



Conscious Life presents

Preparing and Integrating Psychedelic Experience

Guest: Shannon Myers

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[00:00:13] Meagen Gibson

Welcome to this interview. I'm Meagen Gibson, your conference co-host.

Today, I'm speaking with Shannon Myers, a trauma-trained counselor and integrative mental health professional with a master of science in counseling and lived experience of complex trauma. She's also a psychedelic integration specialist and a somatic-experiencing intermediate practitioner. Shannon has served tens of thousands of clients and is an expert at systems change, collaboration, innovation, and trauma-informed practices.

She loves working with those who work with psychedelic users and facilitating the trauma-trained preparation and integration of psychedelics in folks with mental health histories, trauma, and those who have difficult and traumatic experiences.

Shannon Myers, thank you so much for being with us today.

Shannon Myers

Thanks so much for having me.

Meagen Gibson

I wanted to start off by talking about preparation and integration. What is the preparation phase of planning for a psychedelic experience, and why is it so important?

[00:01:14] Shannon Myers

That's a good question. Preparation is often not thought of as part of integration, but it's the front side of integration. From a harm reduction and a safety standpoint, I believe it's the piece of obviously preparing for a psychedelic experience. A lot of times it's just considered, oh, just the experience.

All aspects of the experience are important, but the preparation, if we're looking to heal mental health or looking to heal trauma, we want to make sure that it is as successful as possible, making sure that someone's not retraumatized, that their mental health symptoms aren't exacerbated.

There are so many things when I'm working with people that I'm looking for as far as hallmarks, as far as are you ready? I'm checking off boxes to make sure because I am really, really, really big on harm reduction. A lot of times people come to psychedelics and they've gone through some stuff. To arrive at psychedelics, someone has gone through some stuff and they've probably tried a lot of things to heal, and maybe the trauma is pretty significant or complex. I just want to make sure everybody's safe for their experience.

Meagen Gibson

It's interesting because I was just talking with a research expert yesterday about safety and the principles of safety, and talking through just the ways that psychedelics, as we understand them, can give people an opportunity to experience safety without anything changing in their circumstances or what happened to them changing.

There's this moment of being able to feel and experience what safety feels like and remember what safety feels like. And yet in the preparation phase, what indicates readiness to experience it? Because as we know, and hopefully people listening at home also have this information, that there are no guarantees in a psychedelic experience. When I say safety, I'm talking relative. There are no guarantees, there is no control in a psychedelic experience as far as what your actual experience is, right?

Shannon Myers

Exactly. There's no guarantee, and it's all really individualized. There's typically this expectation versus experience. The experience can be something that is personal. Maybe you're working through some personal things, but some of the natures of what sometimes folks are working through are intergenerational, ancestral, collective, related to the Earth. Maybe they're in a group, so it could be connected to the other participants.

It could be personal, then it can expand to the trans-personal. Which is a very expansive experience. A lot of times, folks don't have any context for that. But to your point, I love that a researcher was saying maybe someone can re-experience safety. That felt sense of safety and through a psychedelic, how beautiful. I love that because that's possible.

Meagen Gibson

I thought of that because what you were saying about, if somebody comes to psychedelics, it's not because that was like a whim, like, "Oh, it sounds fun". They've usually tried a lot of things before

that and have heard that this might be something that can move the needle a little bit in their healing and growth or recovery.

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That aspect of... Because especially if you have PTSD or CPTSD or other, even traumatic brain injuries, things that accumulated over time, I think what most people who haven't experienced trauma don't understand is that that felt feeling of fundamental safety or being able to touch things that make life worth living, like curiosity and exploration and fun.

These things that make our lives really rich and meaningful aren't things that we have touched with if we've been through trauma and haven't been able to move the needle on recovery. So that's what my limited understanding and research has shown me about the potential of psychedelics that I think is so beautiful. But at the same time, I'm really glad that we're having this conversation because there is intention and preparation, and then all the things that are out of our control, as the old saying goes, here are the things that are in my control, and then there's the whole bevy of things that are outside of my control. And my job is to do something with all of those parts, right?

