



Preparing For Your Ketamine Experience: Before, During and After

Transformation can come in the preparation for your psychedelic experience, during your experience and following your experience - during integration. This article will provide some thoughts and ideas about each of these phases. Hold them gently, and run them through your own discernment process, whether that involves your mind, body or spirit.

The terms "set" and "setting" are concepts that we know can influence a psychedelic experience. Setting refers to the physical and social environment in which the experience takes place. Set encompasses the personality, preparation and expectations that the participant brings - the "mindset".

We have been offering practices, such as breathwork, tapping, and other calming practices to help you prepare you for your session. Intentions are how we create and shape our reality. We are constantly sending our intentions out ahead of us – consciously or not. Please reflect on your intentions for your experience.

BEFORE

A) Setting Intentions

vary between individuals and can range from welcoming an unstructured, open experience (e.g. ask the medicine or your wise inner self to guide you to what you need to learn) to wanting to manifest something more specific in your life (contentment, self-compassion, joy, etc.). You might begin by considering your original intentions coming into this program. What brought you to the Roots to Thrive journey? Who do you want to be coming out of it? What quality would you need to lean into or expand to manifest this more secure, congruent, confident, etc. self?

Here are some tips for intention creation. They tend to be most helpful if they are:

- personal - inspired by you not prescribed by others
- simple and specific - perhaps even a word or two
- what we want to move toward instead of what we want to get rid of (e.g. find more calm vs get rid of this anxiety)
- if you are able to drop in to your body, sit with your intention(s) and listen, which intention(s) resonates for you physically?
- write the intention down; you can revisit it after the session or further along on your journey

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Broad themes that you may want to refine for your intention might look like:

- Expanding awareness of your strengths
- Expanding awareness of what is at the root of a blind spot /life challenge
- Exploring an inspiration / desire that's calling you
- Inviting awareness of past trauma in order to begin healing
- Deepening self-compassion • Deepening compassion and/or forgiving another
- Deepening your ability to be intimate with others • Reducing attachment to a behaviour that is no longer serving you
- Expanding a sense of gratitude.

In setting your intentions, you can also ask for insights to be gentle, easy, and that inspire changes that feel possible for you. We are happy to help you refine your intentions. Please just reach out to your facilitators for this conversation.

B) Pillars of Strength

Choosing to enter into non-ordinary consciousness can be anxiety provoking. We have been setting a foundation of caring, connection and trust in our small groups. We also encourage you to take some time to identify the *pillars of strength* that you have within yourself and in your life. Claim them and name them. A pillar of strength is something on which you place your attention in order to experience a response of comfort, courage, or groundedness. It may be:

- a meaningful phrase, mantra, prayer
- your connection to certain people/pets in your life
- beings who give you strength – ancestors, angels, etc.
- A quality that you have or are becoming: "I am strong", "I am becoming strong", "I am resilient", "I am regaining my power"
- it may be a cultural or spiritual tradition.

Spend some time in the question: what can I be reminded of that would help me feel most secure and able to let go? Some people have objects or photos that symbolize their pillars of strength. You may want to write them down on the sticky notes we will provide, and invite us to speak them to you during the sit. You can bring these symbols of your pillars of strength to have nearby or simply bring clarity of them in your mind and heart.

DURING

In this dominant culture that programs us to seek quick fixes from an outside source, we are now invited to slow down, trust, and invest in our own deep processes of growth and healing. While the ketamine might seem like an outside source, it is our relationship with it and this

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experience of being held together in this container, which we have collectively built, that transforms us.

Let go as much as you can into whatever experience you are given. Although we spent time setting intentions for the journey, at this time it is important to let go of the **outcome**. As you go into your experience, don't grasp for your intention. Practice letting go of expectation, trusting that whatever arises is exactly right for you. In this place of surrender, you can **receive** what is offered to you.

You can break through anything that feels challenging by being curious and compassionate, which is the antidote to resisting the experience. You might even ask the presenting challenge a question, which can promote non-attachment and compassion for what is arising. If you need support to trust and let go, ask for help from the team or by returning to your pillars of strength.

