



Conscious Life presents

The Third Wave of Psychedelics

Guest: Paul Austin

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[00:00:09] Alexander Beiner

Our next guest is Paul Austin. Paul is an entrepreneur in the psychedelic space and also a pioneer in the area of microdosing. His work on microdosing has been featured in the New York Times, Rolling Stone, and WebMD.

Paul is the founder of a couple of companies in the psychedelic space, most notably, Third Wave, which is a very popular psychedelic education resource. Really looking forward to speaking to Paul, and here's our conversation.

Paul Austin, good to see you again. Thanks for coming on.

Paul Austin

It's great to be here, Ali. Thanks for having me in for the conference.

Alexander Beiner

Paul, I thought a good place to start would be this concept of the third wave, which is something that you've made a whole organization with that name, but I think it's a really nice entry point for everyone watching because the psychedelics, through history, have gone through these different phases. I really like the way you describe it, the way you break it down. Maybe you could take us through what was the first wave, what was the second wave, and how do you see now the third wave of psychedelics?

Paul Austin

The first wave was the indigenous and ancient use of psychedelics. I use both of those words with intention. Indigeneity, indigenous peoples have worked with psychedelics for as long as 15,000 years. The archeological evidence goes back, and that's specifically with peyote in Mexico, but also with psilocybin mushrooms, with ayahuasca, with yopo. There's a long lineage of Indigenous use of psychoactive plant medicines, sometimes for healing purposes, and other times for performance purposes.

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And ancient, I use that word because in ancient Greece, thinkers like Plato, Aristotle, leaders like Marcus Aurelius participated in the Eleusinian Mysteries, which took part as the ritual around the God Dionysus, and they drank a potion, a beverage called kykeon, which had ergot in it. And ergot is the same thing that LSD is made from.

So these incredibly influential philosophers, thinkers, and leaders of what we perceive today as civilization, Western civilization, were informed on their path by intentional psychedelic use. That's the, I would say, theory at this point in time.

Now, when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, a lot of these mysteries were shut down because they were not in service of or in worship of Jesus and the Christian faith.

A lot of it went underground, and it went underground for 1,700 years. And in the 1930s, 1940s, LSD was invented. We discovered its psychoactive properties. Thousands of clinical papers were published on the efficacy of LSD in the 1950s and '60s. And then, through Timothy Leary, through Richard Alpert, through Ken Kesey, The Grateful Dead, LSD quickly became available to everyone. It was legal until 1966. A lot of people were taking a lot of LSD.

It was also associated with the Vietnam War, the anti-war movement, and the protesters. To shut it down, California, I think, made it illegal in 1966. The United States made it illegal in 1968, and then the UN made it illegal in 1971. So it ushered us back into these dark ages. It's only in the last 10 or 15 years that more clinical research has come out. Cannabis has been legally recreationally made available, at least in the United States and Canada, and a lot of influential people are talking about it.

We find ourselves in, what I contextualize as, this third wave of psychedelics. And the crux of it is, how do we take the best practices and lineage, rituals, ceremony, animus traditions from the first wave of psychedelics and marry it with a lot of the precision science, objectivity, even safety and ethics that are part of our more current regulated, or sometimes unregulated, medical framework.

Because anyone who's done deep psychedelic work will know that getting this prescribed by a psychiatrist and sitting in an office chair, it's potentially not the optimal way to use this. And yet there are a lot of people who, for them, it's an optimal starting place. I think a lot of the ritual, a lot of the ceremony as we get deeper, potentially, into working with psychedelics, there's more and more of that that opens up.

In the meantime, a lot of people in this third wave, they're looking for solutions to help, to help mental health, to help with depression, to help with addiction, PTSD.

We're in, I would consider, a landmark year for psychedelics. This is the year that the FDA will approve, very likely, MDMA-assisted psychotherapy, will become medically available, rescheduled in the United States. It's also looking likely that California will legalize plant medicines and psychedelics. I think these two very likely outcomes of 2024 are really going to blast the doors wide open on this psychedelic renaissance.

[00:06:04] Alexander Beiner

I agree. Let's hope so. I think it's a really interesting time to be having conversations like this.

I thought it'd be interesting as well to hear you talk a bit about how people are engaging with psychedelics outside the clinic. You just touched on that a little bit, but when I first became interested in psychedelics, it was much more niche, as I'm sure it was when you were first interested in it as well. And really a grassroots culture, people growing their own mushrooms, people discussing philosophy and their experiences on internet forums, pre-social media.