Shannon Myers

Exactly. There's certainly consciousness explorers that are more apt to curiosity because there's different types of ways people come to psychedelics, but a lot of times it's through healing and mental health and trauma and those sorts of things. One of the things that we actually do have within our control is doing really good preparation. That's something we have within our control. I go really, really hard and deep on the preparation because we can. I mean, we can do that.

A lot of times, too, it's digging into... All the stuff that's out there, it's like it's a set and setting, and I'm not going to go into that because there's so much information on that. I'm going to go into some stuff that people don't really know so much about.

One piece of the set and setting is, what is your thoughts on the war on drugs? How is that showing up in your system? Is there a part of you that is not open to this experience? What has been your social conditioning around this? What is that in your support system? What are their thoughts on that, too? Because oftentimes, there can be some shame elements if we don't really look at what are the belief systems and the conditioning around the psychedelic experience in the healing.

We want to journey into the belief system and to see what opportunities are there. Do you have a good idea of your trauma history and the traumas in your family, in your culture, in your society, in the collective? Because psychedelic experiences are journeys, and you can go in and out, depending on the dosage in the medicine of your personal, the micro to the macro. You can go way, way outside of that and then come back.

We want to just have a good idea of maybe what you may encounter, especially if the intention is around something very specific. If it's around something very specific, I want to get to know, and help you get to know what those parts are around that thing that's very specific and doing good work.

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Let's say you're going into anxiety or OCD, those are collections that you may be spending timeless time, infinite, maybe even a lifetime within that part. We want to get to intimately know that so that there is more and more... Because a lot of times, facilitators and therapists will say, "Surrender". But that is to someone with trauma history to surrender, that's oftentimes...

There's almost no other way to say it, but at the same time, that's a felt sense. We're going to have to do some pre-work, perhaps around what might that feel like to journey into that aspect of you that's maybe behind the shadows or that's contained, that's more repressed, and to be able to acknowledge that in the forefront and start working with that because that's likely an aspect that may show up. I always am getting into the work before the work because we have to in some scenarios.

Meagen Gibson

Yeah, absolutely. As you were talking, I was thinking it's preparing for the unexpected. Let's get the landscape of who and what might show up. We won't spend too much time anywhere, but let's just get the lay of the land.

Then the other thing, and this is an oversimplification of an analogy, but somebody who has an anxious disposition like myself, if I had a job interview, I would practice driving to the location and figure out, is there a door person and where's the best place to park? I would rehearse. I would talk through all the steps outside of the actual interview itself and then prepare for the interview, so that on the day, I wouldn't have all of these other things coming up.

That's obviously not equivalent to a psychedelic experience, but this thinking about and having somebody say, "Have you considered your relationship to psychedelic drugs and what other people's perspectives are?" That alone is like, let's consider the actual treatment itself, the set and the setting, as you said, our previously conceived beliefs, our family's beliefs, our other traumas that we're carrying.

I read an interesting statistic the other day about, and I don't remember the exact numbers, just that they were very, very far apart, but 90% of people had a poor perception of psychedelic drugs, but that 60% of people had a positive perception of psychedelic-assisted therapy. It's the context really changing people's perception of the same thing just based on the different modalities, set and setting, and intention of use.

You're right, those things can really play into a person's experience, I assume. You said something earlier, too, about trying to protect people's mental health. Is what you just described part of that, or are there other things involved in helping people protect their mental health as they go on one of these experiences?

Shannon Myers

Well, there's so many things that I consider. Knowing someone's mental health and trauma history, medications, their family history, all that's really important. You really want to match the psychedelic to what someone's trying to heal. Not all psychedelics are for all people and for all mental health states. Folks have got to consider medication interactions and dosages I mean, all of

that is just safety 101. Any psychedelic therapist is going to be evaluating that and taking a look at that.