We encourage you to go 'down and in' rather than 'up and out.' Avoid the urge to talk or connect with others about your experience while you are still in it. The deeper and more silent your experience, the more meaningful and transformative it can be.

You may hear tears and laughter in the room. Words might be spoken. There might be movement and sounds around you as we help people with their physical and emotional needs. Please be assured that the team is there for each of you and allow yourself to stay with your own experience. For those who have provided care to others during your life, it is an amazing experience to realize that you don't have to do anything but be in your journey with compassion for yourself and others. This is **your** time.

AFTER – INTEGRATION

Between 1 and 2 hours after you have taken the Ketamine, you will gradually come back into this time and place, bringing with you everything you experienced and learned. We will have a transition circle while we are still together.

Some of you might find it difficult to speak about your experience during the closing portion of our session. You do not need to if you are not ready. This might be because you just have no clarity or words to begin to describe it, or you may be impacted emotionally and do not feel ready to talk yet. Others will be ready and excited to share. Wherever you are on that spectrum, it is fine. Give yourself time and space to navigate this period gently and welcome any silence into which you are drawn. Do your best to let go of comparing your experience to

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others – your experience will be perfect for you... theirs is for them. You will see in time how your journey was exactly right for you. Trust the process.

The 36 to 48 hours following a ketamine journey is a critical time period and an important opportunity to engage in self-care, practice new patterns and begin to establish new neural pathways. You may hear us speaking of this time period as one of heightened neuroplasticity, the brain's ability to modify, change, and adapt both structure and function. After your opportunity to briefly share about your experience with your group, you will be returning home in an open state. Please ensure that the person driving you is aware of this condition and can hold you gently (possibly with some silence). Prepare a space at home (or lodging) for you to gently land and be able to rest for the balance of the day. We strongly encourage you to protect the following day with rest and gentleness. Previous participants have stated that having two days after their session off work was quite important for their self-care.

After each KAT session, there will be group sessions for integration available on Zoom, Monday afternoon 12 – 1:30pm and again Monday night 6 – 8:00pm. These sessions are optional but strongly recommended. They will be an opportunity to talk about how you are relating to your ketamine experience and to be a witness for what is happening with others.

Be aware that your experience will likely have lingering effects throughout the week in terms of your energy, emotions, and self-reflections. It may become important for you to flex your schedule and expectations of yourself to accommodate and care for yourself as new awareness's and needs arise.

For transformations to manifest in our behavior and life in general, we must embody them. To embody anything, we need to make time to cultivate calm and/or inspired ways of being (meditation and flow). Integration happens when we embody new insights, which then leads to new behaviors that align with those insights. Integration happens when we simply settle into and practice new ways of being in the world, which can be further reinforced when compassionately witnessed by others. To encourage such settling, it's beneficial to continue connecting the thinking mind to the spirit-body as often as possible after your KAT session to do this, listen to the signals of your body and engage in activities that feel inspiring.

Making space to sit quietly in relaxation (meditation and other forms of dropping into your body) multiple times throughout the week is helpful, even if it means a few minutes in your car between daily transitions. Find activities that you 'want' to engage in, and that help your body relax (take long showers, Epsom salt baths, go for walks, run, listen to music – maybe the playlist, which will be shared with you) so you can get the most out of your post-session

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window. Once insights begin to drop more solidly into your being (finding the words that articulate how you feel), try writing them down. This acts as a bridge between your insights, your bodily signals, and how they are then expressed in the world. To imbed these awareness's further, discuss your discoveries with your buddy, a trusted friend, family member, or therapist. Sharing insights with others provides an opportunity for witnessing, which is also a key component of embodying more congruence (alignment between your real and ideal self) and sense of coherence (sense of meaning, understanding, and confidence to navigate challenges).

For Next Time: From session to session your intention might change, or you may continue working through the layers of your original one. The most important thing to remember is to trust your inner promptings to guide you in this intuitive process

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