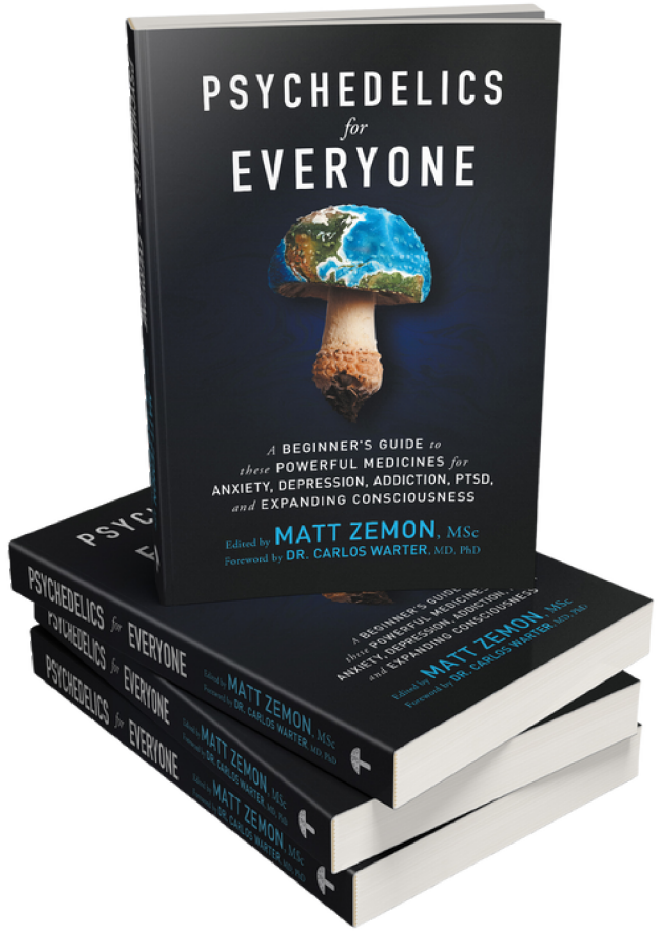
A Beginner's Guide to Microdosing

From Psychedelics for Everyone

Edited by Matt Zemon, MSc



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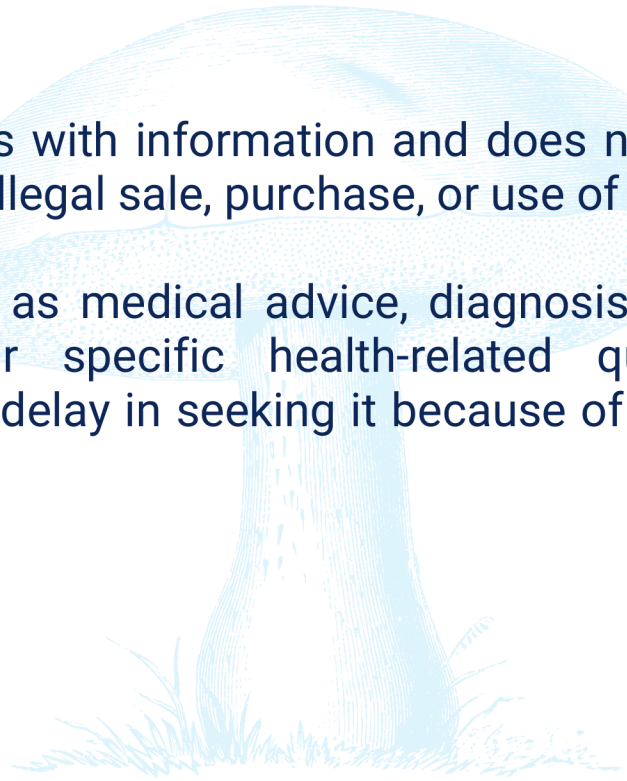
DISCLAIMER

This guide is to provide readers with information and does not encourage illegal activity, including but not limited to the illegal sale, purchase, or use of controlled substances.

Please do not treat this guide as medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Talk to your medical provider about your specific health-related questions. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read in this guide.



INTRODUCTION

Microdosing is the act of taking very small amounts of a psychedelic drug in order to achieve subtle yet noticeable effects on mood, creativity, and overall well-being. Although it is not a new phenomenon, the practice has gained popularity in recent years due largely to media attention and the emergence of online microdosing communities. Psychedelics, including LSD and psilocybin (commonly known as "magic mushrooms"), are widely used for this purpose, and there are chapters devoted to microdosing each in this book.

Despite the general lack of scientific research on microdosing, recent studies suggest it could improve mood, anxiety, depression, and cognitive function (Prochazkova et al., 2018; Rootman et al., 2022). Psychedelics are thought to work by modulating neurotransmitter signaling, and it is believed that microdoses may produce subtle changes in brain function that contribute to the therapeutic effects reported by users.

