

Chapter II

Trauma and Psychedelics

The real secret of The Offer, and in fact, the source of your extraordinary value, power, and strength, is that the universe created you just to exist and it delighted in creating you. If the universe enables its intention, your existence is its own justification.

Church of England theologians of the 17th Century wrote about truths of Christianity in the Westminster Confession of Faith, an instructional doctrinal proclamation. Presented in question-and-answer form, the very first question of the Confession is “What is the chief end of man?” The answer is “To glorify God and enjoy him forever”. It sounds a little egotistical on God’s part doesn’t it? Maybe so, but do not forget, God here is defined as the universe. This may be the place where people get too turned off on The Offer, that it is too Christian. I get that. The main point of this paragraph may alleviate your fears: since the “chief end of man” is “to glorify God and enjoy him forever”, the purpose of your existence simply is to enjoy life. That is good news for everyone and you do not even have to believe in Jesus for it to be true.

But how do you best enjoy it? Your purpose is to

enjoy life but also to emulate the universe's design. Part of the universe's design is love so part of our enjoyment is related to service. We get additional enjoyment from expressions of our natural inclinations, aptitudes, and curiosities. Having an opportunity to express these things is a wonderful gift.

You may feel, however, like it is impossible for you to ever live in the fullness of the universe's design.

Your expectations are wonderful things and part of your design. God gave you curiosities and inclinations, and we all have a sense that there are high purposes that our lives could fill. Many of us feel discouraged, though, like we will never be satisfied in our careers and that we will always be engaged in a profession or work from which we will never receive fulfillment.

Your expectations and desires should be identified when you are asking the question from The Task about what it is that you want.

Expectations are wonderful because you have the creative potential of the divine inside you. Because of your intrinsic worth that the universe gave you independently of any obligation that you agreed to in exchange, you now have the infinite ability to go out and

affect the same divine change on the universe that it exercised by creating you if you follow the maxim: AS ABOVE, SO BELOW.

Where a lot of people get understandably hung up is that they have expectations about their life that do not work out in the way that they think they should. This happens to everybody. I would be surprised if you cannot identify with what I just wrote. If there was somewhere in your life in the past where you wanted something to happen and it did not happen the way that you wanted it to, you probably were disappointed. It may have been an event that was relatively minor, like not being able to go to your first-choice college, or it could have been major where you grew up with a dad who physically abused you.

It could have been severely major if you are a victim of sexual trauma. You had an expectation in your mind that your body and the most intimate part of your being would remain inviolate until such time as you consented to share that with another person. Yet, another person has violated your personal bodily integrity without your permission and has taken what was supposed to be protected. They seized that protected part of your identity from you contrary to your

expectations without your consent in a violent or coercive way in total disregard of who you are or what you wanted.

I describe sexual assault in these terms to note that all trauma has to do with a violation of the underlying fundamental expectation of safety that all humans share. It is certainly reasonable to have an expectation of your own personal integrity, safety, bodily security, and privacy. These are fundamental needs and trauma results if these needs are not met.

There is another kind of trauma that creates things like systemic racism. It also creates dysfunctions that we experience in our families. This is intergenerational trauma. Abuse is wrong no matter what, but abusers so frequently were abused themselves by their own parents or others. This is not an excuse for the abuse but a reason for it and an important one to identify.

I may have been so traumatized by something in my upbringing, either from my parents or third parties (pedophiles), that as a result I have PTSD, a disorder that is triggered by ordinary life circumstances. People with PTSD will tell you that it completely debilitates them particularly when they are triggered. A triggering

occurs when something in the present that is otherwise innocuous so takes the person back to the place of trauma by association that they relive the trauma in the present. They instantaneously re-experience the deep pain of the injuries to their psyche caused by the trauma. They relive the terror and pain and that triggers a fight or flight response.

A person with PTSD may be confronted with the task of raising their young child. They do their best but they have this severely debilitating condition. A triggering event causes them to act in a way toward their child that has the effect of terrorizing and wounding the child. In the process, the parent creates trauma in the child and PTSD may result. The trauma is passed down through generations.

Because I know about the sexual trauma that my dad experienced as a teenager as the victim of a pedophile athletic coach at his boarding school in the 1950s, I know the hurtful things that he said and did to me resulted from events that triggered his PTSD or out of mental illness that resulted from his PTSD. It makes it easier for me to understand why he acts the way he does sometimes. I have been able to dialogue more with him about these matters over the past few years to our mutual

benefit. I love both my parents dearly. In fact, I dedicated this book to my dad and my mom.

