



Sitter Guidebook
Trip Without Falling

Sitter Education

This book helps trip sitters prepare to support someone having an experience with psilocybin, LSD or MDMA. Calm, attentive support can reduce some risks, but cannot guarantee a safe or helpful outcome. Understand the particular compound, the agreed plan and when to seek help. A sitter does not replace professional screening or medical care.

The sitter acts in a non-directive supervisory role, sitting next to the journeyer for the **entirety of psychedelic experience**, attending to the safety and other interpersonal needs of the journeyer with full attention and open acceptance while remaining free from distraction. This seemingly simple stewardship role contributes to the **set and setting**, two critical ingredients for a safe and ideal experience.

Trip sitters are often a trusted friend or family member of the journeyer and are asked at least 1-2 weeks prior to a psychedelic experience if they will assist in a journey. If the sitter agrees to sit for the journeyer, the sitter will be provided this resource along with links to learn more about the psychedelic of choice so they can equip themselves with knowledge and tools to help a journeyer through different aspects of a psychedelic experience. After the sitter reads the materials and conducts their own research, the journeyer and sitter may decide to co-construct a journey plan to clarify roles and responsibilities. Once a journey plan is in place, both the journeyer and sitter are often ready for the trip.

As a trip sitter, being present for someone, listening and sitting with them in silence, occasionally reassuring safety, assisting them to the restroom, and offering water from time to time is often all that is required. At times, a sitter may need to help a journeyer through a difficult aspect of a journey but this is something that can often be overcome with simple tools.

The Trip Sitter's Learning Objectives

- ☐ Identify if they are an ideal candidate to be a sitter.
- ☐ Know the roles and responsibilities of the sitter and journeyer.
- ☐ Understand the importance of set and setting.
- ☐ Learn what is a difficult experience and how to support a journeyer through it.
- ☐ Become familiar with exercises in the mental health toolkit.
- ☐ Know what to do during medical emergency situations.
- ☐ Be familiar and consider using a journey plan.

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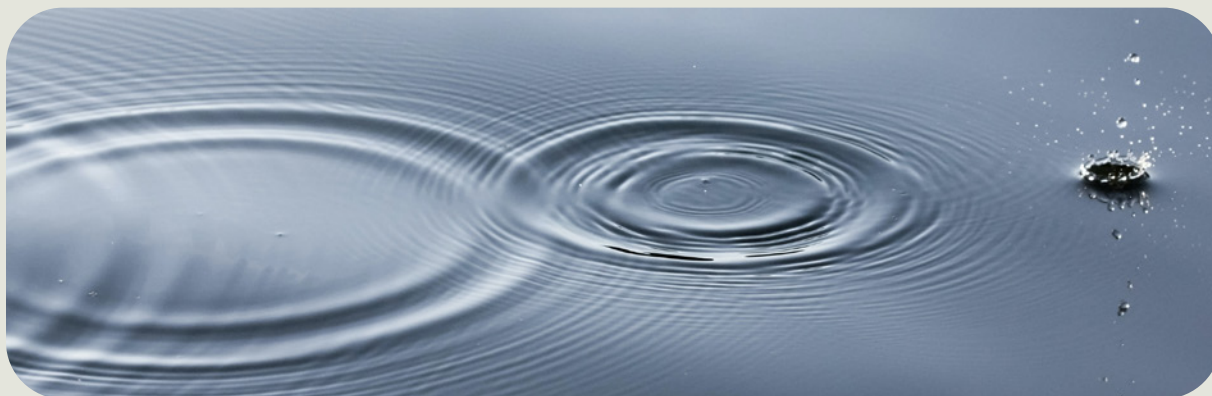
The Journey Plan

Checklist:

The Trip Sitter

Ideal Trip Sitter Characteristics

- ☐ You are open to learning about the psychedelic being used and the importance of the set, setting, and intention.
- ☐ You are mature, trustworthy, compassionate, self-aware, supportive and caring.
- ☐ You are physically, psychologically and emotionally stable.
- ☐ You can openly discuss, agree, and consent to a journey plan with the journeyer.
- ☐ You have the ability to stay relaxed and grounded in the presence of anxiety, fear and other reactions that may be expressed by the journeyer.
- ☐ In the event the journeyer cries, reveals sensitive information, is open about traumatic memories or difficult emotions, they can be met without judgment, with compassion and equanimity.
- ☐ You can maintain confidentiality.

