with cliques anymore. The function of the internet and the cloud and all, is to let us have those conversations. To let everyone else who uses these things share the science.

At the end of the day, I wouldn't recommend or not recommend that you use these. I would say, "If you are going to use any of these, you'd better do it with consciousness and with some people to help you out, or you probably aren't going to like what happens."

Rick: Yeah. On this theme of "rights", one of our biggest donors is the Libra Foundation. It's the Nick and Susan Pritzker family. Their foundation is focused on human rights. They had a multi-year discussion about whether psychedelic research is part of human rights, and they decided that it was.

Dave: Yeah. Amen.

Rick: That it's the right to explore our consciousness.

Dave: The line between the right to eat what you want, and the right to use the psychedelics you want, is very blurry because different foods effect how you feel. It's just a question of strength. If you can make the argument that you shouldn't be able to take this, you should also make the argument that you shouldn't be able to eat whatever in nutrition makes you feel bad. I think it's a very slippery slope. The whole set of regulations are anti-freedom.

Rick: Yeah.

Dave: There's two more drugs that I want to ask you about, and we'll do it in almost snippet levels so we fit into the window we've got for the podcast.

Rick: Okay.

Dave: One of them is DMT, or Ayahuasca.

Rick: Ah, great.

Dave: When I've used, it was in a ceremony in South America. What are some of the things that are interesting about it, and why might we want to study it or potentially use it?

Rick: DMT is orally inactive, but people smoke DMT. It's incredible disorientation of your ego, and people report spiritual experiences. When it's mixed with certain kinds of plants, in Ayahuasca form, with MAOIs, it doesn't get metabolized in the stomach, and so it lasts longer. It's about several hours or so, and it has more therapeutic potential.

MAPS is trying to develop an expertise in PTSD. There are a fair number of veterans, and others, who have gone down to Peru and Brazil for Ayahuasca for PTSD. We're now starting an observational study of veterans who are going to go down to Peru and Mexico, and experience Ayahuasca.

Ayahuasca doesn't have as much of the fear-reduction properties as MDMA.

Dave: It can be scary as all hell, to be perfectly technical about it.

Rick: Yeah. Again, it's not so clear because you need to surrounding support. Also, when you're vulnerable in a foreign culture, in a foreign context, often with foreign religions, it's difficult to really feel safe enough to explore.

What we're thinking, though, is that for some people the Ayahuasca can have a healing property. There's also work that's being done with Ayahuasca and the treatment of depression. But, there's sort of a tension here. There's some groups that focus on the religious use of Ayahuasca, and whatever healing happens comes from the pursuit of the religious experience. There are others that are more scientific that are saying, "This is just a tool. We can take it out of this context, put it in the scientific context." In fact, there's a group in Barcelona that's using freeze-dried, encapsulated Ayahuasca.

Dave: Oh, wow.

Rick: It was standardized. It's a way to do standardized research. They're doing brain scans with it. They're doing a whole host of research with Ayahuasca as a tool, rather than as a religious sacrament. I think it has that same ability to bring things to the surface.

It's a little bit more embodied. A lot of people vomit, and feel like purging when they're on Ayahuasca. There's a bodily energy. They call it "the power and the light". There's a lot of activity in the brain. It's more condensed and shorter than an LSD or Psilocybin experience. I think it has tremendous therapeutic potential.

Actually, a lot of our support is coming from fairly successful business people who've been spiritualized, you could say, by Ayahuasca. The Supreme Court of the United States has said unanimously that the União do Vegetal, the VGD, can practice their religious rights in the United

States with Ayahuasca, but you have to be part of the church. That's kind of a problem because you have to believe certain things.

Dave: Yeah. It doesn't seem like the government should be in the business of telling us what we have to believe to access chemicals that affect our brains.