One of the things that I would like for Real Advisers to contemplate and take steps to address is intergenerational trauma. As I mentioned, this is expressed directly in dysfunctional families and things like systemic racism, both of which are destabilizing factors for our society.

Unresolved trauma creates mental illness. It creates disruptions in our interpersonal relationships, and it impairs the ability to accumulate wealth on a long-term basis. Everyone has experienced trauma at some point in their lives. Many people can overcome it, but many cannot. We all have heard accounts of people suffering from PTSD who are totally unable to live productive lives as part of a community. Many of the homeless fall into this category.

The good news in all of this is that recently there have been profound and significant advances in the science of using psychedelics to treat mental health disorders, most notably, PTSD.

A long-term vision of Real Advisers is to help create and fund retreats that are specifically targeted at helping people heal trauma. We are doing this in a

context of wanting to help people grow and achieve this truly heart-centered wealth that I describe in *The Offer*. This wealth is based on an infinite personal potential that someone with trauma may be unable to see regarding themselves.

As long as you have unprocessed trauma in your life, you will experience a drag against performance in whatever you are trying to achieve. If you have unprocessed trauma in your life that regularly impairs your ability to earn or save or engage in any of those things that you need to do to trend yourself in the direction of wealth accumulation, your trauma must be dealt with before you can become wealthy.

Our long-term vision at Real Advisers is to help people heal trauma. This chapter is not intended to provide you with all the information necessary for you to evaluate for yourself the relative risks and merits of psychedelics as therapeutic tools. Neither is this medical or legal advice. What I write in *The Offer* is one man's opinion based on his own personal experience.

In 2012 I was suicidal. I was going through my divorce and I thought that life had lost meaning because my wife no longer wanted to be married to me. I thought that I would be incapable of ever being a blessing to my

kids as a divorced dad. I literally thought that the world would be better off without me.

Nevertheless, through Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (after spending about a week in a psychiatric hospital) I found some new hope in a way that I never had before then. Dr. Marsha Linehan developed DBT as a form of cognitive behavior therapy based on Buddhist principles of acceptance and mindfulness. Her story itself is remarkable in how she developed DBT to save herself first, and then employed it to help lots of other people including me (through other therapists)! DBT employs concepts of mindfulness and emotional discipline training. It should be taught in high schools.

The training that I received through this therapy has served me well. I employ DBT's core concepts daily and they are a great help to me (particularly when combined with meditation). In 2012, I was directed on a definite path of recovery and it started with DBT. I emphasize this because some people could read what I write in this book and think that I am saying that psychedelics alone are a quick fix for mental health issues. That is not true.

What psychedelics did for me was to reinforce what I learned in DBT, particularly by allowing me to

connect with yoga and meditation in way that I never had.

After I received the DBT therapy, I began to research psychedelics. Prior to that time, I already had experimented with medical cannabis and it had given me great relief from my depressive symptoms, more than anything ever had including numerous prescription psychopharmaceuticals. Some of the most fascinating information I read about psychedelics was research showing that psychedelics (including cannabis) can instigate neurogenesis. Another way of saying this is that ingesting psychedelics can cause you to grow new brain cells.

Of course, in 2012 cannabis and all plant-based psychedelics were illegal to possess in Texas. When you wonder about whether Roland Wiederaenders is a criminal, please remember that by this time, I had spent a week in a psychiatric hospital. In the days before that, I had held a loaded gun to my head, looking in the bathroom mirror where to aim. I was desperate and I was looking for anything that could possibly alleviate my depression and take away my constant suicidal ideations. DBT was helpful but I still struggled.

In late 2012 and into 2013, I had multiple powerful

experiences with psilocybin that were profoundly transformative. My first time consuming four grams of dried psilocybin-containing mushrooms, I experienced an instantaneous shift in my perception. I felt like David writing the Psalms, realizing how God delighted in him and saw him as a beautiful creation independently of anything that David would ever do. Everything was sourced in a creator god that had special awareness of me. I knew what it was like to dance with ecstatic joy before my creator just like David when they brought the ark back to Jerusalem. My experiences with psilocybin (and later Ayahuasca) were among the most immediately transformative ones of my life.

Despite my disclaimer about psychedelics NOT being a quick fix, research has shown that the positive effects that people experience after having ingested entheogens persist for sometimes months and are observable by their friends and acquaintances. This is significant. It is not just me who has noticed the change. If you know any of my best friends, ask them who Roland was in 2012 and what he was like. They can testify to changes, and I believe that the changes have their source in my experiences with psychedelics. Psychedelics saved my life and I am not the only one

who can tell the same story.