So what's going on now? Because you're really connected to lots of different ecosystems in the psychedelic world. How do you see people using psychedelics outside of, let's say, even healing? What else are people using them for?

Paul Austin

Yeah, what are the non-traditional ways or methods? The one that I talk the most about and focus on quite a bit is microdosing. You could even call that low dosing, where you take low doses of psilocybin mushrooms or LSD, those are the two most common, two or three times a week for a period of 30 days, 60 days, 90 days, there's a set protocol that you follow.

What that allows for is you can still go about your everyday reality, you can still do the things that you need to do. It's sub-intoxicating, so in no ways are you journeying, in no ways are you intoxicated. But there is an enhancement element. You feel a little bit more people have better energy, they have a better mood, they are a little less reactive, less fatigued at the gym. It can help with things like depression. I think that is...

People are mostly just almost exclusively because it isn't really legal anywhere, there are a couple of jurisdictions where in the Netherlands, there's legal microdosing because of truffles. But in most places, people are just doing this on their own underground. There was a Reddit forum for microdosing that in 2017 had like 20,000 members, I want to say. If you look today, I don't know the exact number, but it's probably 400,000 members.

There's been a really interesting community that's developed around it, so much so that I actually started a non-profit called the Microdosing Collective, where we're looking at how do we create a legal regulated marketplace for psilocybin microdosing supplements. So people can buy this legally. They know that it's third-party tested, it's trustworthy, all these sorts of things.

I think that's one interesting element. The other aspect that I would point to would be ayahuasca and deeper plant medicine work. Ayahuasca is a tea from the Amazon, and it's made from a DMT-containing leaf and a vine that has an MAOI. When you combine the two... You know this, I see you nodding along, you're very familiar with this. But when you combine the two, it's a very psychoactive experience, a very psychedelic experience.

There are a lot of people who are going to ayahuasca. There are a lot for healing, specifically for PTSD, for addiction. Ayahuasca was often used for this shamanic doctoring in Indigenous Amazonian communities and tribes. But more and more founders, entrepreneurs, leaders,

creatives, visionaries starting to work with ayahuasca and this deep plant medicine in legal retreats that are in jurisdictions almost always outside the United States.

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They might be in Costa Rica, they might be in Mexico, they could be in South America. There are more and more, I would say, communities forming of people who are interested in, not just the healing benefits of psychedelics, but how can psychedelics help us to step into our full potential? How can they help us live a very conscious life? How can they be great tools and modalities that are in our toolkit?

When I look at this, I often think about psychedelics as a skill. It takes practice, it takes exploration, it takes trial and error, that these aren't without risks, that there are certain risks in engaging with these substances, and that risk depends on the specific substance. It depends on the setting, it depends on a lot of factors.

Knowing that, let's say, context, then we can make a decision about how we can, based on my situation, based on what I'm going through, what might be most useful or effective for me at this point in time? Because I think the other thing that psychedelics, which I've seen time and time again, is that in the clinical regulated format, it's very particular and specific. There has to be a specific diagnosis, and if you meet that criteria, then you can get access to this treatment.

But there are a lot of people who don't necessarily fit very strict criteria who could benefit from psychedelics. They're incredibly safe substances. Literally, psilocybin mushrooms, I think, are the safest drug, substance, legal or illegal that we have available to us. What's beautiful about them is you can grow your own mushrooms. Like you mentioned, with Third Way, we sell a mushroom grow kit.

If you live in the United States, we'll send a grow kit to your house. You have to buy the spore separately because we can't sell both together, that would be illegal. But you can buy the spore separately, and in six weeks, you can have your own mushrooms. Put it in a shoe box, put it in a drawer. All of a sudden, it's like, how are we empowering more and more people to take healing and sovereignty back into their own hands.

Also encouraging accountability within that, that when we step outside of some of these more clinical and regulated formats, it's helpful to have a coach, a guide, a practitioner, a friend, a group, a community, that's more and more bubbling up. It's still quite early, so a lot of people do feel isolated or disconnected, or "I live in this small town", or "I don't know anyone".

What I love to tell people is we have a free community platform at Third Wave where people from all over the world are coming and meeting. And there's a lot of local psychedelic societies in various cities across the globe, there's more and more events. So my recommendation is to go to a conference, go to an event if this is something you're interested in.