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And two, and some people, one of the things we've got to manage is the expectations of reality. A lot of times someone will be on a medication for a really, really long time and they'll get off it real fast for the hope of healing from the psychedelic experience. Sometimes it's just too fast. Sometimes it's too fast and then it's just... That's another thing is the sense of urgency. If there's a real sense of urgency and a real rush, then we've got to really slow it down because there's a part that's trying to go real fast, and there's some trauma physiology that's really activated.

The tendency of good trauma work slow and low still applies to psychedelics. We want to make sure that someone is set up for success without... If someone's been using a medication for 20 years, we want to go a little bit slower with that. We want to make sure that some skills are in place and those types of things that are just necessary to be included.

Then there's things like support and time. That's often not considered. It's like, okay, so if I want to heal this trauma, do you have the time to recover and heal from that? Because trauma healing takes time. The psychedelic experience, some of that trauma physiology is going to lift. It's just going to lift and it's going to be processed. But if you've uncovered something that was outside of your conscious awareness beforehand, that's a lot to handle and to deal with.

We have got to make sure that folks have a realistic viewpoint as to, what if what comes up is your relationship isn't working, your work isn't working, where you live isn't working? Those are big things that we have to sit with for a while before decisions are made. Because sometimes, psychedelics are very metaphorical and symbolic and not to be taken literally.

We want to make sure someone has support. A lot of times, when someone doesn't have the professional and personal support, they can have this transformational experience but feel really isolated after. So some healings happen, but then not because they don't have the social context to talk about it with anyone. There's just so many things that the preparation phase really is looking at.

Meagen Gibson

That's really interesting. Support and time is something that I think people very much overlook, and I'm so glad that you brought it up because just like if you had a major surgery or a major medical operation or procedure, 2-6 weeks minimum before you're doing heavy lifting, literally or something like that.

If you think about that and emotional work and somatic work and the way that your brain has been impacted by the psychedelic drugs and neuropathways and things like that forming and that you would want to give yourself some gentle time. I do this on Friday and Monday. I go back to my really extraordinarily stressful job where I'm doing... Then at home, I've got all these roles. It's like, how can we recruit support and space in the way that we have available to us? Yeah, it would be such a different experience.

[00:15:25] Shannon Myers

Exactly. This is psyche and soul surgery. It's the same. We're looking at it in the same way that it's going to take time. The preparation with the psychedelic state, you're already in the experience if you're preparing. Stuff's already moving. Stuff is moving into your conscious awareness for you to heal. That is the nature of how our psyche and how our soul works. We actually don't have to rush the process. We want to, as much as possible, slow it down and enjoy it and to plan for the most successful outcomes.

A psychedelic experience is often listed as the most transformational or expansive experience beyond the birth of a child in anyone's life. We don't want to just go into it willy-nilly without checking off all the boxes of safety and social support and shadow work and trauma recognition and mental health support and time and space and energy and all the things that go into really good recovery work.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. You mentioned shadow work, and I wanted to talk about that for a moment. For people that aren't aware of what shadow work is, what is that and why is that so important, both in, I'm assuming, the preparation and afterwards in the integration phase?

Shannon Myers

Shadow work is an important period, and it's especially important when you're in more transpersonal spaces and looking at yourself from an expansive view because shadow work is integrating all aspects of oneself. Especially the shadow is the aspects that we repress and deny of ourself and therefore the other person.

We can also project that onto other people, often in projections like, I'm not okay with this part of me, so therefore I'm not okay with that aspect of you. There's the projected shadow, and then there's the golden shadow. The golden shadow is you are putting somebody on and you're projecting hero, saver, all these archetypes on another person.

Again, these things are beyond our conscious awareness. Like Jung said, we're making the unconscious conscious with shadow work. When you are whole and you are your authentic self, you are self, capital S Self, meeting another person, capital S Self. We're all interconnected with capital Self, into one, into the whole. Mystics have always said, we're all just mirrors. That's really, really, really important because when you're in an expansive state of awareness and consciousness, there are so many levels of protection and armoring that are completely unavailable or turned up times a thousand in a psychedelic experience.

The shadow is something that is collective, and it's personal too, the macro and the micro, always. It's so important to be discerning of that and to do shadow work before because there's usually an aspect of every psychedelic experience and every trauma process processing, that there's some level of shadow work.