Two 2015 Ayahuasca ceremonies were tremendously beneficial to me. In fact, I believe that my T. H. Chalm Bible poetry grew directly out of those two experiences. My poetry is based on books of the Bible, so Ayahuasca drove me artistically to my source, my creator and my God.

The way that this happened was my creation of a backstory for my poetry pseudonym as if “T. H. Chalm” were a real person. In my books, I describe him as an Australian salamander biologist I met at Barton Springs in Austin. In the morning after one of the Ayahuasca ceremonies, I wrote a long poem, “Thucydides Ascending”, about Chalm leaving this earthly realm being taken into heaven just like Elijah in a flaming chariot. I describe Chalm as dying in 2015 and leaving behind thousands of unpublished manuscripts to me in trust for publication.

Why is it surprising that a natural psychedelic medicine would lead me back to my source? Ayahuasca is a brew made by boiling leaves and shredded bark of two different species of Amazonian plants. The resulting “tea” contains a natural MAOI inhibitor and DMT in oral form. DMT is dimethyltryptamine, a

psychedelic chemical substance naturally occurring in many plants and animals. In fact, we have DMT in our brains, and theories suggest that DMT release in our brains while we sleep is related to dreaming. The natural MAOI inhibitor of Ayahuasca allows the orally ingested DMT to cross the blood-brain barrier, or else it would not otherwise be available to the brain where its therapeutic effects occur.

One of the books of the Bible that my T. H. Chalm poetry re-writes is Ecclesiastes. From that perspective, Ayahuasca led me directly to The Offer.

I can say that the careful, intentional, and responsible use of psychedelics drew me closer to my source. I cannot see how that would not happen through the use of natural medicines fundamentally different from the manufactured prescription psychopharmaceuticals that were my only option for so many years.

When I came back to cannabis in 2008, I found relief in a way that I never had. When I had my experiences with psilocybin in 2012, my depression was altered in a fundamental way for the better. For the first time in my life, I could genuinely identify with the notion of God's love for me. I could FEEL that love. I

had the ineffable experience that almost everyone describes when they take psychedelics: the feeling of an unmistakable unifying interconnectedness with the entire universe and a belief that the universe has a benevolence, and that it has a specific awareness of my identity.

Through psychedelics and yoga, I genuinely connected with meditation for the first time in my life. I have only been practicing regular meditation for three and a half years, 15 minutes a day, but even during this short time period, meditation has had a deeply transformative effect on me.

Natural psychedelics have served to reinforce my Christian concept of God, Jesus. I can describe to you in different ways how blessings have flowed from my experiences with psychedelics in 2012 and 2015. My life has grown in abundance in many ways, all culminating in The Offer. The Gospel of Matthew includes a statement from Jesus that even Aleister Crowley agrees with, that “wisdom is proved right by her deeds”.

I initially picked MAPS as a charitable organization I wanted to support when in 2012, I read about a study they were conducting using MDMA in connection with marital therapy. A \$2,500 donation

allowed a married couple to participate in a MDMA-assisted counseling session. When I first read about this therapy, I thought it could have saved my own marriage. This concept inspired me to give and give and continue to give to this great organization. Now in 2020, MAPS funded research that has resulted in the near-FDA approval of MDMA as a therapy for PTSD

As I mentioned, my intention here is not to present all the scientific information and research that has been done in connection with psychedelics. I am not alone in believing that one of the great crimes against science in the 20th and 21st centuries is that these largely plant-based medicines that are remarkably safe continue to remain among the most highly illegal substances under the U.S. federal Controlled Substances Act, classified as more dangerous than cocaine, heroin, and alcohol. We all know and understand that there has been a major shift in thinking about these substances, yet there are many people in the United States who have no firsthand experience with cannabis and other psychedelics. They believe (many times, with willful ignorance=COGNITIVE BIAS) in the lies of the DARE! and Just Say No! anti-drug programs from the 1980s and 1990s that described cannabis and psychedelics

as more dangerous than heroin, meth, or cocaine, and certainly alcohol, which of course is completely legal.

I would challenge anyone to look at Great Britain's leading medical journal, the Lancet, and its 2012 published study classifying the relative risks, harms, and benefits of the most used drugs in the world, including legal drugs like alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine. The study classified the relative harm of illegal "drugs" too, including all of the ones I mentioned above. The Lancet's study concluded that alcohol actually is the most dangerous drug in Britain, more dangerous than heroin or crack cocaine.

