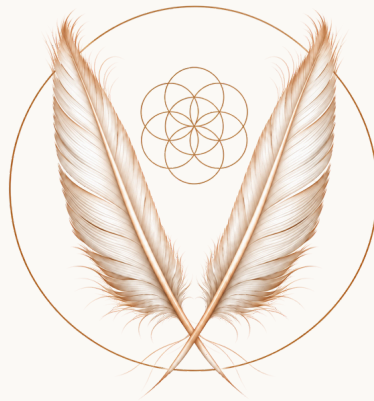




PSYKEDELISK PORTAL

After the Experience

A guide to integration, with exercises and questions for reflection

NATALIE JUUL AND TOBIAS DINESEN

For you, after a psychedelic experience

Perhaps your experience was a few days ago. Perhaps it was months ago. It may have been beautiful, difficult, or a little of both.

Whatever it was like, it is common for a powerful psychedelic experience to keep working on you long after it has ended. Thoughts, feelings and sensations in the body can return in the days and weeks that follow. That does not mean something is wrong with you.

This guide is for the time afterwards. It offers a simple picture of what integration is, some practical advice for the first days and weeks, gentle exercises for the body and the nervous system, and questions you can write about whenever you feel ready. There is no need to read it all at once. Take what feels useful now and come back to the rest later.

How to use this guide

- **Pages 3 and 4** give you an overview: what integration is, and what helps in everyday life.
- **Pages 5 to 7** are about the body: why it may feel unsettled, and exercises that can help you land.
- **Pages 8 to 10** are questions for reflection, with space to write. You are welcome to return to them over time.
- **Page 11** explains when it is important to seek help.

This guide is written for people who have already had an experience. It does not help anyone plan the use of psychedelics, and it gives no advice on substances, doses, settings or timing. It is not treatment and does not replace medical advice.

What is integration?

Integration is the process of returning to your experience and, little by little, understanding it, working through it and making room for it in your life.

Researchers describe integration as something that happens on several levels at once (Bathje et al. 2022):

- **The mind:** the thoughts, insights and questions the experience has set in motion.
- **The body:** what you sense, and how your nervous system is doing.
- **The existential:** questions of meaning, of life and death, and of who you are.
- **Relationships:** how you are with other people, and who you can share this with.
- **Everyday life:** the way you live, day by day.

Integration is not something you finish over a weekend, and it is not a test you can pass or fail. For some, it is about understanding a beautiful or meaningful experience and holding on to what it gave them. For others, it is about finding their feet again after something that was hard. Both are integration.

An experience can be both difficult and meaningful

In a survey of almost 2,000 people who described their most challenging experience with psilocybin mushrooms, 39% ranked it among the five most challenging experiences of their lives. Yet 84% said they had benefited from it in some way (Carbonaro et al. 2016).

The first days and weeks

Most integration happens in ordinary life. Small, gentle steps often help more than big changes.

- **Give yourself time.** Integration rarely happens in a few days. It is normal for it to take weeks, or longer.
- **Sleep, food and routine.** A steady rhythm can help an unsettled nervous system.
- **Movement and nature.** Walks, fresh air and feeling the ground beneath your feet.
- **Write it down.** What you remember and what you notice now, without needing to make sense of it all. The questions on pages 8 to 10 can help you start.
- **Be careful with alcohol and other substances.** They can make it harder to land.
- **Hold off on big decisions** straight after a powerful experience, if you can. Give what you have been through time to settle.
- **Share it with someone you trust.** It does not have to be the whole story. Many people who struggle after an experience describe feeling alone with it. Being met without judgement can make a real difference in itself (Argyri et al. 2025).

There is no need for shame

Many people keep an experience to themselves because they fear being judged, or worry that they "did it wrong". You will not be judged by us, neither for your curiosity nor for what happened. Doctors are also bound by confidentiality, so you can safely tell yours what has happened if you need help.

When the body has not quite landed

Thoughts come and go, but the body remembers.

During a powerful or difficult experience, the nervous system can go into alarm: the heart races, muscles tense, breathing speeds up, or you freeze and feel far away. Once the experience is over, the nervous system does not always find its way straight back to calm.

