

Entheogens vs Psychedelics

While entheogens and psychedelics often refer to similar substances, the terms reflect different intentions, contexts, and worldviews.

Key Differences:

Aspect	Psychedelics	Entheogens
Focus	Psychological, therapeutic, recreational	Spiritual, religious, ceremonial
Context	Clinical trials, personal exploration	Sacred rituals, shamanic traditions
Terminology Origin	Greek: <i>psyche</i> (mind) + <i>deloun</i> (manifest)	Greek: <i>entheos</i> (the divine within)
User Role	Explorer, patient, psychonaut	Seeker, initiate, spiritual participant
Examples	LSD at a rave, psilocybin in therapy	Ayahuasca in a jungle ceremony
Substance Source	Natural or synthetic	Natural (plants, fungi)

- All entheogens are psychedelics, but not all psychedelics are entheogens.
- The difference lies in intention and context.
- A dose of psilocybin in a lab is a **psychedelic**, while the same mushroom taken during a sacred ceremony is an **entheogen**.

Psychedelics

Definition: A **scientific/medical term** for substances that alter perception, mood, and cognition—often producing hallucinations or deeply altered states of consciousness.

Examples: LSD, psilocybin, mescaline, DMT, ketamine (sometimes included), MDMA (empathogen, sometimes grouped with psychedelics)

Key Contexts:

- Used in **clinical research**, psychotherapy (e.g. PTSD, depression)
- Recreational use for exploration, fun, or creativity
- Framed in terms of **neuroscience**, **mental health**, or **drug policy**

Entheogens

Definition: A **spiritual or cultural term** referring to natural substances used **specifically for religious, shamanic, or sacred purposes**—to “bring forth the divine within.”

Examples: Same substances—psilocybin, mescaline, DMT—but **used in rituals** by cultures like the Mazatecs, Bwiti, Shipibo, or Native American Church.

Key Contexts:

- Sacred ceremonies and **spiritual healing**
- Indigenous traditions and **ancestral knowledge**
- Guided by **ritual, song, cosmology**, and community