There's tons of methods to do shadow work. I prefer to do it along the lines of internal family systems and parts work and somatic work. I combine somatic experiencing and parts work, and it's called Self-Embodiment. That's typically what I do. But if you don't have access to someone like

me, go and google shadow prompt questions. There's so many lists out there and you can journal them. I have a shadow workbook here, *The Shadow Work Journal*. I think someone got this on Etsy.

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There's so many tools out there so you can get to know yourself and therefore be a more compassionate member of society because once you've made this, all of these things, these cobwebs, if you've broken them all down inside of you, then you can more connect to another.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. It was funny because earlier I had written... While you were talking, I had written 'Parts? IFS', because I was hearing all this big Schwartz language and Internal Family Systems coming out of you. So I was curious. So that's great because...

And parts work is so beautiful, especially in this context, because so many people have, and we don't have to get into all the parts work jargon, but the parts of ourselves that we cordon off and we're like, "I'm not going to deal with that". That's trauma histories or even just parts of ourselves that we just don't like or that formulated during parts of our becoming who we are today that we are proud of, or that we have shame around.

To just be able to honor and allow all those parts to have a say in the giant experience that we're probably going to have and get everybody on board, if you will. "Okay, we're doing this. Who's got concerns? Please come to the table and let me hear your voice". So that's great.

So let's talk about mental health and the precautions of psychedelic experience, regardless of how much preparation you do, can you worsen mental health symptoms by using psychedelics?

Shannon Myers

Absolutely. So with trauma, and that's my specialty, anything that can heal one person can harm another person. Just because psychedelics work for your neighbor or your friend, that doesn't necessarily mean that it's going to work for you. At the same time, they can be profoundly healing if the preparation is done because we can make a lot of assumptions and we can plan for the best outcomes.

With a really skilled practitioner, therapist, shaman, facilitator, they're going to know how to help you prepare. They're just going to know how to help you prepare. Mental health symptoms can worsen because oftentimes, what arrives is there's excitement and fear with a psychedelic experience in typically these expansive states.

If you're working through a mental health condition, psychedelics are the complete opposite of almost everything in Western society, where Western society is suppression of symptoms. Psychedelics walking you right through, not only walking through, you are embodied in that part, in that mental health. It's timeless. At higher doses of certain psychedelics, you are in your mental health.

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If someone's not prepared for that, or if the proper preparation isn't there, or there's an element that's missing, that can be a lot. If the integration isn't happening, and if there's not someone that's very skilled with trauma that's supporting you or with mental health that's supporting you, and that's good at the pieces, exactly what you're working with, a specialist in that, it may be really hard because oftentimes...

Everything is workable. Everything is workable within the right conditions. That's my job is to make sure the condition with the preparation and the integration are there, no matter what. Because I'm preparing folks, we know this part, and on the other side, this part is showing up. We're going to work with that because it's expansive and non-ordinary reality feels more real than reality oftentimes. It's this huge experience to journey into.

If the integration isn't done, and certainly there are some individuals that are naturally really good at doing their own integration, consciousness explorers, wonderful. Other individuals with trauma and mental health, if they're struggling and they don't have a strong grasp on a lot of their tools and things like that, integration is so helpful with someone that is very, very skilled at what you're looking to master. Because without those pieces of it they're, especially in the Western world, because some of these medicines are more soulful, expansive, and they come from indigenous cultures that are more collective, that are more realizing some of the things, the interconnection of all.

That can be a really, really foreign thing for an American to encounter in their healing when they're journeying into the interconnection of things, or if someone has a very rigid viewpoint on their worldview, because someone may go into a psychedelic experience with their openness score as maybe at 15%, and then psychedelics are this massive opening in an overnight experience, they're at 85% openness.

That's a huge... That's eight hours for you to go from, "Oh, my goodness, I was a Christian to start out with, and now I've seen past lives. I've seen ancestral trauma. I just came here to deal with my anxiety. This is a lot. Am I supposed to be a shaman? I was seeing a symbol of a shaman. I saw an image of a Christ".

