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PLANT MEDICINE SAFETY



7 STEPS TO FIND THE RIGHT
PLACE FOR YOUR JOURNEY

NINA IZEL

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PLANT MEDICINE AND ITS GROWING POPULARITY

The rising popularity of plant medicine, used for centuries in indigenous healing practices, is now gaining recognition in Western societies for its potential therapeutic benefits.

While these substances offer potential benefits, they also carry risks and should be approached with caution, respect, and proper guidance. As research continues, plant medicine may play an increasingly significant role in mental health, personal growth, and spiritual exploration.



PLANT MEDICINE AND ITS GROWING POPULARITY

WHAT IS PLANT MEDICINE?

Plant medicine, also known as **entheogens** or psychedelics, is a naturally occurring substance that can **induce non-ordinary states of consciousness**.

Some of the most well-known include:

- **Ayahuasca:** A brew made from the Banisteriopsis caapi vine and Psychotria viridis shrub, traditionally used in the Amazon.
- **Psilocybin mushrooms:** Commonly known as "magic mushrooms," containing the compound psilocybin.
- **Peyote and San Pedro cacti:** Containing mescaline, used in Native American and South American traditions.
- **Iboga:** A West African shrub containing ibogaine, used in healing ceremonies.



PLANT MEDICINE AND ITS GROWING POPULARITY

GROWING INTEREST

There are many reasons for the growing popularity of plant medicine in recent years. The **ongoing mental health crisis**, marked by rising rates of depression, anxiety, and PTSD, has led many to seek alternative treatments beyond conventional therapies. **Scientific research** also showing promising results for the use of psychedelics in treating various mental health conditions.

Simultaneously, a **cultural shift** is underway, with growing disillusionment **towards** pharmaceutical approaches and an increasing desire for more holistic, **natural healing methods**. The **spiritual dimension** of plant medicine has also played a significant role, as many people are drawn to the profound mystical experiences often associated with these substances.

Additionally, **public figures and celebrities** sharing their positive experiences have increased awareness and acceptance of plant medicine in mainstream culture, further increasing their popularity.

IN THIS BOOK YOU WILL LEARN:

7 STEPS

TO FIND THE RIGHT PLACE FOR YOUR JOURNEY



This ebook, is a **comprehensive guide** designed to help you **navigate** the growing world of **plant medicine retreats and ceremonies with safety and confidence.**

As medicinal plants like Ayahuasca, psilocybin, and others continue to gain popularity, many are seeking transformative healing experiences. However, it's important to approach these powerful substances with awareness and caution to ensure your journey is **safe, healing, and aligned** with your intentions.

IN THIS BOOK YOU WILL LEARN:

SAFETY & INFORMED DECISIONS

Safety is paramount when engaging in plant medicine experiences because **these substances can profoundly alter consciousness and dissolve personal boundaries.**

In this book, I will teach you **how to choose a safe container** where your physical, emotional, and psychological boundaries are respected, so you can fully surrender to your healing experience. I will share with you a **step by step guide**, including screening protocols, informed consent, professional guidance, and cultural respect.

I wrote this book **to empower you to make informed decisions** and choose the right plant medicine retreat or ceremony. Whether you're new to plant medicine or have previous experience, this guide will help you to make safe decisions when you embark on your plant medicine healing path.



STEP 1. LEARN ABOUT PLANT MEDICINE SAFETY

PLANT MEDICINE DISSOLVES BOUNDARIES

In the realm of plant medicine, in the world of non-ordinary consciousness, **boundaries can seem different or dissolve completely**, therefore more attention is needed to ethical and professional issues and create a safe container.



A safe container refers to a comprehensive set of practices, protocols, and ethical guidelines designed to protect and support all participants.

- **Screening and Preparation:**

Includes medical and psychological screening of participants, and preparation support from setting intentions to physical detoxification.

- **Clear Boundaries:**

Establishing and maintaining clear ethical boundaries in the healing container. (code of ethics and standard of practices)

STEP 1. LEARN ABOUT PLANT MEDICINE SAFETY

- **Informed Consent:**

Ensuring participants fully understand the potential risks, challenges and protocols before the experience. Signing written agreements.



- **Trauma-Informed Approach:**

Recognizing and appropriately addressing potential trauma responses and ensuring the presence of qualified professionals.

- **Integration Support:**

Providing ongoing support to help participants process and integrate their experiences after the plant medicine ceremony.

STEP 1. LEARN ABOUT PLANT MEDICINE SAFETY

- **Emergency Protocols**

Having clear procedures in place for managing handling medical or spiritual emergencies.

- **Professional Training:**

Ensuring all facilitators and support staff are thoroughly trained and experienced in working with plant medicines.