Rick: Right. That's actually a really important point. Religious freedom ... The problem is you need a religion. We should say that we all have our individual human right to explore spirituality the way that we want. We shouldn't have to be part of an organized religion to do it. That's where I think we're going to find that religious freedom is going to move forward, as it is, and medical freedoms will move forward. Both of those, together, will eventually change people's minds, as we also watch marijuana become legal and we see the disenchantment with prohibition and mass incarceration. Then, eventually, we'll get to this point where we have the freedom to explore our consciousness, even if we're not technically sick with a diagnosable illness. That's really where we're trying to end up.

Dave: that's remarkable. We're up against the end of the show. The other thing is that at the end of every episode, I ask the same question. I have for almost ... A little bit more than 200 people now. Given all that you know, not just your work at MAPS, but your life's experience ... The three most important things you would share with someone who wants to perform better at whatever it is they're to do. If you want to kick more ass at life, three most important learnings in your experience.

Rick: The first is to not so much care about outcomes, but care about the effort. I think that was particularly something, for me, that I had to really focus on. When I started trying to work on my own psychedelic therapy, and to bring psychedelic research back, it looked like that might never happen. Or it might be multi-generational. It is turning out to be multi-generational thing ... I'll only get this small portion of the way in my life. I think if you can redefine "success" as effort, rather than outcomes ... Although you really need to focus on outcomes to try to figure out if you're effort is wise and effective ... But, I'd say that's really the prescription for joy, and for not burning out.

The second, I think, would be to ... I guess many people would say this, but it's really to recognize that your life is actually very short. You need to focus on what you're really passionate about. Think about what it is that you care about, and that's more important than money. Of course, we need money for survival, but I think finding that internal motivation that will sustain you in the many different forms that you work will take.

The other is just to be able to sit with yourself when things are difficult. Like in the flotation tank, or like with psychedelics, the main thing is letting feelings in, rather than blocking them. Opening up to what's happening. It's kind of a meditative thing, but you'll find that once you can sit with stuff, things will sort out. You'll be able to see through the mists, and see through the flurry of emotional storms. Sit with that rather than ... So, open rather than suppress. I think that's the third thing.

Dave: That's awesome advice. Thank you for that. I just had an idea here that was probably fueled by some default mode network thing. For people listening, if you enjoyed this show, thanks for listening, number one. Number two, I think we've made a pretty convincing case that science ought to be looking at this whole banned class of drugs as something that may be useful in certain circumstances for certain people. Demonizing them or putting them on an alter ... Neither one of those extremes is particularly useful, or particularly beneficial, or even scientific. Looking at them for what they are, versus what we have painted them to be, might be helpful.

I'm a fan of what MAPS is doing, and I'm going to come up with a little challenge. I know that about 50,000 people have listened to each of these episodes. It keeps growing every month, so maybe it's 60,000 people.

Rick: Wow.

Dave: If you like this episode, I'll do a little challenge. I'm really looking to help people see the [Bulletproof Diet Book](#), which is the work I just did that came out on the New York Times list. I'm looking to show my publisher that my audience cares about this. Over the course of this week, if we



sell 2,500 copies of the [Bulletproof Diet Book](#), I will donate all of the profits that I receive from those ... Not the total cost of the sales ... Directly to MAPS.

Rick: Wow!

Dave: This isn't about me making money. This is about me supporting something that's important, and it's about you getting a book that you can give to someone you like. You can also give the money straight to MAPS, at MAPS.org, and I'm totally down with that. But, if you wanted the book anyway, check it out. [Bulletproof Diet Book](#). You know how to order books.

I will track the sales with my publisher, and I'm serious. Every nickel that my publishers pay me for those sales will go straight to MAPS. Support the [Bulletproof Diet Book](#), and support MAPS. Or just support MAPS. This is good work. These tools, like neurofeedback, they're our birth right. When people mess with that, whatever their name is, it's not cool. Now, we can fix that.

Rick: Beautiful. Dave, thank you so much.

Dave: You got it. Have an awesome evening. Thanks so much for staying up late there in Boston, where it's dark and cold, as opposed to here in Canada, where it's also dark and cold. Have a great day. Thanks a lot for your work.

Rick: Wow. Thank you so much, Dave. This has been a privilege and a pleasure to speak with you.



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