A lot of the people that I meet who are doing plant medicine work, or are in the psychedelic space are great people. They're generally quite welcoming and quite kind. There's a certain path that working with psychedelics opens up. And a lot of these people, I mean, not everyone, you always

have your weird or bad characters or like any other. But a lot of good heart-centered people who really want to see the world become a better place.

[00:12:46] Alexander Beiner

Yeah, it strikes me listening to you talk how important education is right now, at this time in history, when a lot more people are encountering psychedelics. I agree, psilocybin, for example, the LD50, which is the amount of a drug that will kill, I think it's 50% of rats who take it at a particular dose, the LD50 of psilocybin mushrooms is the equivalent of bath tubs full of mushrooms that no human being could conceivably eat. But of course, there are mental health risks, which we should point out when people don't use them well, and especially contraindications like bipolar and psychosis.

And there is also a huge need... I agree, there's an issue if everyone has to go through the clinical model and the medicalized model, that's going to mean most people don't ever get to access it, either for money or just because they don't hit criteria.

As a director of a psychedelic charity, an education charity, Breaking Convention, we think about this all the time. How do we best educate people? What resources? You mentioned a few, and obviously Third Wave have a community. That's a great one. Is there anything you found useful for people, anything else? People might be looking at this huge world of psychedelic information and different books, and different podcasts and whatnot. Where do you suggest people start? How should they approach that process of educating themselves?

Paul Austin

I think there's three key steps. I would say there's education, there's the provider that you choose to work with, and there's the community that you are plugged into. You really want to look for what is the medicine that I want to use? If I want to use that medicine, which provider do I choose to work with? Is it a psilocybin retreat center in Jamaica? Is it ayahuasca? There's a lot of underground circles, but doing some vetting and making sure you can find a great provider.

Then just being mindful of the community that you're entering, or the people that you're sitting with, or how you're integrating afterwards. How do those peak experiences with psychedelics transform into something that's more, I would say, tangible in the long term and more meaningful in the long term?

Community is really important for that. Book-wise, I'm happy to give a shout-out to James Fadiman, who wrote *The Psychedelic Explorer's Guide*. I think that's a fantastic starting book. Michael Pollan's, *How to Change Your Mind*, is also great. I wrote a book called *Mastering Microdosing*. So if someone is particularly interested in microdosing, it's a good initial primer to become familiar with it.

Really coming at it from, I think so often, especially in the psychedelic work, we come into this work with, I would even say, a deep unmet need to some degree that we feel is necessary to live a healed, healthy, vibrant life.

There's something about the intelligence of these different medicines that we work with that help to heal certain things. I think more than anything, the practical hands-on experience of just going

and doing the work, so to say. Trying a microdosing protocol, going to a ketamine clinic, ideally an integrative ketamine clinic where they offer preparation and post. Signing up for that psilocybin journey. Or if you're low income, if you can't afford to pay \$5,000 for travel and a retreat, grow your own mushrooms, and explore what that could look like with microdosing or in solo journey work.

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I think as long as you pay attention to those three key elements, the educational process, just doing your due diligence, finding a great provider, having a great community afterwards, all those are important things. And then the final thing that I'll say is, as you're exploring that route... There's what I call the five key elements.

It's assessment, assessing yourself in terms of what's the right fit, what do I need? You may need to have conversations with a psychiatrist or a therapist or a practitioner or a coach, or there could be someone that you have a conversation or discussion with that is knowledgeable about this.

Preparation, so how do you prepare for that experience, if you want to move through with it? How are you prepared for it? If you choose to work with a coach, therapist, or guide. The facilitation of the actual experience is very important, the amount of medicine that you take, the length of the overall experience, the setting of the experience. And then integration and microdosing. Integration is after we have these high dose experiences, how do we, in the power of community, lean into that? To feel healed and more healthy. And then microdosing is a great tool.

For anyone who's looking to get into this work, or explore it, I would say if you use those five key elements, I'll say them again. Assessment is the first one. How do we assess? Preparation. How do we prepare ourselves? Facilitation or the experience itself, the medicine. What's that like? Integration and microdosing. If you use those as five key points on that trajectory of psychedelic experience, what you want to do is, you really want to find, if you're looking to work with a provider or a clinic or a center, you really want to ask them about all five of those aspects.