- **Cultural Respect:**

Honoring the indigenous roots of these practices while adapting them responsibly to new contexts.



By prioritizing these ethical considerations and safety measures, you will ensure **your experience will be not only profound and deeply healing but also safe and respectful.**

STEP 2. UNDERSTANDING SET AND SETTING

Plant medicine experiences are determined by set and setting. "Set" refers to the mindset and intentions of the individual, while "setting" encompasses the physical and social environment. Both play crucial roles in shaping your experience.

- **Set: The Internal Landscape**

"Set" refers to **your mindset including your mood, expectations, and intentions** for the experience.

The set significantly influences how you perceive and interpret the experience. It is important that you have clear intentions for your upcoming journey to make the most out of your experience.



STEP 2. UNDERSTANDING SET AND SETTING

- **Setting: The External Environment**

"**Setting**" describes the physical and social environment in which the plant medicine experience takes place. Traditional ceremonies often occur in natural settings or purpose-built spaces. The **ceremonial space and cultural practices** used during the ceremony will have a significance in your experience just as much as the presence of guides, **facilitators**, and other participants present in the ceremonial space.



Setting also includes the **plant medicine**, so you have to know where it came from and who prepared it to avoid any physical or energetic contamination. It is crucial to make sure that you have the right setting to stay safe and supported, so you can fully engage in the experience.

STEP 3. DO YOUR RESEARCH

GATHERING INFORMATION

If you are embarking on a plant medicine journey the first step is to **educate yourself about plant medicine** in order to choose the right match for you. Today there is plenty of information online regarding this topic starting from podcasts to forums, social media groups and online articles. When you research retreat centers, facilitators and indigenous healers it's important to **look for reviews and video testimonials**.

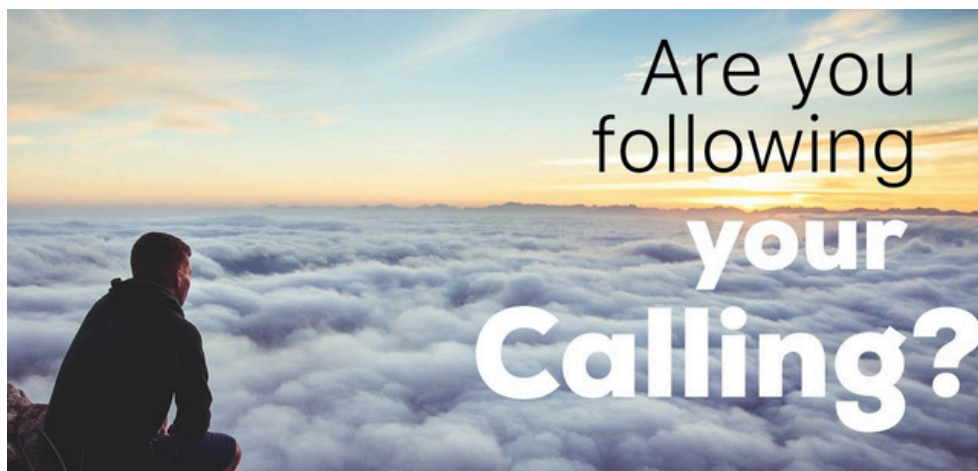


Psychedelic Support is the leading **online education and therapeutic platform in the psychedelic space** advocating for mental health and wellbeing worldwide.

STEP 3. DO YOUR RESEARCH

LISTEN TO YOUR 'CALLING'

In indigenous and traditional contexts, the idea of a "**calling**" holds significant importance. This concept goes beyond mere interest or curiosity and is often described as a profound, spiritual calling to work with plant medicines. A calling is often perceived as an invitation from the plant spirits to engage with the medicine.



It's described as a **deep, intuitive feeling that you are meant to work with plant medicines**, often experienced as an undeniable pull or sense of destiny. You may experience synchronicities, dreams, or visions that consistently point towards plant medicine work. If this describes your experience, **I suggest you follow your call!**

STEP 4. CHOOSE THE RIGHT PLACE

CAREFUL SELECTION

Embarking on your plant medicine journey can be a transformative experience, but it's crucial to prioritize safety and **choose the right place and guides for your adventure.** Whether you're considering ayahuasca, psilocybin, or other plant medicines, the importance of doing your own research and careful selection cannot be overstated. If you **follow these steps** you will ensure that you have a safe, ethical, and transformational plant medicine experience.