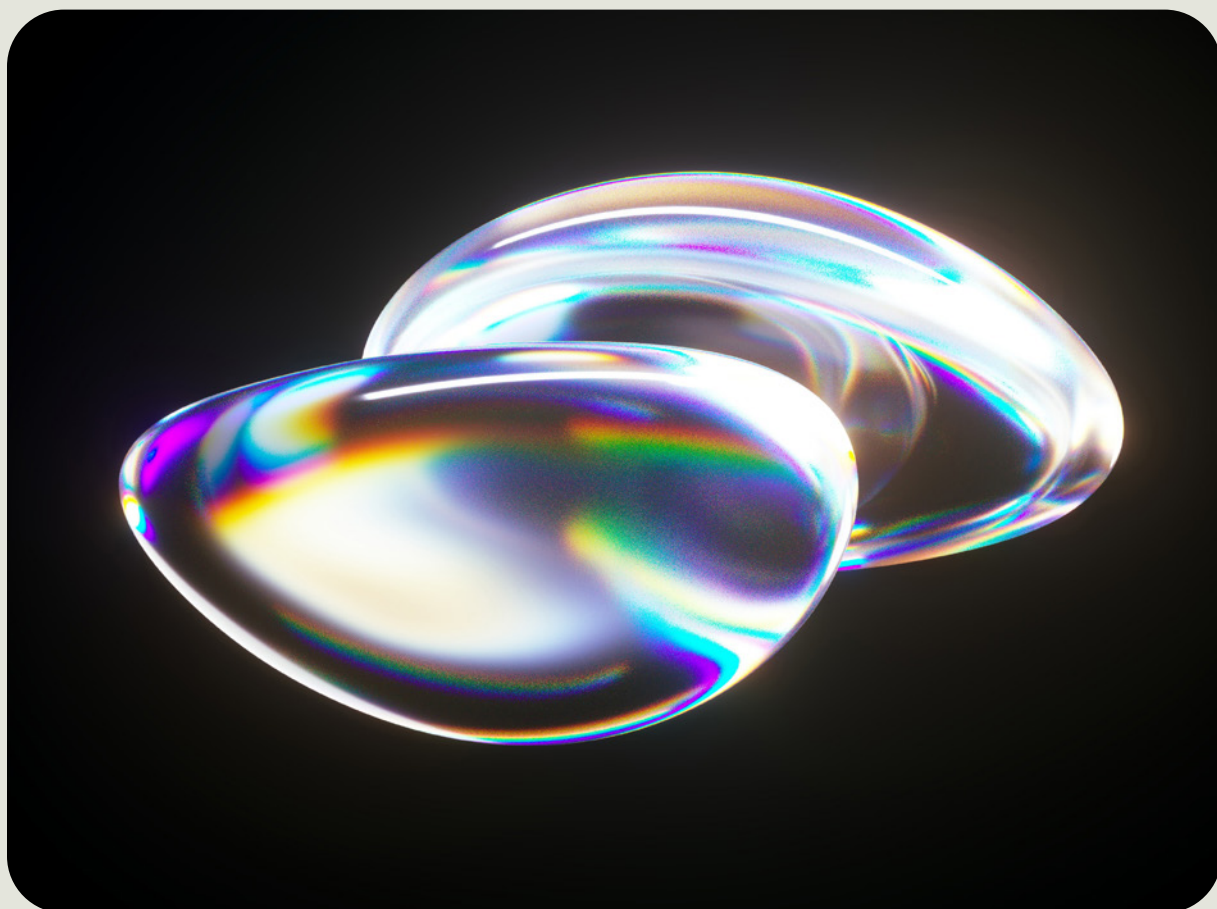


Bonus Trip Sitter Characteristics

- ☐ Have experience with psychedelics.
- ☐ Personally understand the potential benefits of psychedelics.
- ☐ Have experience with trip sitting.
- ☐ Have valid first aid training.
- ☐ Is trauma-informed.
- ☐ Is a registered health professional.
- ☐ Have completed a recognized course or training program such as MAPS, ATMA or Therapsil.
- ☐ Have read [The Manual for Psychedelic Guides](#).
- ☐ Are aware of the [6 Core Competencies of a Psychedelic Therapist](#).