WHAT IS MICRODOSING?

Microdosing involves using a sub-perceptible amount of psychedelic drugs to improve mood or enhance cognitive performance in work and play while eliminating the physiological experiences associated with "tripping" (an increase in heart rate, changes in vision, perceptions of time, etc.).

The goal of microdosing is to develop practical applications for psychedelic substances in everyday life. Its increasing popularity may be attributed partially to the fact that microdosers claim they can experience the benefits of the psychedelic substance of their choice without the perception-altering effects of a full dose of psychedelic. Considering that most long-term benefits of psychedelic therapy are attributed to the trip and integration of the experience, microdosing operates from a different therapeutic paradigm.

Scientific research is in the beginning stages, but much of the research on microdosing is mainly anecdotal or self-reported survey research. A recent study suggests that the benefits of microdosing can also be attributed to the placebo effect (Szigeti et al., 2021). With 191 participants, this study was the most extensive placebo-controlled study that has been done on psychedelics. The results found that while the microdose group reported improved psychological outcomes, so did the placebo group, with little difference between the two.

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

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IS MICRODOSING RIGHT FOR ME?

One of the reasons people microdose is for its potential benefits on mental health. The science around microdosing is still being explored, but one study suggests it may help with depression, anxiety, and other psychological disorders (Polito & Stevenson, 2019). Microdosing may also improve creativity and enhance one's overall outlook on life. Although more research is needed to understand the risks and benefits of microdosing, it is a practice that continues to gain popularity. As society becomes increasingly open to alternative forms of medicine, it is likely that more people will explore microdosing as a way to improve their mental and physical health.

PRODUCTIVITY & CREATIVITY

One of the most popular reasons people give for microdosing is to improve focus, creativity, and productivity (Anderson et al., 2019). In today's fast-paced world, where it can seem that self-worth is increasingly dependent on productivity and outputs, young professionals are looking for ways to stand out from their peers. It has become a popular trend among Silicon Valley professionals looking to gain a competitive edge in their field.

Those who microdose regularly report that it makes them feel more productive in their work, more able to focus, and enhances their creativity. One San Francisco professional says, "It helps me think more creatively and stay focused. I manage my stress with ease and am able to keep my perspective healthy in a way that I was unable to before."

MICRODOSING FOR DEPRESSION & ANXIETY

While research demonstrates that psychedelic therapy is helpful in cases of depression and anxiety, there is no clinical evidence of the impacts of microdosing on depression and anxiety (Kuypers, 2020).

A review of low-dose psilocybin and LSD studies suggests that there is potential for smaller doses of psychedelics to serve as a treatment option for otherwise healthy individuals who are struggling with depression or anxiety. A microdose of some psychedelics could affect cognitive flexibility by reducing the tendency toward rumination, a thinking pattern commonly experienced as a symptom of depression.

The idea is that when taken at low doses, psychedelics can improve mood and productivity while reducing the risk of harmful side effects, like anxiety, that might be experienced during a full-blown trip. On the day following a trip, some people might experience feelings of depression as their neurotransmitters recalibrate. If microdosing, there may not be as much of a risk of post-trip depression.

With microdosing, it's not about altering consciousness—it's about using psychedelic drugs to improve everyday life. Novelist Alayet Waldman, who has suffered from mood disorders for most of her life, did a 30-day microdosing experiment with LSD and wrote about it in her book A Really Good Day: How Microdosing Made a Mega Difference in My Mood, My Marriage, and My Life (Waldman, 2018). On her first day taking a microdose of LSD, she wrote about how normal she felt. "I'm content and relaxed. I'm busy, but not stressed. That might be normal for some people, but it isn't for me." For many people who struggle with mood disorders such as anxiety and depression, this is the ultimate goal: to have a "really good day."

MICRODOSING FOR PAIN RELIEF

Research by the Beckley Foundation, an organization focused on global drug policy reform and psychedelic drug research, conducted a study to determine if low doses of psychedelic drugs such as LSD could be used as a non-addictive pain management technique. In their 2020 study, researchers provided 24 individuals with a single dose of 5, 10, or 20 micrograms of LSD or a placebo (Ramaekers et al., 2020). The study found that the 20 -microgram dose consistently increased pain tolerance by 20% compared to the placebo group. However, it is worth noting that the 5 and 10 microgram doses did not have the same effects.

The study noted that the perceptive pain tolerance while under the influence of the 20 -microgram dose of LSD was comparable to the effects of opioids such as oxycodone and morphine. This study also showed that the pain reduction effects of a 20 -microgram dose may have extended beyond the five-hour study window. This could be a significant breakthrough in the world of pain management.

HOW MUCH IS A MICRODOSE?