STEP 4. CHOOSE THE RIGHT PLACE

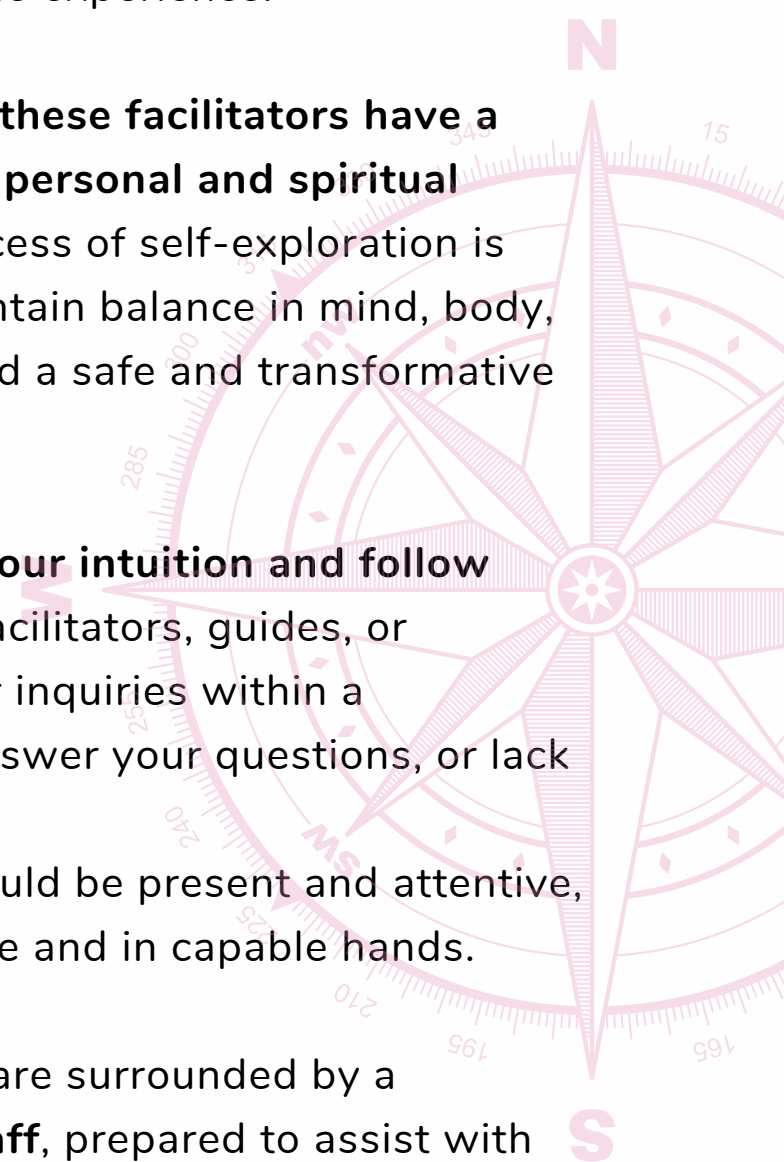
Engaging in powerful plant medicine ceremonies requires careful discernment, particularly when selecting the guides or shamans who will facilitate the experience.

It is of utmost importance that these facilitators have a deep commitment to their own personal and spiritual development. This ongoing process of self-exploration is crucial, as it allows them to maintain balance in mind, body, and spirit, ensuring they can hold a safe and transformative space for others.

Furthermore, always listen to your intuition and follow your heart. If at any point, the facilitators, guides, or shamans do not respond to your inquiries within a reasonable time frame, fail to answer your questions, or lack empathy, trust your instinct. Your guides and facilitators should be present and attentive, making you feel that you are safe and in capable hands.

Make sure that your facilitators are surrounded by a **permanent and well-trained staff**, prepared to assist with any needs that arise and able to support participants throughout the entire process.

In this sacred journey, the integrity of those guiding you is as important as the medicine itself.



STEP 4. CHOOSE THE RIGHT PLACE

- **Credentials and reputation**

To stay safe on your journey and to get the most out of your plant medicine experience it is most important that you do your own research and **check reputation and credentials**. In general, look for centers and facilitators with established reputations and positive **reviews** from past participants.

The possibility of speaking to previous participants and hearing about their experience or accessing video **testimonials** is a good sign that you are dealing with a reputable place. Remember, that **you have the right to ask** about proper certifications, training, and experience regarding the people who are providing the plant medicine experience.



STEP 4. CHOOSE THE RIGHT PLACE

- **Medical screening and safety protocols**

All plant medicine center or people with integrity will require **medical screenings** and have clear safety protocols in place. They also should be prepared to handle potential medical emergencies and have a medical professional accessible.



- **Preparation & Integration support**

Integration is an essential part of working with plant medicines. Look for programs offering **pre-retreat preparation and post-retreat integration support**. Make sure that your integration guide has experience and adequate training to support psychedelic healing experiences.