What do they do for assessment? What do they do for preparation? What is the medicine experience like? How do they support you with integration? Are they knowledgeable about microdosing? What does that look like? If you can ask good questions about those five, I think that can go a long way in the discernment process around who might I want to work with, how might I want to work with this? These sorts of things.

Alexander Beiner

Linked to that is another point you raised before, which I think is something that I focus on a lot and care about a lot, which is psychedelics as a skill. That the process of learning how to effectively go into these spaces, know ourselves, come with a curiosity discernment, is a skill set.

I'd love to hear you talk a little bit about what you feel are some of the core skills that people need in a peak, an altered state experience, perhaps not just microdosing, but more of a journey.

Paul Austin

How in-depth and detailed should I...?

[00:19:23] Alexander Beiner

That's a great question. Yeah, medium, medium.

Paul Austin

Through Third Wave, we've developed what I would call our model of transformation. There's five pillars that are part of that model. The intention with it is to create a framework, whereas people are doing their own psychedelic work, so you can see how psychedelics are helping to change them on a fundamental everyday level, and not so much focused on the clinical side.

Like I mentioned, we, a few years ago, started the Psychedelic Coaching Institute. We've trained a number of coaches and practitioners on how to work with psychedelics. And this framework started to come out of that process of inquiry, of discussion. What does it look like to work with psychedelics in a non-clinical framework for leadership, performance, well-being, awareness, relationships, life purpose, these sorts of things.

So those five are awareness. How do we come into greater awareness? How can psychedelics, especially in living a conscious life, help us become more aware of our shadows? How can they help us become more aware of the traumas that influence and inform us? How can they help us become more aware of the bliss and joy and awe that's in life, the beauty of everyday life, the miraculous gratitude that we have for existence? I think one of the key things is how can psychedelics help bring us into greater awareness?

The second thing is self-regulation. How do we regulate our nervous systems? Oftentimes, we spend time in this sympathetic fight-or-flight state. We're overly stressed, we're pushing it. A lot of dopamine, a lot of caffeine. How can we shift into more of a parasympathetic state? And how can intentional psychedelic work help us to remember what it feels to be in that rest and digest state? To have a regulated nervous system, to make choices and decisions from a very calm and centered and equanimous sense rather than a reactive or inflamed sense of being. So the second thing is nervous system regulation. How do we regulate our nervous system?

The third thing is purpose, our 'why'. Why are we here? What is the greater intention of our mission here? What do I, as an individual, want to create and contribute to the world? What feels like it's my call, it's my vocation, it's what I'm here to do? What really motivates me and inspires me. And it's usually a combination of your gifts, what you're best at, which can sometimes... We're discovering our gifts every day.

New gifts come online and we become aware of them. But as we discover those gifts, how do we create an alignment between those gifts and what we create in the external world? How can that help to positively impact others? Whether that's coaching, whether that's therapy, whether that is art, whether it's cooking, whether it's coding. There's so many outlets for that. But can we find a greater alignment between our gifts and what we want to create in the world?

The fourth thing is relationships. And that's, once we know the thing we want to create and bring into the world, who do we do that in a relationship with? Who are the business partners that we choose? Who are the advisors that we choose? Who are the people that we hire? Who are the

people that we intentionally choose to be around as part of that greater gift that wants to move forward?

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The final one is then what's the greater collective asking for? What wants to emerge? As an individual, we all have a very important part to play. We are sovereign, we are creative, we are unique, and we're part of this much bigger organism.

This is something that psychedelics help us become attuned to, or aware of, is this interconnection between ourselves and nature, or ourselves and the environment, or ourselves and our community. How can we attune and listen to what wants to emerge and therefore align this deeper purpose and path with the greater emergence of what wants to move through?

The collective, I would say that's deeper. Some of the ayahuasca medicine work is very relevant for that. But the first few that I mentioned, cultivating greater awareness, nervous system regulation, our deeper 'why', those three, I think, medicine work brings you immediately into a recognition of the importance of those three. Once we really heal within, once we get ourselves back to baseline, once we are resourced and capable, then it's, who do I want to do this with, and how might this contribute to the larger evolution of humanity?

Alexander Beiner

Really nice to explain, thank you. And very useful. That last point about the deeper interconnectedness, that's something that we see in the psychedelic research as, let's say, improving as really coming online in people after, not always, but very often after a psychedelic experience in the sense of being connected to, and part of, a greater cosmos. I think that's such an important aspect to it.