People can take these images literally, not knowing that there's archetypes, not knowing that your ancestral DNA is being activated. It can make a lot of assumptions. That can be really dangerous because what can happen is a worsening of narcissism. There's an aspect of spiritual narcissism, spiritual bypassing with some expansive states of non-ordinary reality. Then there's also aspects of dissociation, depersonalization, derealization that can last for hours, days, weeks, and even up to years, if proper integration and trauma support isn't provided.

It's so necessary to work with the integration practitioner on the preparation side. Then afterwards, so that if you're having some lingering effects of your psychedelic experience so that... Because even though it can be transcendental, it can be that your nervous system still went through all of that, and that can be just too much.

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Then we want to do some really good... It's beyond grounding work, but I'm going to use that word, but really some somatic trauma, stabilization work, mental health stabilization work, and integration of the expansive awareness experience afterwards.

Meagen Gibson

I have a lot of follow-up questions. You said a lot of fantastic things there, and I'm like, okay, I need to slow down and go back to a couple of things.

I can imagine, and tell me if I'm off base here, but say you grew up and you didn't have any religious or spiritual life. Your family was either agnostic or whatnot, and you have some big spiritual opening, awakening experience during a psychedelic experience, I could see how that would be extraordinarily... You wouldn't know what to do with that. You'd be like, "Wait, what? What does that mean?"

What I'm hearing you say in the integration phase is not necessarily assigning too much story and meaning to something that feels incredibly meaningful. It feels like the most meaningful experience you've ever had, but you don't necessarily have to assign a meaning to that meaningful experience.

Shannon Myers

Because you could have 40 years of being an atheist, and then overnight, you're in Buddhist bardos, and it's like, "What?" And does that mean you have to become a Buddhist? This is why we want to wait. We want to do really good integration work and trauma work, and we want to just journey into, what was your intention? If we go back to what was your intention, what's your experience, what's the metaphor? We don't have to take things literally.

In the Western world, we often take things very literally. Our psyche and our soul speaks in metaphor, symbols, visions, sounds, stories. On top of that, there's all this trauma processing that's happening somatically and energetically as well at the same time. It's going to take a skillful integration professional to really look at that experience and to dive into that, and to ask the body, and to sit with the person over a period of time to discover what to make of this.

That's a slower process. We don't have to make any decisions overnight. These are ancestral healing technologies. We don't have to get into hustle culture and be like, "Let's figure this out in the next 24 hours". We don't have to do that. In fact, people are not going to like this, but integration is lifelong.

Integration is lifelong. You may have a journey that you think you have the answers for in the days and weeks afterwards, and it may unfold after a year, even decades later. Life is long, and to become whole is to integrate all aspects of yourself into the whole. And integration is the same way. Now, do you have to go to integration sessions week after week for the rest of your life? No, you do not. However, if you're journaling that experience and you have messages and things that you are writing about, I welcome people to go back month after month to look, after that year after year.

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I will invite people to use different color pens and write the dates like, "Oh, actually, that meant that". Because the message is the understanding of it all will and can change over time if you've really dedicated yourself to like, "Hey, I'm going to recover. I'm going to heal. I'm going to realize my wholeness".

Meagen Gibson

That's why I think such a great integration of parts work into this is so important, as you know, is because when you put the parts into all of these reflections, it matters less what was coming up, and what matters more is that you allowed it.

Because I think so many of us have been taught that aspects of ourselves, whether it's our thoughts or feelings, are not acceptable, whether it was that we were taught that in our family system, and maybe that contributed to some complex trauma, or we had a terrible trauma experience acutely, and other people told us it wasn't that bad, or we had to get over it.

So there's all of these parts competing for just the allowance of their actual experience and feelings. And without that, I bet, in the integration phase, as all of these things come up, if you allow them and then give them some space and time as you're describing, then none of it has to be scary. It's just now. It's just what I'm experiencing right now, and maybe it'll pass. Maybe I should pay some more attention to it later. Yeah, it just sounds like a really beautiful experience that you should take your time with.