STEP 4. CHOOSE THE RIGHT PLACE

- **Ethics & Integrity & Informed consent**

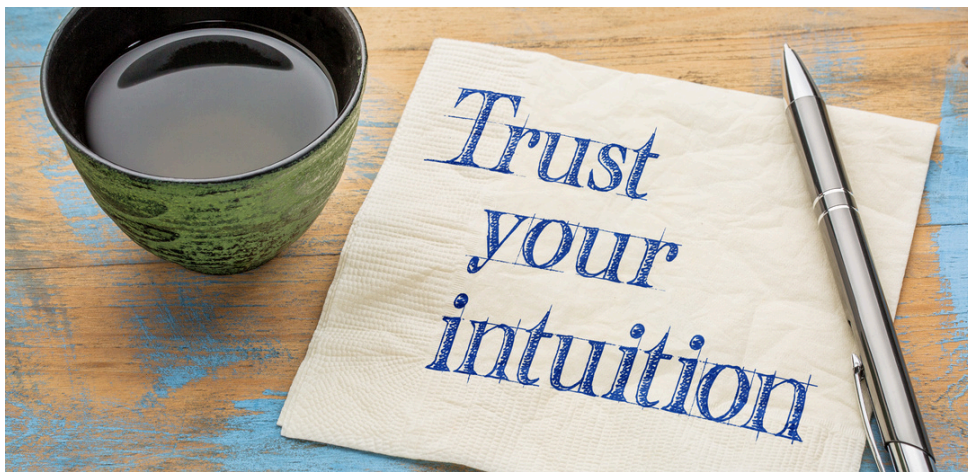
Ethical guidelines and practices are vitally important to **provide a safe and professional healing container and competent care**. People with integrity will provide you with clear mission statement highlighting their values and their clear operating protocols without you asking. Look for centers and people who provide you with their **code of ethics and standard of practices** to create trust and transparency.



STEP 4. CHOOSE THE RIGHT PLACE

- **Clear communication & written agreements**

Make sure that you are provided all the information about practices, what to expect, and potential risks before you make a commitment. **Written agreements are vital** to prevent any future confusion or misunderstanding.



- **Trust your intuition**

If something feels off or unsafe, and you are receiving multiple signs not to proceed, **trust your instincts** and look elsewhere. Remember that plant medicines can be powerful and potentially risky. It's crucial to approach them with respect and caution, and to work with experienced, ethical professionals.

STEP 4. CHOOSE THE RIGHT PLACE

ASK THESE QUESTIONS BEFORE YOUR PLANT MEDICINE JOURNEY

- **Ask your plant medicine ceremony facilitator**

What kind of training, lineage, experience do you have to create a sacred, safe space when working with sacred plant medicines?

Have you ever dealt with a spiritual emergency? What did you do?

What are your criteria to select, approve plant medicine ceremony participants?

What are the contraindications for working with plant medicines?

What kind of preparation is needed before participating in a plant medicine ceremony?

What are your main values and ethics you work by?



STEP 4. CHOOSE THE RIGHT PLACE

- **Ask your plant medicine retreat center, organizer**

Where is the ceremony space, what kind of facilities it has, how many people are on the staff, how many participants in the group, is there a medical professional present?

Who is leading the ceremonies and what are their credentials?

Have you ever dealt with a spiritual emergency? What did you do?

Are there trauma informed therapists on your staff?

Do you have written ethical guidelines that you work by?

How do you ensure informed consent and voluntary participation?

What are the contraindications and preparation guidelines for your retreats?

Can I get a copy of your client, medical intake form?



STEP 4. CHOOSE THE RIGHT PLACE

- **Ask your psychedelic integration guide**

What kind of training and experience do you have as a therapist and especially working with plant medicines?

What kind of tools, methodologies do you use to facilitate physical, mental, emotional and spiritual healing and psychedelic integration in particular?

Have you ever dealt with a spiritual emergency? What did you do?

Are you trauma informed?

Do you have written ethical guidelines that you work by?

How do you ensure informed consent and voluntary participation?

Can I get a copy of your client, medical intake form?

How long is your therapeutic container, how many sessions and how often?

What happens during a therapy session?



STEP 4. CHOOSE THE RIGHT PLACE

REMEMBER...

Plant medicines are powerful tools and potentially life-changing. By taking the time to carefully select the right facilitators, retreat centers, or integration therapists, you're setting the foundation for a safe and transformational experience. Trust your instincts, ask probing questions, and don't hesitate to seek multiple opinions. **With the right preparation and guidance, your plant medicine journey can open doors to healing, self-discovery, and profound personal growth.**



STEP 5. AVOID BAD TRIPS AND RECOGNIZE RED FLAGS

WHAT IS A BAD TRIP?

