

# MAGIC MUSHROOMS - Rituals

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## 10. Rituals

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Rituals and ceremonies, maybe you believe that this is all nonsense and then you simply skip this chapter. We deal with this at some length in this book, because it might help you not only to place the mushroom-trip in context, but to also see the connection with other experiences, religions and even the disco-culture. To transgress the border between the known and the unknown, the visible and the invisible, the conscious and the unconscious is a serious matter. You'll in fact come in contact with things inside yourself that you normally suppress, that you are not conscious of. To give an example: you smell something or you hear a particular sound and that takes you back to your childhood. Normally you don't always realize this, but this will happen more easily during a trip. This can be nice or not, you fling your memory doors wide open and make some vivid jumps in time too.

You can prepare yourself by selecting the right spot and the right environment, but is there something else that can be done so you won't feel overwhelmed by what you have hidden, suppressed or just never noticed? The question we are touching upon here is how to safely reach the subconscious, the unconscious and the deeper layers of what Jung called the collective unconscious. Science has its own models and techniques for getting there, like Freud's psychoanalysis or Jung's work about archetypes. Psychologists may have very beautiful theories and will talk in terms of associations, hypnoses and deprogramming but since ancient times medicine-men, priests and shamen have their ceremonies and rituals. And those have proven their worth, otherwise they would have been abolished by now. There was, for centuries, a veil of ridicule and ignorance concerning the work of these healers, witches and helpers of old.

Things are changing; there is a growing understanding that many of the rituals of so-called primitive cultures are very effective and can for instance cure medical problems that we are stuck with in the West. To think that these things are superstition and nonsense, is the total opposite of the experience of many people that report wonderful results. With the help of certain mudras (gestures), visualization, special breathing, auto-suggestion, mantras (specific words that have a deeper significance), hypnosis, symbols, patterns, etc. priests and shamen developed a whole repertoire of what we would nowadays call: "The communication with your deeper self". Rituals are not linear, not logical, they work!

Rituals become important in connection with the psychedelic experience, because you need to kind of leave your `rational' mind behind; in a trip you can't trust your normal logic anymore, you surrender to the forces of chaos, to the wilderness of the subconscious. A strange territory, where some structure, some guideline to follow is welcome. Ceremonies provide that framework. That's why in many cultures one dealt in a very respectful manner with the magic mushroom and other psychedelics in the rituals. Of course we can't force you, but we suggest every user to get more information and inspiration from the wisdom of the ancient cultures and the people.

The mushroom itself can also be a guide here. It is because of the valuable lessons we received that we call them our "little brothers" in this book. They have something of real value to contribute, maybe the brotherhood between mushrooms and people entails more than just eating and being eaten!

It is not a bad idea to learn from the old cultures if we deal with magic mushrooms or other psychedelics, they do have a long history. The funny part is that the so-called `modern' scientists, often after lots of research, discover that these old and `barbaric' methods are based on a very right understanding of the interaction between body and mind.

The subconscious is a system which is not easy to reach. It has been programmed over the course of your life and especially in your early youth by your experiences, often by the endless repetition of the behavior and remarks of your parents. Of course there are many ways to contact the subconscious, some rituals are very specific to a special culture, others are more universal. All are intended as formalized ways to come into contact with the spirit world, inside and outside yourself. For that matter you can see a ritual either as a real contact with another reality (outside yourself) or as a support for your own subconscious (inside yourself). It does help if you believe in the deeper meaning of the ritual, but even if you only view this as a programming of your subconscious, it can still have a beneficial effect.

### *Rites of passage: initiation*

The traditional way to prepare for a trip is through a ritual of purification. Clean yourself, to make an easier contact with the spirit world, when you go there to ask for help or guidance. Often the rituals connected to psychedelics have to do with initiations, which are then part of a rite of passage (for instance when youngsters become of age). A youngster becomes a man, a common water-carrier becomes a warrior, a servant a priest, an outsider an initiate. This is a step through a door, to a higher level of consciousness and a 'trip' is an appropriate way to do so. These initiations usually deal with insights in the `hidden' knowledge, to share in the `knowing' or to be part of the group that `knows'. It is important to do or experience something out of the ordinary, that impresses the initiate and makes him or her aware that they have reached a `higher' level.

In many cultures initiations are very important, they define your life, where you live and what is your task. Often you are first sent in to the woods or the wilderness alone or with others initiates, to fast, and as a preparation. Then comes the trial, the vision-quest or the

ordeal, they want to see if you can withstand the test of manhood, maybe you have to crawl through a narrow tunnel or through a dark crack in the rocks and generally submit to all kind of trials to be eventually accepted in the group. Usually at the end a certain sign is given, a totem or a tattoo, and then a big party is thrown; you became a man or a woman or a warrior. In our society these rites of passage have slowly withered away. Only for religious people it still matters, for the Jews for instance Bar MitzWa is still a very important event and milestone. Some anthropologists believe that many of the problems that modern man encounters are due to the loss of these obvious milestones and passages in our life. We seem to need them to straighten out things with ourselves, to create a distance from the frustrations of our childhood and thus become 'wiser'. To cut through the programming, to realize who we are and why we are what we are.