What does a typical integration timeline look like when it's done with a therapist? I mean, obviously, you said integration is lifelong, but what does a typical psychedelic experience integration period look like?

Shannon Myers

It really depends. A lot of therapists, they have how they go through that. I take it as everyone's really individual, based on what they're working through. Complex trauma, complex solutions, I have other modalities and things that I use as far as, besides the integration. It just depends.

Was this a difficult experience? If so, we're going to spend a couple of sessions on integrating the difficult experience. Was this traumatic? Are you experiencing dissociation, depersonalization, derealization? We're going to spend some time with that. Was it transcendental? Transcendental experiences are... It's just, "Did that even happen? Is that even possible that I can self-realize?"

Sometimes, too, it's a follow-up and follow-through and just checking in because immediately after the experience, typically someone is going to know how to heal themselves. They're going to be getting this... Because you're always healing yourself, the psychedelics are the catalyst. It's self-healing-self always with the psychedelic.

It's all coming together. It's just following up as far as you want to go in your self-realization process and staying accountable to what comes up within you because people know. They know, "Well, this came up, and this came up, and this came up". Then it's going back to even their notes

or what they remember of the experience and like, well, where are you at with that, with your work and relationships and how are you showing up with that?

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Because it depends because individuals will have different goals and ideas and ways. I really wish I could give a great answer. Typically, with good trauma work within 10 to 20 sessions, which still applies to integration, there's a significant amount of improvement that someone can make towards all aspects of their life and their nervous system, rebalancing.

Even just one session, if you had a really difficult experience, just having one session with a really skilled provider, that's skilled with trauma, can be the difference between living with symptoms of dysregulation and trauma, or not. So even just one can be profoundly helpful. So I've given no exact answers because there's no exact... I wish I had that answer, but it's also individualized.

Meagen Gibson

No, I totally understand that. That's a fair answer.

You went over a couple of terms I want to make sure people understand because I was actually like, "I'm not sure I know the difference between those". So derealization, dissociation, depersonalization. Describe to me what those might look and feel like, because I imagine there might be people at home who have had a psychedelic experience in or out of a therapeutic environment who might, once you start describing it, be like, "Oh, gosh, I didn't know that that was what that was called or that that had a name, and that sounds familiar to me".

Shannon Myers

Right. They're all aspects of dissociation, dissociation exists within a continuum. Again, I work from a trauma-trained, multiple modalities, and a harm reduction standpoint. Dissociation is an aspect of trauma, and I don't want to villainize it. However, if these features turn up more after psychedelics, we really want to focus on it because there is so much that we can do to heal.

I actually have these written out because I was anticipating that you'd ask, and I like to be precise.

Okay. Derealization is a feeling that people and your surroundings are not real, like you're living in a movie or a dream. You're feeling emotionally disconnected from people you care about as if you were separated by a glass wall. The surroundings may appear out of their usual shape and are blurry or colorless. Something may be bigger, our body parts, your body part may be bigger or smaller.

Depersonalization is feelings that you are seeing your thoughts, feelings or body, or parts of your body from the outside. For example, you may feel like you're floating in the air above yourself, and you may feel like a robot, or that you're not in control of what you say or how you move.

Then dissociation is the feeling of being foggy. There's levels of dissociation, being foggy, disconnected, tired, feeling spacey, like you're on autopilot. It can be features... Even in levels of anxiety, there's levels of dissociation. In panic, there's levels of dissociation. Depression, there's

levels of dissociation. Then you write along the continuum of dissociation, then you get into dissociation disorders and complex trauma, which comes with levels of dissociation as well.

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You really want to listen. If you're a provider and a practice, you really want to listen to what someone's experienced. You want to get, in the preparation like, what's their baseline? Then after the integration, you want to understand where they are at now because we're wanting to make sure that someone's nervous system in the attempt to heal isn't becoming more dissociative, experiencing more derealization and more de-personalization. Because we're wanting to look for healing to occur. I'm saying these words because there's just not enough assessment for this and not enough awareness around how to check or support somebody, going through some of that.