When To Consider Not Being A Sitter

- ☐ You do not want to learn about the psychedelic and principles of harm reduction.
- ☐ You do not believe psychedelics have therapeutic potential.
- ☐ You cannot support someone for the entirety of the journey.
- ☐ There is no access to essentials such as food, water or a restroom.
- ☐ You do not feel safe being with the journeyer.
- ☐ You do not have a safe and comfortable space to sit in.
- ☐ You have not reviewed the journey plan for the journeyer.
- ☐ You will have difficulty remaining present, calm, and grounded in challenging situations.
- ☐ You do not have phone service in case of an emergency.
- ☐ You have unresolved psychological issues (i.e. trauma).
- ☐ You have a complicated relationship with the journeyer.
- ☐ You may feel uncomfortable hearing traumatic memories or an array of different emotions.
- ☐ You would not be able to support a journeyer through a difficult experience such as anxiety or fear.



Roles And Responsibilities

What to discuss prior to the journey in the non-psychedelic space?



Before the journey, discuss roles, responsibilities and how you will respond to different situations. Make a journey plan together. Clear agreements help prevent misunderstanding and support a safer experience.



Agree beforehand on any therapeutic touch, in writing or verbally. Hand-holding should happen only if both people have consented; practise it beforehand. Touch can feel different across cultures and past experiences, including trauma. If touch was not agreed to, offer a pillow or blanket to hold instead.



Keep to the consent agreed before the journey; do not change the plan while the journeyer is in an altered state. Discuss how you would handle sensitive disclosures, especially if you are friends or family, and whether they could affect the relationship or your ability to provide support.



Orient the sitter to food, water, blankets, emergency contacts and any clinician-agreed medication plan. Both people should understand the plan. A sitter should not select or add medication. See this book's evidence notes for emergency signs, and the Preparation Book for medication decisions.

Checklist:

Roles And Responsibilities

The Trip Sitter Will

- ☐ Read the educational content on the psychedelic and how to trip sit.
- ☐ Remain sober, present, attentive, undistracted, calm, empathetic and supportive.
- ☐ Provide care or assistance as agreed upon with the journeyer prior to the journey.
- ☐ Consider completing a journey plan with the journeyer.
- ☐ Hold a safe space for the journeyer and understand how the sitter contributes to the set and setting.
- ☐ Provide non-judgemental, non-directive and compassionate support for the entirety of the experience.
- ☐ Become familiar with the journeyer's intentions, curiosities, specific fears or worries and support preferences.
- ☐ Keep the journeyer focused towards their inner experience.
- ☐ Ensure the journeyer does not engage in risky behaviours.
- ☐ Offer water and assist the journeyer to the restroom if needed.
- ☐ Not engage in sexual touch.
- ☐ Not reveal the details of the journey with others and maintain confidentiality.
- ☐ Not record, take videos, or pictures of the journey.
- ☐ Not take personal responsibility for the outcome of any journey.
- ☐ Be present for the entirety of the journey and at least one hour afterwards.
- ☐ Support a journeyer through a difficult experience such as anxiety or fear.