Embarking on a plant medicine journey can be a profound experience, but **what happens when it takes a turn for the worse?**

What most people call a bad trip is an intense, challenging and uncomfortable experience caused by plant medicines. Feelings of intense fear, panic, paranoia, a **total loss of control** and a feeling of existential crisis are common when you have a 'bad trip' experience.

But don't worry, these intense experiences **can often be avoided with the right preparation and support.**



STEP 5. AVOID BAD TRIPS AND RECOGNIZE RED FLAGS

COMMON SIGNS OF A BAD TRIP

- Sense of doom, despair
- Fear of death or paranoia, thinking that there are people out there to get you
- Troubling thoughts about existence, life and death
- Difficulty in discerning what is real and what is not
- Extreme level of confusion and disorientation
- Auditory or visual hallucinations that can be frightening or disturbing
- Total loss of control over your mind and your body

Thankfully, these types of experiences don't happen very often, and **in most cases, they happen because of lack of safety, preparation and professional guidance.**

Even though these 'bad trips' can be intense, life changing experiences with professional support and guidance they can be integrated and turned into valuable gifts and a new beginning.



STEP 5. AVOID BAD TRIPS AND RECOGNIZE RED FLAGS

UNDERSTANDING SPIRITUAL EMERGENCIES

A spiritual emergency can occur when you are not able to integrate the challenging experience and your life continues to **spiral out of control**. When you have a bad trip that doesn't end **when the effects of the plant medicines wear off but keep going and getting worse**, you are entering into a spiritual emergency.

The following are the **most common signs** of a spiritual emergency:

- Falling into despair, fear of losing sanity
- Difficulty in coping with daily life
- Hopelessness, powerlessness, loss of control
- Invasive, intrusive thoughts, trapped in the mind
- Extreme confusion, doubt
- Unusual feelings and desires, obsession
- Hallucinations, distortion of reality
- Insomnia, loss of appetite, loss of focus



EMERGENCY

STEP 5. AVOID BAD TRIPS AND RECOGNIZE RED FLAGS

HOW TO AVOID SPIRITUAL EMERGENCIES?

Based on the extensive research of Dr Stanislav Grof, **spiritual emergencies can be turned into valuable insights and personal growth when and if you have holistic support from experienced professionals.** Unfortunately in many cases, allopathic medicine in itself is unable to provide this type of support so it's important to seek appropriate support if needed.

- **Prevention**

The best is to prevent these challenging experiences if possible and **responsible preparation is key** to that. Learn more about the 5 steps of responsible preparation and **how to avoid the biggest pitfalls and stay safe** on your plant medicine healing path in this popular webinar.



STEP 5. AVOID BAD TRIPS AND RECOGNIZE RED FLAGS

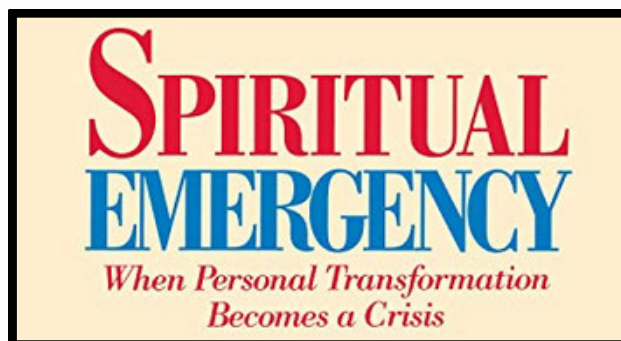
- **Reframing**

Viewing the crisis as part of a transformative process rather than as a pathological condition is key to empower you to navigate this challenging experience.

- **Adequate support**

Having professional support, including people who are knowledgeable about spiritual crises, like shamanic practitioners, psychedelic integration therapists, and holistic practitioners who can support mental, emotional, and spiritual healing work **is vital in case of spiritual emergencies and 'bad trips'**.

When understood and integrated in a supportive manner, these experiences **can become gateways to higher levels of functioning and new ways of being.**