One of the most critical aspects of microdosing is to ensure proper dosage. Too much, and a person runs the risk of experiencing a full psychedelic trip, which likely isn't the intended outcome before walking into a board meeting or while in the middle of a project deadline.

In clinical settings, a microdose would consist of 10–20 mcg of LSD and/or 0.3–0.5 g of psilocybin-containing mushrooms. That is roughly 1/10th of a typical active dose. For most people starting microdosing, they begin with 50-100mg for a very mild experience, 100-150mg to feel it slightly, and 200-250mg to definitely feel it. The goal is to use psychedelics in a way that reduces the risk of having an intense experience. This allows people to go about their day as if nothing was very different.

Many people choose to grind their mushrooms up and create their own capsules. By doing this, they blend the inconsistencies in psilocybin between cap and stems. Cap-M-Quick is a popular capsule filler that makes this process painless.

HOW DO I SCHEDULE MY MICRODOSES? THE FADIMAN PROTOCOL

The most common protocol for microdosing can be attributed to James Fadiman, an American psychologist and author of The Psychedelic Explorer's Guide, who is well known for his work in psychedelic research (Fadiman, 2011; Fadiman & Korb, 2019). Fadiman collected thousands of anecdotal reports and has been active in promoting scientific research into the benefits of microdosing. While his protocol was originally created to microdose with LSD, it can also be used for psilocybin. He suggests starting with 1/20 to 1/10 of a recreational dose of the substance of choice and dose every three days with two rest days in-between. At the end of each thirty-day cycle, rest for two weeks.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Fadiman Protocol: Take a microdose every 3rd day. At the end of each thirty-day cycle, rest for two weeks.

HOW DO I SCHEDULE MY MICRODOSES? THE STAMETS STACK

The other popular protocol for microdosing was developed by world-renowned mycologist Paul Stamets. With the Stamets protocol, people microdose for four consecutive days followed by a three-day break. This is continued for one month, followed by a 2-4-week rest period to notice any changes and allow for a body reset. Stamets recommends microdosing with a combination of Lion's Mane, niacin (B3), and psilocybin. His specific stack designed to repair, rebuild, and enhance creativity and cognitive function for a 154-pound person is:

- 100 mg psilocybin
- 200-500 mg lion’s mane mushroom extract
- 100-200 mg niacin

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Stamets Protocol: Take a microdose every day for four days in a row and then rest for three. Take.a 2-4 week break after every month.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ACCIDENTALLY MACRODOSE

It is not uncommon to accidentally take too much psilocybin or LSD, especially when first starting to microdose. If this happens, the first recommendation is to not panic and to enjoy the journey. If you feel that you have accidentally macrodosed, you may want to remove yourself from work or other social situations and rest somewhere comfortable and safe. Many people choose to put on headphones and listen to calm, meditative music. Keep in mind everything else you have read about the safety of psychedelics in *Psychedelics for Everyone*, and trust that this unplanned experience will end.

RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH MICRODOSING

Despite a positive outlook, microdosing is generally considered safe but does have some risks. These range from difficulty concentrating to unexpected such as increased anxiety and physiological discomfort

Those who have been diagnosed with psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder are discouraged from using psychedelic drugs at any dosage, as negative consequences may be experienced. Microdosing has been shown to increase neuroticism in one self-reported study, but these results have not been validated in clinical trials.

This being said, in a recent discussion between James Fadiman, and Sam Harris, Fadiman mentioned three things specifically related to this topic: First, there is little to no research on psychedelics on people with schizophrenia or bipolar disorders as they introduce a level of risk that researchers have not been willing to take; second, there are thousands of self-reported anecdotes from people with bipolar disorder who have used psychedelics. Third, those that have reported typically say it is not a good idea to use them in a manic state and that positive experiences have been had while in a depressive state.

It is always a good idea to do thorough research before mixing any drugs, including prescription drugs that are taken regularly. If you are currently taking antidepressant medications, it is highly recommended that you get guidance from a psychiatrist prior to microdosing. Microdosing is also not advisable for people who are colorblind, have chronic anxiety, or are on the autism spectrum.

When considering psychedelic drug use in any form, the substance should always be tested for purity. When using any psychedelic substance outside of a clinical setting, it is possible that the substance could be cut with other potentially lethal contaminants. There are harm-reduction networks where testing kits can be accessed that will indicate whether a substance is pure or not.

MICRODOSING IS ILLEGAL IN THE UNITED STATES

A significant risk with microdosing is that most psychedelic drugs are illegal to use outside of clinical settings in the United States and many other countries. This means that it can be difficult or impossible to obtain psychedelics for microdosing purposes from a legal source. As a result, it is important to be aware of the source of any psychedelic substances that are used for microdosing.

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