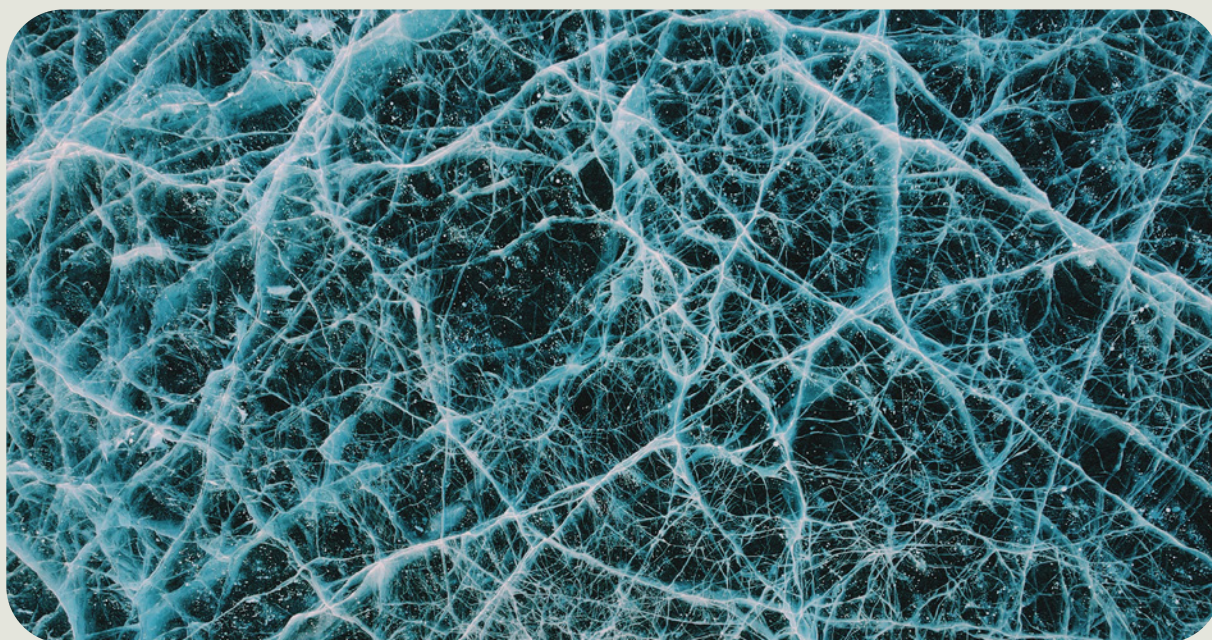
The Journeyer Will

- ☐ Take full responsibility for the outcome of the journey.
- ☐ Provide the sitter with educational content on the psychedelic and how to trip sit.
- ☐ Advise the sitter of what psychedelic and dose is being used.
- ☐ Disclose in advance their experience with psychedelics.
- ☐ Adhere to the agreed upon journey plan during the experience.
- ☐ Not leave the space while in a non-ordinary state.
- ☐ Not engage in risky behaviours such as driving a vehicle, cycling, climbing or sexual acts.
- ☐ Have the set and setting prepped.
- ☐ Provide a comfortable, safe and clean space for the sitter to sit and supervise in.
- ☐ Tell the sitter about the intention, any specific worries, and the mantra.
- ☐ Let the trip sitter know how they can assist if a difficult experience arises.
- ☐ Prepare emergency contact information of close family or friends.
- ☐ Outline any relevant physical or mental health conditions you have.
- ☐ Consider and arrange necessary peer support for after the experience.

Trip Sitter Tips

“If you want to have fun, take them (psychedelics) alone or with friends and spend the day in a beautiful setting. If you want to learn something about yourself and your relationships, take them with a therapist.”

— Rick Strassman



- Sit in a chair on the side of the bed where the journeyer is most likely to exit.
- Keep the journeyer as the central focus and be present.
- Maintain appropriate previously agreed upon boundaries and level of consent.
- Engage in light reading, meditation or listen to music when you are not needed.
- Keep cell phone use to a minimum, no computer games, and no phone calls unless for emergency purposes.
- Discuss fluids beforehand; never force drinking. With MDMA, both overheating and too much water can be dangerous. See the evidence notes.
- The sitter should not leave the journeyer at any time unless the sitter feels unsafe.
- For journeyers who attempt to leave the room, gently redirect them back towards the couch or bed.
- If the journeyer wants to move, walk or dance, remain seated and have them move within the room you are in. Consider gently redirecting them back towards their inner experience if they appear confused, challenged or at risk of hurting themselves.
- Suggest the use of a journal, particularly near the last hour or two of the journey, so the journeyer can capture key insights.