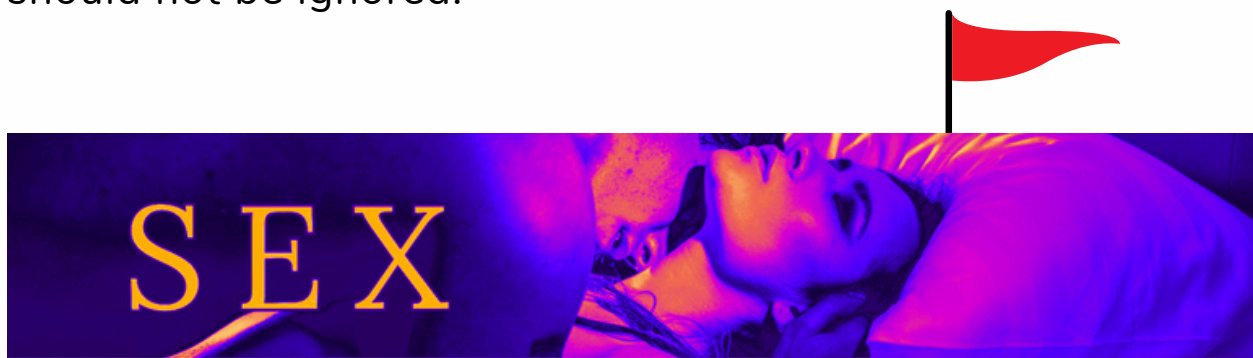


STEP 5. AVOID BAD TRIPS AND RECOGNIZE RED FLAGS

HOW TO RECOGNIZE RED FLAGS?

As the popularity of plant medicines grows, it's crucial to be aware of potential ethical violations and abusive practices that can occur in these highly vulnerable settings. **While many practitioners and centers operate with integrity, there are unfortunately many that don't.** Learning about the red flags can help you protect yourself and make safer choices when engaging with plant medicines.

The following list outlines some serious warning signs that should not be ignored.



- **Sexual relations** between participants, healers, clients
- Being told that having sex with the shaman will give you **special powers**
- Asking clients to **undress** and touching them without consent
- To be asked to go for a **private session** with the shaman/healer

STEP 5. AVOID BAD TRIPS AND RECOGNIZE RED FLAGS

MORE RED FLAGS

- **Manipulation**, disempowering people, attacking people when they are most vulnerable
- **Shaming, humiliating, and threatening** people in a healing container
- Being **asked for favors** or free work
- Being told that you are unique and have special powers, you are better than others, and you need special attention (**grooming**)
- The **use of additional plant medicines** outside of the ceremony (especially in a private setting)



STEP 5. AVOID BAD TRIPS AND RECOGNIZE RED FLAGS

MORE RED FLAGS

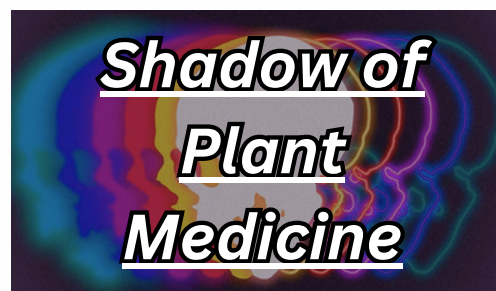
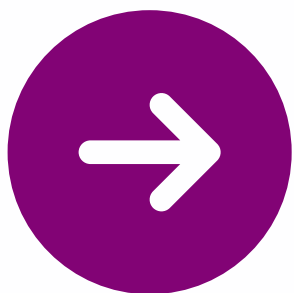
- **Being told you have a special problem** will require extra work/ceremony/sessions, which will cost extra money outside of the agreement.
- **Gaslighting**, convincing victims that nothing really happened or that what happened was part of their healing and happened for their own good.
- **Feeling very confused** by the healer/shaman, feeling unsafe with the healer/shaman
- You are **constantly doubting yourself** and your decision to continue with your experience.



STEP 5. AVOID BAD TRIPS AND RECOGNIZE RED FLAGS

If you encounter any of these behaviors or situations, it's important to **prioritize your safety and well-being, potentially by leaving the situation or seeking help from trusted sources.**

Remember that these red flags can apply to various contexts within the plant medicine community, including retreats, individual healers, and ongoing therapeutic relationships. Being aware of these warning signs empowers you to **make informed decisions and work with people who have the highest ethics and integrity.**



STEP 6. DON'T PREPARE & CONSUME PLANT MEDICINE ALONE

Ordering Plant medicine online from unknown sources and preparing it without proper training or experience possess several significant risks, physical, psychological and spiritual. These risks include:

- **Contamination**

Plant medicine from unknown online sources may contain adulterants, fillers, or even toxic plants.

- **Incorrect dosage**

When you work with plant medicine **even small variations in preparation can significantly affect its strength.** If you don't know the proper practices to identify the right dosage or strength, consuming your own brew can result in overwhelming psychological effects, extreme discomfort or even unconsciousness.



STEP 6. DON'T PREPARE & CONSUME PLANT MEDICINE ALONE

- **Absence of a Trained Facilitator**

During a plant medicine journey, a trained shaman or guide helps to manage your experience, providing emotional, energetic and physical support. **Without an experienced guide, there is no one to help if something goes wrong** and you may end up in a physical or spiritual emergency.



- **Lack of Integration Support**

Proper preparation and integration is crucial for healing and growth when you work with powerful medicinal plants. Without someone trained to help you to process the insights, and apply them in your life as intended, there is a higher chance of regressing back to your old patterns and habits on the long run.