It leads into the last thing I want to ask you about, which is when an individual takes a psychedelic, that experience can come up and we can really reframe who and what we think we are and what we think matters. We're, right now in 2024, going to this reality where the collective is going to have a dose of psychedelics, so to speak. We're going to see a lot more access to psychedelics. The stigmas are falling away. What is your hope for how that evolves? What would you like to see coming out of this process of psychedelics going mainstream?

Paul Austin

Well, on the one hand, I'd love to see immediately less people committing suicide, veterans that get the support and help that they need, people who struggle with major depressive disorder, treatment-resistant depression, people who have really nasty addictions. I'd love to see how psychedelics can make an immediate and pretty impactful entryway into psychedelics that way. Sorry, into culture that way.

I think my most initial hope is, how do we see a reduction in mental health issues and diagnosis and rates? I would say that's number one. Number two would be how does, let's say, microdosing in particular become accessible and available through a... It wouldn't fully be like a cannabis dispensary model, but through somewhat of a regulated model, but that doesn't require you

necessarily to be with a guide or a facilitator. What will be the case in the FDA, or what will potentially have been the case in Oregon, and some of these other states. I think there's a lot of efficacy for low doses of psychedelics. I think if there's enough education that these should be made broadly available to people who want to use them in a safe and regulated format.

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I think within 3-5 years, we'll see that become quite available. That I see as the next... For me, it's FDA approval in 2024 for MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for PTSD. Okay, we're starting to see the next 3 years of reduction in mental health. 3-5 years out, we're seeing the availability of microdosing. More and more people are becoming aware of it, they've tried it, they understand its benefits.

And then I think farther out, and this is where I go a little bit more vision, is centers, retreat centers, land projects that both provide retreats and medicine, but also have communities associated with them. I think there's an intelligence, there's this archaic intelligence, this Indigenous, I would even say, intelligence that a lot of these psychedelic plant medicines elicit or reawaken within us. Terence McKenna, who some of your listeners may have heard of, called this the Archaic Revival. If we step fully into that, well, how do we better track a lot of our set and setting? How does our set and setting actually reflect biologically the way that we lived for tens of thousands of years.

Now, it can't just be that. It also has to be science and technology, and remote work, and cryptocurrency and blockchain, and AI and automation. What I'm really interested in is what happens at the intersection of an archaic revival of these Indigenous or animus traditions that we have as a human species with this 21st century decentralizing technological mycelial infrastructure that's developing around Bitcoin and around DeFi, and around all these other... There's a lot more I'm sure you could speak to Web3, DAO, whatever you want to call it.

I think that's the question that I'm exploring now is, do psychedelics, as more people work with psychedelics, will that help to create a bridge between these two worlds? If we have more founders, creatives, leaders who get in touch with a deeper intelligence through psychedelic work, how does that inform the artificial intelligence that we make? How does that inform the way that we treat work? How does that inform the set and setting that we choose to live in? I really think psychedelics will have this, at first slow, but then exponential impact, the intelligence of it, in broader culture at large within the next 10, 20, 30 years.

Not to mention how it can help with resilience, how it can help with adaptability, how it can help to learn new things, all of which are going to become necessary as our typical structures that we're used to die and wither away. I would argue that we're going through a pretty massive period of death. Death, I would say, particularly to industrial culture and a rebirth into something that's much more regenerative. I think psychedelics can help us to make that transition in a ideally smoother and more graceful way.

Alexander Beiner

Yes, nicely said. Totally agree with that. The process of death and rebirth is so fundamentally an aspect of a psychedelic experience for so many people as well. It's so fitting that we're getting mainstreaming now at this time, and perhaps not a coincidence.

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Paul, thank you so much for this. It's been a pleasure.

Paul Austin

This has been fun, Ali. Thanks so much for creating a platform. If your listeners want to follow up, send me a note. I'm on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) @PaulAustin3w. I'm pretty active on Instagram and X, I guess, formerly known as Twitter.

And then Third Wave is www.TheThirdWave.co. We have a newsletter, I have a podcast. It's a great starting point for people who are fairly new to this and just want to get a lay of the land of the psychedelic ecosystem.

Alexander Beiner

Yeah, absolutely. Definitely recommend that as a port of call for sure. Thank you, and see you soon.