Set And Setting

The Set and Setting has been regarded as one of the most influential factors that can shape the complexion of the psychedelic journey (ref). It is the interplay between the psychedelic, the mindset (often referred to as the set), the sitter, the setting and the music that create the conditions for an optimal experience. A trip sitter who has prepared for the journey and is present to the needs of the journeyer with a calm, non-judgemental, accepting and supportive presence will nudge an experience towards a more beneficial and positive one.

- Because psychedelics amplify every aspect of experience, sitters must be mindful and aware of what they could bring to the experience since this can be projected onto the journeyer. Journeyers want to have safety and the perception of safety for self-discovery both of which a sitter can provide.
- The Set is understood as anything related to the internal state of a person, including personality, preparation for the experience, intention, as well as mood, expectations, fears, and wishes. (*Metzner and Leary, 1967*). If the sitter and the journeyer trust each other, feel prepared and safe together this will likely be heightened during the experience. Conversely, if the sitter is distracted, highly anxious or uncertain, this can be projected onto the journeyer affecting the nature of their experience and mindset.
- The Setting is understood as anything related to the environment in which the experience takes place, including the physical, emotional, social, and cultural environment. Journeyers who are in a familiar and safe environment with a sitter they are compatible with and trust will tend to be more comfortable, have more positive thoughts and emotions versus those who are in an unfamiliar setting with an unfamiliar person.
- Creating a setting that is controlled, decluttered, comfortable, and inviting is a key priority in order to facilitate safety, the perception of safety and the ideal experience. Having a sitter who has prepared and reviewed the journey plan with the journeyer will contribute to that same feeling of safety and comfort, but also create a shared understanding of roles, responsibilities and expectations.



Talking Through The Difficult Experience

What is the difficult experience?

A difficult experience, sometimes called a bad trip, can involve fear, grief, unfamiliar sensations, troubling images or memories, confusion and physical distress. It can occur during or after a psychedelic experience. A vivid memory or feeling of certainty does not independently establish what happened. Difficulties are not proof that the journeyer has failed to surrender.

The substance, person, other drugs or medicines, and setting all affect the experience. Preparation and support cannot guarantee an easy or helpful outcome. Some people find gentle curiosity useful; others need grounding or more help. Do not insist they go deeper or treat distress as failure. See the Integration Book evidence review.

Being present means sharing the moment with attention and compassion. It takes effort: notice your own thoughts, expectations, biases and reactions so you can respond calmly to the journeyer.

If the journeyer is afraid or anxious, stay aware of what each of you may be bringing into the interaction. A sitter who appears distressed, distracted or tired can add to their worry. Stay calm, attentive and non-judgemental.

Difficult experiences can have lasting effects. Some people later find meaning; others remain distressed. Do not assume suffering is harmless or happens for a reason. Seek help if safety is uncertain, symptoms are concerning or difficulties persist. See this book's evidence notes for emergency signs; do not delay urgent care for grounding exercises.

If A Journeyer Is Having A Difficult Experience, They May Be Experiencing (ref):

- Fear, overwhelm or difficulty relating to what is happening.
- Reliving past traumas.
- Having visions of personal issues.
- Troubling visions of fear provoking entities.
- Sensory overload.
- Agitation, paranoia and confusion.
- Concern that one has done irreparable harm to their physical or mental health.
- Concern they are going crazy or took too much of the psychedelic.
- Thought loops - when a journeyer experiences the same distressing experience, thought or emotion on repeat.
- Tangible feeling of darkness, impending doom, despair and hopelessness.



A journeyer may be struggling even if they do not look distressed. They may become restless, withdraw or tell you something is wrong. Offer calm support or grounding if welcome. Do not require surrender or wait a set time before seeking help. Concerning physical symptoms or uncertain safety need assessment. See the evidence notes for emergency signs.

3-Steps:

How To Change Your Mind

step one.

Be calm, be present, and reassure safety. Remaining a source of calm, trusted, and compassionate energy is often all that is needed to tame anxiety, fear or paranoia. Validate and reassure them a few times - “this is scary but not dangerous, you are doing well.” Gently walk them through their mantra if needed. Encourage them to let go, breathe, say “yes” and to surrender to their experience. Accept whatever comes up and be curious where their mind is taking them. If this does not ease their issue within a few minutes, move to Step 2.

step two a.