Alcohol is a substance that is legal for purchase in some parts of Europe by people as young as 17. Thankfully in the United States you still must be 21 to purchase alcohol. Nevertheless, we all know of the extremely destructive nature of alcohol even when consumed "responsibly". In fact, when you make The Wager and ask me what I think, one of the things I inevitably will discuss with you is your relationship with alcohol. People who abuse alcohol are more likely than not to engage in behavior that will be a drag to their long-term economic performance.

To conclude this chapter, I challenge anybody

who has any doubt about the healing potential of psychedelics to watch the Israeli documentary, *Trip of Compassion*. This documentary follows the lives of three people who each suffered severe trauma as victims. Nevertheless, they were able to overcome the detrimental effects that the trauma had on their lives because of their PTSD. Through the legal MDMA therapy available in Israel, these individuals conquered their PTSD and went on to lead more fulfilling and impactful lives. The turnarounds their lives experienced from overcoming PTSD demonstrated their renewed ability to cultivate the same characteristics that I describe in *The Offer* as trending you towards the accumulation of long-term wealth.

Michael Pollan also has a good book out now that has been getting attention in the popular media called *How To Change Your Mind*. I highly recommend it.

Research MAPS, and I strongly encourage you to support MAPS and other organizations like it that are working to demonstrate the clear, scientifically proven, safe, effectiveness of psychedelics as therapeutic tools to overcome mental illness. With further research in the future, other psychedelics will be used in new ways and with similarly remarkable results as MDMA.

Again, this chapter is not intended to be an exhaustive description of the possibilities of psychedelics and does not constitute medical advice. In the Appendix of The Offer you will find references to online bibliographies from several third-party sources (including MAPS) where you can find additional information about psychedelics.

One of the resources listed in the Appendix is the Yale Manual for Psilocybin-Assisted Therapy of Depression. If you are looking for information about how to treat your depression with psilocybin, I believe that this manual could be extremely helpful to you. There are many places on the internet where you can find it but we are making it available through thchalm.com because of how valuable we believe this information is. It is essential information like this that is necessary for desperate people looking to treat depression with an alternative modality that in my experience and in the experience of many others has much higher healing potential than conventional, prescription psychopharmaceuticals.

I believe that a naturally occurring compound like psilocybin will help you reconnect with your identity in a way that is necessary for real healing. I would contrast

this with the soul and personality numbing effects of the prescription drugs so frequently prescribed for depression and anxiety that were ineffective for me.

I want to mention DBT one more time. After the initial intensive, five-week, four night per week, three hours per night intensive session at the Seton Mind Institute in Austin, I followed up with a talk therapist who was trained in DBT counseling methods. He also employed Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), a psychotherapy treatment designed to alleviate the distress associated with traumatic memories. EMDR was beneficial to me as was the talk therapy that reinforced the concepts learned from DBT.

Both my therapist then (and the psychiatrist I was seeing when I began taking medical cannabis in 2008) were open to my use of cannabis and psilocybin. They of course warned me about the legal issues, but they did not discourage me or tell me that cannabis or psychedelics would be harmful medically or contraindicated by my prescribed medicines. To his credit, my psychiatrist never told me that the psychopharmaceuticals he prescribed were contraindicated by my simultaneous use of cannabis.

This is confirmed in the medical literature. The reason I include this paragraph is to encourage you to discuss psilocybin and other psychedelics with your counselors, therapists, and psychiatrists.

At the same time, I also would strongly encourage you to find another counselor, therapist, or psychiatrist if you believe that resistance to or discouragement of your use of psychedelics is related to antiquated and ignorant notions about the safety of these natural substances.

The same Lancet study that ranked alcohol as the most dangerous drug lists cannabis and psychedelics as about as potentially harmful as caffeine when you take away the potential harm caused simply by the fact that cannabis and psychedelics are frequently illegal to possess.

The pharmaceutical industry is shaking in its boots about psilocybin because they will have a very difficult time making money from a chemical that is so readily available in nature. The same is true with cannabis as medicine. The pharmaceutical industry certainly will do everything they can to discourage mental health workers from taking a favorable stance toward natural psychedelics because that favorable view will hurt the industry's profits.

There are certain instances when psychedelics are not recommended (particularly with people suffering from schizophrenia), but often, you will be discouraged from psychedelics by your mental health professional for the wrong and not the right reasons.