Meagen Gibson

Sorry, I didn't mean to talk over you. Zoom is hard.

I'm glad that you described all of those because I'm sure that you don't often, unless you're treating a therapist, which therapists also have psychedelic assisted therapy and experiences with psychedelics sometimes. But unless you're treating a therapist, they don't come to you and say, "I was experiencing derealization". They're not going to describe it like that.

What they're going to say is, "An hour passed and I didn't even realize that I had been picking at my cuticles". It could be emotional, it could be behavioral, it could be all kinds of things, but they're going to tell you what happened, and then you're going to know, and you're not going to... It's not necessarily like you're going to say, "Oh, that sounds like depersonalization".

Shannon Myers

Exactly. You just want to listen too, because there's aspects of when someone's like, "I feel like in my head all the time. I'm thinking all the time. I don't feel like I have a body. I don't feel like my head and my body are connected". You really want to listen to what's going on and you want to ask further questions. You want to have some somatic skills. You want to be on grounding. We've got to have grounding skills, yes, that's 101 stuff. But we've got to have some somatic skills to really, really help folks that are struggling after a psychedelic experience.

It's just not being talked about enough about the levels of trauma that are happening, the levels of dissociation that can sometimes happen, too. It's important, and these things can heal.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. What are your hopes for psychedelics in the future?

Shannon Myers

I have so many hopes. I have all the hopes, and I call them 'holding my intentions for humanity'. There are a lot of barriers right now, and there's a lot of things that, in my viewpoint, are off track, which therefore means there's a lot of opportunity, and I have a lot of hope.

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My hopes are that anyone that wants to access psychedelics in any way is able to, whether that is in the medical model, through psychedelic therapy, or in any other way. I'm a big supporter of the decriminalization movement, but I'm also a supporter of religious freedoms. There's so much... Psychedelics never went away. They went underground.

Indigenous communities are well-equipped, I don't know why Indigenous communities in the underground haven't been invited to the table because they have the best... These individuals are so skilled and can help us so much, and they're not brought to the table.

I envision everyone at the table, including insurance funders, including grants, including psychedelic users, drug users, peers, communities, therapists, doctors, the funders, the legislation, everyone at the table. Because we need everyone at the table because it's so siloed right now and it's almost inaccessible for folks, and it's getting to be very medicalized, which is okay because that is a way that some will interact with psychedelics. But there's also going to be this counterculture. There always has been. If there's a way for those folks to be grandfathered in, or to validate safety and protocols, I'd love to see that.

We are in an epic trauma crisis. Childhood trauma is the biggest public health crisis known to man, and so is trauma. The war on drugs has been a war on trauma, and has been a war on people. We're in multiple crises that are converging: depression, suicide, mental health, trauma, despair, loneliness, isolation. We're about to see a lot of people laid off with AI and automation.

People are so disconnected from the rhythm of life, just from being their authentic self. I'm holding out hope for humanity that we can get it a little bit better this time because it wasn't just decades ago that things got off track. This has happened in the 1500s and 1600s in South America. I hope we can learn from our past mistakes. Some of these psychedelics are sacred sacraments. Everyone should be allowed to explore their consciousness and their divinity.

Now, obviously, it's not for everyone, but if we don't decriminalize, we lose access to education and safety because just like we have... Because psilocybin is safer than alcohol. Yeah, alcohol, if you're over 21, you're allowed to drink and we have a lot of programs and education around safe drinking and all of that. That would be the same if we did that here.

We have models to follow. We've got the models in Portugal, and yet we only use mental health and trauma as talking points and there's not really these systems in place because all of these individual's traumas are coming from systems traumas, and the systems are disconnected. They're not linked together.

Fundamentally, we need to have some of the weavers. I am asking anyone listening to that that is excited about becoming involved in any aspect of psychedelic healing to please do that. Whether it's policy, whether it's becoming a counselor or a therapist, or advocating, working with insurance funders, asking everybody really to step up because it's so important. People are not okay.