STEP 6. DON'T PREPARE & CONSUME PLANT MEDICINE ALONE

- **Physical Health Risks**

Some medicinal plants can interact dangerously with various medications, especially antidepressants, stimulants, and blood pressure medications. Without proper screening and detoxification you might put yourself in great physical risk and do more harm than good.



- **Legal and ethical challenges**

Most plant medicine contains controlled substances in many countries, and ordering it online may result in **possible legal consequences**.

STEP 6. DON'T PREPARE & CONSUME PLANT MEDICINE ALONE

- **Cultural Appropriation**

Plant medicine use is deeply rooted in the spiritual and healing traditions of indigenous cultures. Preparing it without understanding or respecting these traditions can be seen as **disrespectful and exploitative**. By disrespecting the traditions connected to this plant medicine you contribute to the commercialization and potential cultural **exploitation of indigenous practices**.



Remember if you want to experience the breakthrough results plant medicine is famous for, you have to **approach them with respect**, care, and under the supervision of experienced facilitators in a safe, professional environment.

STEP 7. CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR PLANT MEDICINES

GENERAL CONTRAINDICATIONS

Plant medicines have various benefits, including deep healing and personal transformation such as, overcoming trauma, healing depression, anxiety and addiction just to name a few. **Plant medicines can facilitate profound insights and emotional breakthroughs that can lead to lasting positive life changes and spiritual growth.**

While these powerful substances can offer profound healing experiences, they are not suitable for everyone.

Understanding the contraindications for plant medicines is crucial for ensuring your safety.

It's essential to consult with professionals and be fully transparent about your medical history before engaging in any plant medicine ceremony.



STEP 7. CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR PLANT MEDICINES

- **Severe mental health conditions**

Individuals with **schizophrenia**, **bipolar** disorder (especially during manic episodes), or severe depression may be at higher risk for adverse reactions.

- **Heart Conditions**

Many plant medicines can affect heart rate and blood pressure, potentially **posing risks for those with cardiovascular issues**.

- **Pregnancy & breastfeeding**

Due to potential risks, plant medicines are **generally contraindicated** during pregnancy and breastfeeding



STEP 7. CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR PLANT MEDICINES

- **Certain Medications**

SSRIs and MAOIs can interact dangerously with many plant medicines, especially ayahuasca. Blood thinners may increase the risk of bleeding. Some medications may diminish the effects of plant medicines.



- **Liver & Kidney Disease**

These conditions can affect the body's ability to process and eliminate plant medicines and can **increase the risk of toxicity** due to potential accumulation of the substances in the body.

- **Epilepsy & Seizures**

Some plant medicines may lower the seizure threshold and trigger symptoms.

STEP 7. CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR PLANT MEDICINES

- **Physical Fitness**

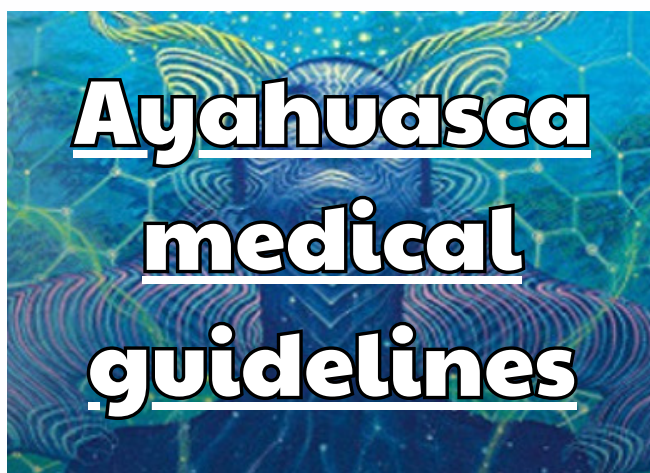
Some plant medicines can be physically demanding, requiring a certain level of stamina and therefore **contraindicated for elderly people who are specially frail** or people who are in the dying process. However there are some research of psilocybin effectively reducing fear of death and anxiety for dying people so it **depends on the combination of the specific medicine and your individual situation.**



STEP 7. CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR PLANT MEDICINES

MEDICAL SCREENING

Reputable retreat centers and facilitators should conduct thorough medical and psychological screenings before allowing you in plant medicine ceremony. **It's crucial for you to be completely honest about your medical history** and current health status, disclose all medications and supplements you are taking and inform the facilitators about any changes in health status, even minor ones, before the ceremony. When in doubt, it's better to be cautious and seek professional advice or do further research into specific contraindications.



A WORD OF ADVICE

REMEMBER

As we conclude this journey through the world of plant medicines, remember that **your safety and well-being are your responsibility.** The seven steps outlined in this book are your best friend, your compass, guiding you towards a safe and profound healing experience.