Make them more comfortable. Offer blankets, pillows and water. Have the journeyer move into a different position such as lying on their side or back. Watch and wait 2-3 minutes to see if they settle. A good next step from here, if needed, is to change the music to the journeyer’s second playlist. If they are still having difficulty ask if hand holding would be helpful.

step two b.

Offer calming sensory stimulation. Prior to the experience, choose items that can be used as grounding tools during the experience. The use of smell, touch, and taste can be particularly useful during the trip. Consider soothing smells, a soft blanket, plushy, or grounding item, or a small piece of fruit to alleviate distress. If 2a and 2b does not help, move to Step 3.



step three.

Active listening and talking through. The trip sitter actively listens and helps the journeyer work through the experience. For more on how to perform Step 3, let's be inspired by the guiding principles outlined by the [Zendo Project](#) below:

1. Sitting, Not Leading

- └ Be a calm presence of acceptance and compassion. Promote feelings of trust and security. Let the journeyer's unfolding experience be the guide. Don't try to get ahead of the process. Explore distressing issues as they emerge.

2. Difficult Is Not Necessarily Bad

- └ When the experience is difficult, this is where key insights can appear whether they are readily apparent or not. Consider that it may be happening for an important reason. Gently have them approach the difficult aspects of their experience with curiosity and openness.
- └ Let them explore the happy, fun, and challenging experiences. When a person resists confronting or escaping from emotions, this **can lead to longer lasting consequences** after the journey.

3. Talk Through, Not Down

- └ Without distracting from the experience, help the person **connect** with what they are feeling. Invite the person to take the opportunity to explore what's happening. Go through the experience with the journeyer:
 - a.
 - Ask them "what are you experiencing" or "where are you and what does it feel like?"
 - b.
 - Now practice active listening:
 - Wait for the journeyer to finish speaking, defer judgment, and paraphrase what has been said.
 - └ "What I'm hearing is... ," and "Sounds like you are saying... ,"
 - └ Then pause ...
 - └ Allow them to respond and clarify.
 - └ Repeat as needed.
 - Help them connect with the content with trust and security. Validate their experience and reassure them:
 - └ "This is scary but not dangerous, you are doing well."
 - └ "This is difficult, but you are doing great, keep breathing, this will pass".

If you need support during the psychedelic journey or the journeyer needs immediate emotional support consider calling the [Fireside Project](#), a psychedelic support line. For other support and resources click [here](#).

Mental Health Toolkit:

Taming Anxiety And Panic

Anxiety, fear and thought loops can occur during a psychedelic experience. Stay calm and listen; do not insist the journeyer surrender or go deeper. A familiar mantra, grounding or previously agreed touch may help, but none guarantees relief. Watch for physical symptoms and changes in safety. See the evidence notes for signs that need urgent assessment.

If the journeyer wants support and there are no signs of a medical emergency, the following may help. Seek help whenever safety is uncertain.