### *The staging of a ritual*

Many rituals contain the same elements. It is usually about purification, a healing, the creation of a structure and making a link, a connection. This is symbolized by certain actions, which record it in the language of the subconscious (neuro-linguistic programming is a modern term for this). It usually starts by making an amendment, purification and cleansing. This is often in the form of a smudge with herbs like sage or incense (scents are very important during a trip too). One very often takes a bath, or a symbolic bath and likewise get rid of the influence of the past or of the environment. This spiritual purification is important to part with unfinished stuff of self and others. The Huichol Indians, for instance, have a complex, mostly spiritual purification; before their collective peyote-ritual they confess publicly their wrongdoings.

In the further course of a ritual repetition plays a big part, often using the rhythm of drums or rattles. One can sing, pray silently together or alone, move in a circle, make contact with the four directions (and with the above and the below) and one usually pays respect to the 'intelligence' one deals with (whether this is seen inside or outside oneself). Concentration is essential and without calling this directly 'praying', there is a possibility that by using certain words you too can give direction to your trip.

The space where you take your trip is not only important, but also magical; it is possible to design this symbolically by putting an object in the four corners, a kind of watchtower. Native Americans also frequently make a circle or a medicine-wheel; this is also a kind of screen, meant to keep the 'good' energy inside and to lock out evil energy.

After the preparation you can concentrate and connect, like a link to the spirit world, animals, friends, ancestors, etc. by dancing, gestures, recitations, songs etc. Other cultures often use fascinating forms, masks, complex sacrifices to gods or spirits, invocations, prayers, chanting or special music. Just remember that a Holy Mass or a church service is often based on the same principles.

### *Contact - alignment*

Don't only purify yourself, also align and connect. For instance with the others in a group and also with the magic mushrooms which you can pass around. This is a good way to ensure a fair mix and in this way everyone contributes their own energy. Hold hands, burn some incense, pass some water around, light a candle, choose a flower, sing together; it is all a question of tuning in. Repetition helps, everyone has their own energy, but if we make the same gestures together we come closer to the same energy level, and to the same brain wave frequency. The mushroom, which magnifies and accelerates all emotions and experiences, makes this even more intense. To create links, to allow the energy of others or to invoke energy of the past or your own past; the invocation of Gods and Goddesses, Spirits or Forces of Nature is again a question of aligning with an archetypal energy which has been encoded deep inside by the image of some God, force or symbol.

### *Structure*

Rituals can also be seen as a support to structure the chaos around you. This principle applies not only to the use of mushrooms or other psychedelics, but also to churches, societies and in politics. Even in front of the mirror in the morning or while making coffee in the office, specific rituals develop after a certain time. The way you dress for a funeral, marriage or party, the way you behave and the contacts you make, are in fact part of a ritual. For this matter there is not much difference between an African tribe feasting and today's house-parties. To have a party can be a good way to end a trip; to totally let go in a new realization, in an expanded consciousness. Notice that Mardi Grass is not only fun but also has a religious connotation and is part of a ritual.

### *Eternal pattern*

It is good, when adjusting the trip in a larger ceremonial context, to recognize the age-old pattern of separation, initiation and return. Even Freud spoke about separation and individuation, the process of freeing oneself of some old patterns. This structure is present in all kinds of myths, but according to psychiatrists like Stanislav Groff, who worked with psychedelics extensively, it is related to experiences at the time of birth. You experience this pattern in the trip itself but it is also possible to apply it in a ritual. So first create a division between your daily routine and the place of the ritual, by marking it, but also by some extra rest, fasting or by seeking out a quiet place in nature, in company of a few friends or on your own. Then before or after the trip there can be an initiation. It is also possible to give a tangible form to this initiation, which not only makes you or the initiated part of the psychedelic community, but which also allows you to reach a deeper level, especially if you do it in a rather big group. For the return to the world, coming back in a new form is not so easy these days. Going out on the street singing and dancing might get you in trouble. However, why not dressing up, go out for dinner or to a party that can be a manifesto of your change of heart too.

*To copy or to create something yourself*

So far you got a lot of suggestions concerning rituals, now it matters how you apply this and how you intend to apply it. One can rely on what, for instance, the shamen and the Native Americans do. We gave already several examples and a lot has been written about it, but you can also create something on your own. A basic outline may help: - A ritual is to use certain gestures, sounds, words, prayers, visualizations and likewise to work at the relation with something in the subconscious or in the spirit world. - You want to create a link, to bridge the boundaries between two worlds. That doesn't necessarily mean something esoteric; you can work on your relationships with others, on the separation that exist between the group members, between you and the people around you, but also between your conscious and your subconscious or between your mind and your body. Invent your own rituals or let them happen spontaneously. Be creative, don't make it too heavy and remember that all that you do with a certain awareness already has an extra in value, whether it is reciting a poem or silence and concentration, holding hands in the beginning of the trip or by wishing each other a good trip. Even a small ceremony or ritual is helpful, brings clarity and supports you on your voyage, which will always take place in a strange world.

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