

## The Psychedelic Handbook, by Rick Strassman: A Review

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Rick Strassman, a pioneer in psychedelic research, puts forth an easily accessible volume discussing the various psychedelics. It is a broad scope discussion that is as engaging as it is informative. With reminders of the risks and cautious approach one should take towards psychedelic ingestion, as well as psychedelic research, he dedicates the book to an in-depth exploration of the various psychedelics, the ensuing implications, and practical approaches. The book excels at the accessible descriptions and explanations.

In the first section, *What Are Psychedelics*, he explains the history and effects. Overviews of the experiences and risks are incorporated into the fascinating history of psychedelics. Particularly interesting was the inclusion of the nomenclature of various psychedelics and how it relates to the experience. Strassman provides cultural and historical contexts initially, then delves into areas of research. His own research into DMT shaped the foundations of his understanding of the cultural, medical, and metaphysical uses of psychedelics. He consistently comes back to DMT, unsurprisingly, given his meticulous and extensive research on DMT.

Strassman does not hesitate to discuss the metaphysical implications of psychedelics, along with current research and often relates this subject to his experiences administering DMT. He mentions links between psychedelic use and the experiences of dreams, spirituality, near death experiences and alien contact. These phenomena have lacked significant study; however, Strassman includes them and refers back to these common experiences throughout the book. Unabashedly, he confronts these subjects that tend to be common experiences in psychedelics that are not often mentioned in clinical research, due to the difficulties in studying such abstract

phenomena. The topic was a refreshing insight into his own interpretations of these events and how they relate to the larger picture of humanity and spirituality as a whole.

The second part, *How Do Psychedelics Work*, describes its aim in a clear and direct manner, allowing for complex concepts to be understood easily. Here, the book addresses metaphysical, Freudian, and even Buddhist models of the mind in order to relate these concepts to grasp the importance of understanding the mystical experiences of common to users of psychedelics. This section does not shy away from speculative subject matters, but rather addresses them as areas of investigation. The mind body connection is emphasized heavily.

Part III, *The Psychedelic Drugs*, covers each psychedelic in depth. Pharmacology, history, botany, and legal status are discussed practically and using common language and even slang terms for the drugs included. This section is packed with information.

Part IV, *Practical Guidelines*, wraps up with potential implications of the previous three sections. Here is included a section on How to trip, which focuses on the suggestions for one's own individual psychedelic journey. The insights gathered from studies, researchers, and spiritual practices are compiled in a brief objective description. This subsection neither persuades nor encourages the exploration of a psychedelic. Descriptions of set and setting, micro and macro doses, and spiritual growth are explained to objectively attempt to avoid negative outcomes, should Hernandez<sup>e</sup> to partake in a psychedelic experience.

Overall, Strassman excels at compiling the available knowledge with his own insightful analysis, while remaining as objective as one can be when describing the controversial,

subjective, and mystical aspects of psychedelics. This book is a valuable resource for those with no knowledge of psychedelics as well as those interested in broadening their knowledge.

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