[00:44:04]

I'm holding out hope. I really am holding out hope and intentions for our highest timeline of humanity that these medicines, my goodness, a right to try for people at the end of life and even just for people curious to explore.

Psychedelics, if anyone's read *The Immortality Key*, predates Christianity. Psychedelics have been part of religious and sacred rites of passage since the beginningless beginning. I hope that these barriers are removed. I hope that there's more collaboration across systems. It's very siloed. It's so very siloed and it's so inaccessible.

It's almost inaccessible for someone to become an integration professional just for the cost of it. For someone to be asked to spend several thousand dollars to heal their trauma, what are we doing here? Why are we trying to profit off someone's trauma? Why aren't all vets given access, right after they come back from deployment? Why are there so many barriers? I don't get it because we are not okay.

I hope that some of these insurance providers will allow individuals to actually have true informed consent, meaning don't push something on somebody and tell them what they should be doing for their mental health. If they're cultural, if they're religious, if their spirituality is saying, "You know what? I'm going to try psychedelics before I'm going to try this other thing to heal my trauma, to heal my mental health".

A lot of times, some of these protocols require folks to fail out of everything. They're retraumatizing folks across trying to heal and like, "Okay, you've tried it all, and now this is approved". That is so inhumane to someone. I mean, they're just trying to get through life. That is so inhumane. The cost, my goodness, the costs are... And even to the therapist, there's no... I don't know of a code right now for individuals to actually... When MDMA comes... I hope that there's a code for the length of time that someone needs in the integration and the group work and all of the things.

Then I hope that because we've decriminalized, because I'm holding this intention, that folks can do the individual work and do the collective work and do the community work because it's both and. We cannot be so Westernized when we're using ancient technology, that's Indigenous technology, and go with it with this mindset of individualism. We heal together. We heal together.

It's both and. I call myself The Integrative Counselor because I'm trying to fill in the gaps between all the systems where people fall in between. I am a fan of any single path that someone heals. I'm going to root for every single way that it is possible someone walks all the way home.

That's what I'm here for. I am not going to play this competition game. I'm not going to create these barriers. In fact, I'm going to put my head down. I'm going to lean into collaboration, and I'm going to play my little part so that collective liberation happens, hopefully, in this lifetime.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. As you were speaking, I was thinking about the concept that you were saying about the weavers, because everything is so siloed right now. Because of that, there are some safety issues in some places where people have been taking advantage of people. Without the weavers in place

across all of these different systems, that's the system that will help prevent further abuse or further traumatizing, or we have to be able to share information across both traditions and systems, right?

[00:48:03] Shannon Myers

Absolutely. There are so many protocols that festivals have in place that are incredible and should be woven in, and Indigenous and Shamanic practitioners, they've been doing it for thousands and thousands of years, and these are oral traditions passed down. How are they not included? I don't... Me, having a background, both Indigenous and a colonizer within myself, there's often this, "What's going on?" I don't understand why we're not including this Indigenous science, why we're not including the festival science.

All of this is evidence-based. It really is. There's so many things that have been figured out for safety in consciousness healing already. I hope everyone can get at the table, and I hope that more weavers come on board to help because we can build bridges. We don't have to rip apart everything. We can build bridges, and I'm hopeful for that.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. Well, on that hopeful note, Shannon, how can people find out more about you as The Integrative Counselor?

Shannon Myers

I'm on most of the social media websites. My website, [The Integrative Counselor](#), and [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [Threads](#) and [YouTube](#) as The Integrative Counselor. I think it's... I don't do [Twitter](#) anymore, but I'm there as well. I am not on TikTok. I don't know, I'm in my 40s.

Meagen Gibson

We can't be everywhere, Shannon. It's okay to have limits.

Shannon Myers

I can't be everywhere. I'm not on there, but I'm on the other places, and that's where you may find me.

Meagen Gibson

That's actually where I found you. I found you on Threads. So thank you for being there because I would not have made your acquaintance without it.

Shannon Myers, thank you so much for being with us today.

Shannon Myers

Thank you for having me.