

Entheogens for Healing Addiction

Entheogens have shown **promising potential for healing addiction**, not just by disrupting patterns of dependency, but by facilitating **deep psychological, emotional, and spiritual breakthroughs** that can reset a person's relationship with themselves and the world.

Why Entheogens Work for Addiction

Addiction is often rooted in:

- Trauma
- Disconnection
- Emotional pain or numbness
- Lack of meaning or purpose

Entheogens can address **these root causes**, not just the symptoms.

They tend to:

- **Break compulsive patterns** by disrupting default neural pathways
- **Facilitate emotional release** and trauma processing
- Help users **reconnect** with meaning, self-worth, and community
- Provide "**mystical**" or "**peak**" **experiences** that often lead to lasting behavioral change

"The opposite of addiction isn't sobriety—it's **connection**."

— Johann Hari

Most Researched Entheogens for Addiction

1. Iboga / Ibogaine

- **Used for:** Opiate, alcohol, and stimulant addiction
- **How it works:** Resets brain's neurochemistry, reduces withdrawal symptoms, often leads to intense life-review visions
- **Risks:** Cardiac concerns; must be used in clinical or supervised setting
- **Tradition:** Bwiti religion in Gabon uses iboga as a sacred initiatory plant

2. Ayahuasca

- **Used for:** Alcohol, cocaine, and nicotine addiction
- **How it works:** Deep emotional purging, trauma release, reconnects people with purpose and emotion
- **Supported by:** Studies and anecdotal reports from Peru, Brazil, and Western retreats
- **Tradition:** Amazonian shamanism

3. Psilocybin (Magic Mushrooms)

- **Used for:** Alcohol and tobacco addiction
- **How it works:** Increases openness, mindfulness, and spiritual insight; supports long-term behavior change
- **Research:** Johns Hopkins studies show long-term success with smoking cessation and alcohol use disorder

4. Ketamine (*not a classical entheogen but often included*)

- **Used for:** Alcoholism, depression-related addiction
- **How it works:** Rapid antidepressant effect + can catalyze emotional processing in therapeutic settings

Healing Mechanisms (Psychospiritual)

Mechanism	How It Helps with Addiction
Ego dissolution	Breaks identity tied to addiction ("I am an addict")
Mystical/spiritual insight	Provides meaning and emotional clarity
Emotional catharsis	Releases repressed trauma or grief fueling substance use
Neuroplasticity	Supports new patterns, behaviors, and mindsets
Reconnection with self/others	Restores emotional and spiritual wholeness

Important Considerations

- **Not a magic cure:** Entheogens are *catalysts*, not substitutes for therapy, integration, or support systems.
- **Preparation and integration** are key to lasting change.
- **Set and setting** must be safe, intentional, and supportive.
- **Legal risks** and medical safety** (especially with ibogaine) must be carefully managed.

Quote from Research:

"After one dose of psilocybin, participants described the experience as among the most meaningful of their lives. Their cravings dropped, and many remained abstinent for months or longer."

— *Johns Hopkins Psilocybin Study*

Entheogens for Healing Addiction – Summary Chart

Entheogen	Addictions Treated	Mechanism	Traditional Use	Modern Use / Research
Iboga / Ibogaine	Opiates, heroin, alcohol, stimulants	Interrupts withdrawal, life review, resets dopamine	Bwiti religion (Gabon)	Clinics in Mexico, Costa Rica, New Zealand
Ayahuasca	Alcohol, cocaine, tobacco	Emotional release, trauma healing, spiritual insight	Amazonian shamanism	Research in Brazil; legal in some church contexts
Psilocybin	Alcohol, nicotine, depression-linked use	Boosts neuroplasticity, mystical experiences	Mesoamerican mushroom rituals	Johns Hopkins, NYU studies on alcohol and smoking
LSD	Alcoholism (historically)	Ego dissolution, increased awareness	20th century therapeutic use	1950s–70s studies; resurgence in modern clinical trials
Ketamine <i>(non-traditional)</i>	Alcohol, depression-related behaviors	NMDA receptor reset, antidepressant effect	—	Legal in ketamine clinics for addiction + depression
Mescaline (Peyote / San Pedro)	Alcohol, spiritual emptiness	Vision quests, moral insight, connection	Native American Church	Some use in NAC treatment programs (protected use)

Common Therapeutic Outcomes

- Reduced cravings and compulsions
- Increased sense of purpose and self-worth
- Access to buried trauma or root causes
- A “reset” of identity: breaking free from the label of "addict"
- Deep emotional catharsis followed by clarity

Examples of Healing Contexts / Retreats

Program / Group	Location	Entheogen Used	Focus
<i>Clínica Ibogaine</i>	Mexico, Costa Rica, Portugal	Ibogaine	Opiate & substance detox
<i>Takiwasi Center</i>	Peru	Ayahuasca + Amazonian plants	Addiction recovery & integration
<i>Johns Hopkins Center</i>	USA	Psilocybin	Alcohol, tobacco, and depression research
<i>Native American Church</i>	USA (protected use)	Peyote	Spiritual guidance, addiction recovery

Final Note: Entheogenic healing is **most effective when embedded in a system of support**, including:

- Integration therapy
- Community or group support
- Ongoing intention and practice