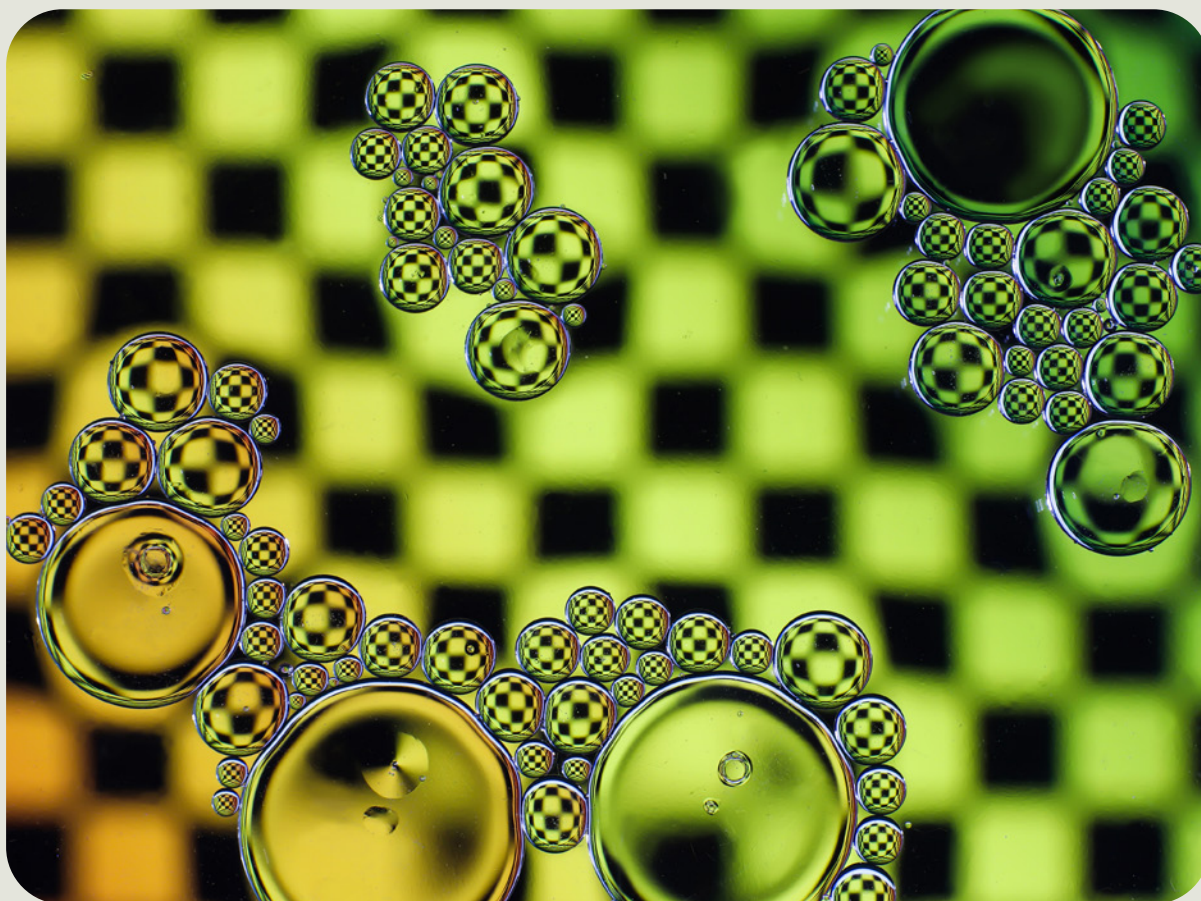
How To Tame Anxiety And Panic?

- **Stay Present.** Remain a source of calm, compassionate and supportive energy.
- **Use Validating And Supportive Statements:**
 - └ "I am here with you. Tell me what you need." "We can seek more help if you need it."
- **Settle With The Breath:**
 - └ Use a breathing exercise - ideally, get the journeyer seated with feet flat on the floor or laying flat with their left hand over their heart/chest and their right hand on their stomach.
 - └ Have them focus on their breathing using, repeating 5-10 times (or more as needed).
 - └ **Box Breath (4-4-4-4):** 4-second inhalation, 4-second hold, 4-second exhalation, and 4-second hold.
 - └ **Relaxation Breath (4-6-8):** 4-second inhalation, 6-second hold, 8-second exhalation.
- **Settle With Movement:**
 - └ If breathing did not help, encourage them to sit at the edge of the bed and march on the spot, drawing awareness to their feet. This technique **helps people move from their thoughts back into their body**, and may help regain control of their breathing.
 - └ If they regain control of the breath, have them focus their breathing using one of the aforementioned breathing techniques.
- **Settle With The Senses:**
 - └ Before starting this exercise, have the journeyer engage in slow, deep, long belly breaths to support a calmer state of being. Once finding the breath, go through the following to help further grounding.
 - └ If you are still having trouble, ask the journeyer 1 thing they can taste, 2 things they can smell, 3 things they can hear, 4 things they can touch, and 5 things they can see.

A sitter should not choose or add medication. Follow an existing clinician-agreed plan. Call emergency services for seizures, collapse, breathing difficulty, severe overheating, or confusion with marked stiffness or repeated jerking. Tell responders what was taken. Recovery varies; do not promise a quick discharge. See the evidence notes.