With Love, Nina Izel

Trust in your intuition, honor the wisdom of these ancient practices, and approach your journey with reverence and caution. As you step forward on this path of healing and self-discovery, carry with you the understanding that true transformation comes not just from the medicine itself, but from the integration of its teachings into your daily life.

Safe travels on your sacred path.

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USEFUL RESOURCES

REMEMBER

As we conclude this journey through the world of plant medicines, remember that **your safety and well-being are your responsibility**. The seven steps outlined in this book are your best friend, your compass, guiding you towards a safe and profound healing experience.

LEARN MORE ABOUT

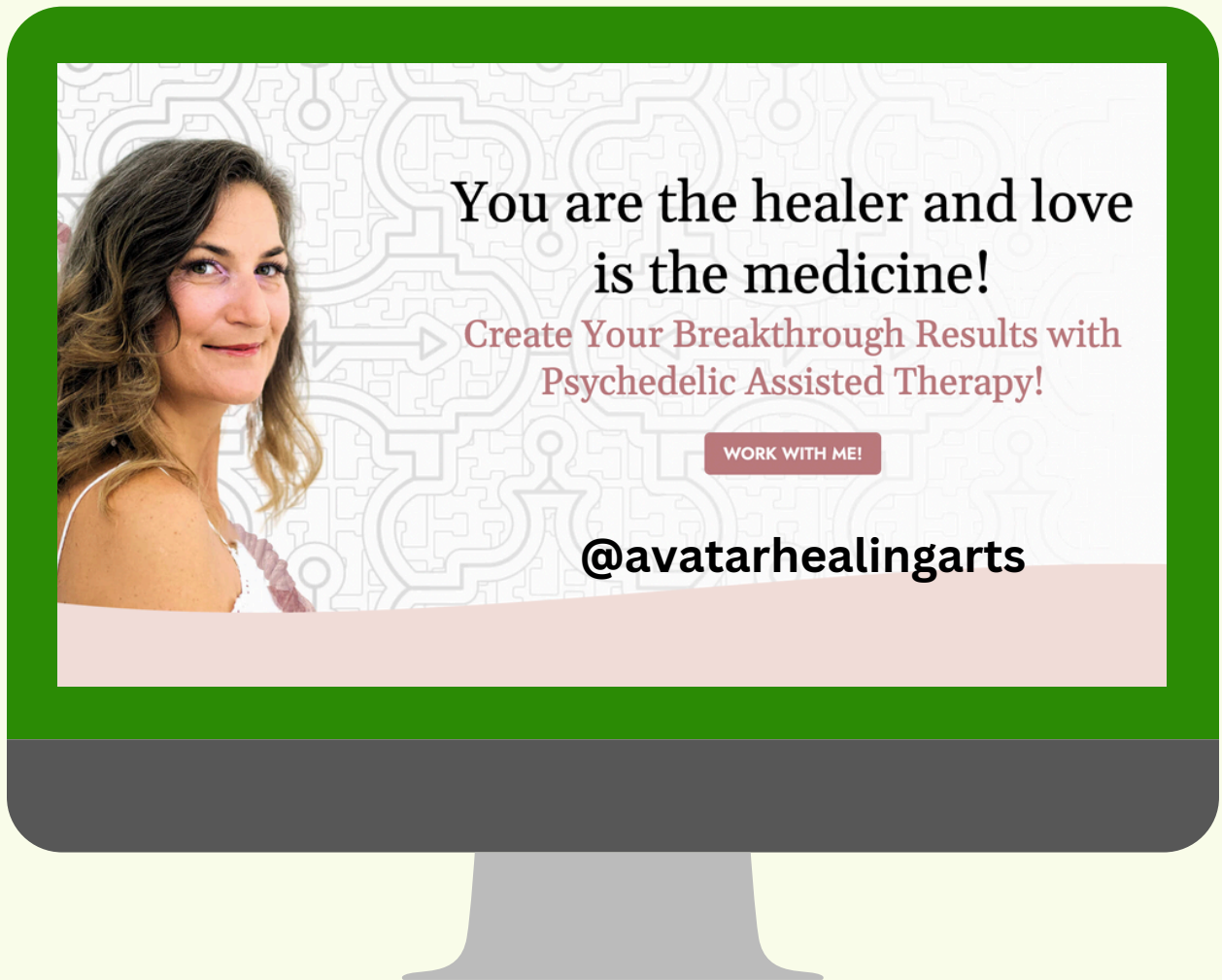


USEFUL RESOURCES

LEARN MORE ABOUT



Work with me!



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free consultation!

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**“You are
the healer,
and love is
the medicine”**