Emergency Situations

- If the journeyer is experiencing severe fear or anxiety, use the **mental health toolkit**.
- If the journeyer remains in severe psychological distress despite using the mental health toolkit **call 911** and if applicable and notify their emergency contact.
- If the journeyer is in medical distress, **call 911 immediately** and notify the emergency contact.
- Medical distress may look like:
 - └ Difficulty breathing.
 - └ Chest pain.
 - └ Seizures.
 - └ Loss of consciousness and unresponsiveness.
- If the sitter does not feel safe and/or boundaries have been violated, contact the emergency contact and develop a plan on how to have the journeyer supported for the remainder of the experience.
- If you or the journey have questions or need immediate emotional support during or after the experience consult with your primary healthcare provider and consider calling the [Fireside Project](#), a psychedelic support line.



The Journey Plan

The journey plan helps the journeyer and the sitter get alignment on preferences, safety considerations, and brings to light any specific worries one or the other may have. One area to have clarity on prior to the psychedelic experience is the use of therapeutic touch, such as hand holding or soothing techniques (gentle contact with the arm, leg, or other consented area).

If this is something the journeyer may find helpful, consider practicing this beforehand together. Preparing in advance for most things in life often leads to an experience free from misunderstanding and greater levels of trust and safety.

The Psychedelic Being Used And Dosage:

Journeyer's Experience (Novice/Competent/Expert):

Anchor or Mantra:

Emergency Contact Information:

Health, full medication list, recent changes and clinician-agreed plan:

The Trip Sitter Can Provide Assistance If The Journeyer Requests Or Needs:

- Extra comforts such as a pillow or blanket. Y ☐ N ☐
- Assistance to the restroom if needed. Y ☐ N ☐
- Offer water; never force it. Y ☐ N ☐

Notes:

Therapeutic Touch Provided By The Trip Sitter:

- Hold the journeyer's hand upon request. Y ☐ N ☐
- Provide alternatives to touch such as a stuffed animal, pillow or blanket. Y ☐ N ☐
- Offer gentle contact. Area(s)_____. Y ☐ N ☐
- To assist a requested change in the journeyer's resting position. Y ☐ N ☐

Notes:

Taming Anxiety, Fear Or Panic:

- The sitter can provide or facilitate:
 - └ Reassurance and supportive statements: Y ☐ N ☐
 - └ Remind the journeyer of their mantra: Y ☐ N ☐
 - └ Use active listening techniques: Y ☐ N ☐
 - └ Breathing techniques: Y ☐ N ☐
 - └ Movement techniques: Y ☐ N ☐
 - └ Grounding with the Senses: Y ☐ N ☐
 - └ Follow an existing clinician-agreed plan. Y ☐ N ☐

Notes Or Medication List:

Are there any specific worries or concerns from the journeyer or sitter? How can you accommodate for these?

Emergencies:

- The sitter will call 911 if:
 - └ The journeyer loses consciousness or is in medical distress.
 - └ The journeyer is unable to settle from anxiety or panic.
 - └ The journeyer is at risk of harming themselves and or the sitter.

Notes:



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Evidence notes for sitters

Evidence reviewed: September 27, 2026.

Know the experience; do not predict it

Psilocybin and LSD can alter perception, time and the sense of self; LSD usually lasts longer. MDMA may bring warmth or openness but can also feel tense or distressing. No particular emotional response is required. Read the compound guides below. [1]

Stay responsive and respect boundaries

Agree on support, consent and an emergency plan beforehand. Do not treat distress as a failure to surrender, or openness as permission for touch or disclosure. A sitter should not choose or add medication. [2]

MDMA: fluids and temperature

Do not force water or use a fixed drinking schedule. Both overheating and excessive fluid intake can cause serious harm. A quiet room or comfortable mood does not guarantee physical safety. [3]

Recognize an emergency

Call emergency services for seizures, collapse, chest pain, breathing difficulty, severe overheating, or confusion with marked stiffness or repeated jerking. Tell responders what was taken. Do not delay care for grounding exercises. [2, 3]

Read more and sources

1. Entheo: psilocybin

LSD

MDMA

2. Johnson et al. (2008): research safety guidelines

3. MDMA pharmacology and health review (2025)