The window of tolerance

In trauma work, a model called the *window of tolerance* is often used. It describes the zone in which we can feel our emotions and still feel reasonably safe (Corrigan et al. 2011).

- **Above the window** we become overactivated: restlessness, anxiety, a pounding heart, racing thoughts.
- **Below the window** we become underactivated: emptiness, fatigue, numbness and a sense of being far away.

It is a model rather than a measurable boundary, but many people recognise themselves in it. After a difficult experience, the window can narrow for a while. It takes less to tip into restlessness or sink into emptiness.

Common reactions afterwards

Among people who had difficulties for a long time after a psychedelic experience, the most common were (Evans et al. 2023): anxiety and fear, sometimes without knowing why; existential unease; feeling alone with what you went through; and feeling detached from yourself, or that the world seems unreal.

For most people, this passes. But it is important to take it seriously if it does not. See page 11.

Exercises to help you land

These exercises are simple. They are not treatment, and they are not meant to fix anything. They can help you come back into your body and into the present moment. Go slowly, and stop if it becomes too much.

I Feel what is holding you

Sit so that you can feel the chair beneath you and your feet on the floor. Notice the pressure. Where are you in contact with what supports you? Let your weight sink a little. Stay here for a minute.

Turning your attention to concrete sensations here and now can signal to your nervous system that you are safe at this moment.

2 Orient yourself in the room

Let your gaze wander slowly around the room. Find three things you can see, two things you can hear and one thing you can feel with your hand. Let your head turn with your eyes.

When we are in alarm, attention narrows and turns inwards. Orienting outwards can help you sense that you are here, and that the danger has passed.

3 A longer out-breath

Breathe in gently through your nose. Let the out-breath be a little longer than the in-breath, for example in for four and out for six. Continue for a few minutes, without forcing anything.

Research suggests that slow breathing can shift the nervous system towards greater calm (Zaccaro et al. 2018). If breathing exercises make you more unsettled, skip this one.

More exercises

Each exercise can be used on its own. Choose the one that feels good to you, and come back to it as often as you like.

4 Move between the difficult and the safe

Find a place in your body that feels fairly neutral or calm, such as your hands or feet. If you notice something difficult elsewhere, let your attention visit it briefly, then return to the calm place. Back and forth, at your own pace.

This can help you stay with what is difficult in small doses, without being swept away by it.

5 The "voo" sound

Breathe in through your nose and let the out-breath become a long, deep sound, "vooooo", so that it vibrates low in your belly. Repeat a few times, then notice how you feel.

The exercise comes from Peter Levine, founder of Somatic Experiencing. According to Levine, the vibrations in the belly help regulate the nervous system (Levine 2010).

6 Tapping

Tapping lightly and rhythmically on certain places on the body can help bring you back into your body and the present moment. This is how Natalie teaches it: tap gently with two or three fingertips for about 10 seconds on each spot. Notice the sensation under your fingers, and listen to the soft sound it makes.

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|--|---|
| 1. The back of the hand , between the knuckles of the ring finger and little finger | 5. The smile line , between the nose and the corner of the mouth |
| 2. The outer edge of the hand , the soft side below the little finger | 6. Just above the upper lip , between the nose and the lip |
| 3. The temples , beside the eyes | 7. Just below the collarbone |
| 4. The cheekbones , just below the eyes | 8. The lower ribs , on the side of the chest |

Take your time and breathe calmly as you go. Afterwards, notice: what has changed in your body? If anything becomes uncomfortable, stop and return to feeling what is holding you.

The points come from EFT tapping, which uses points that lie on the meridians of acupuncture. Tapping is used to help regulate the nervous system.

The first days

Write freely. It does not have to make sense, look tidy or hang together. A single word is enough.

What do I remember from the experience, including the parts that seem disconnected?

What do I notice in my body right now?

Which feelings are taking up the most space today?

What do I need in the coming days: rest, nature, quiet, company?

After a few weeks

Before you answer, you might read what you wrote in the first days. What has stayed the same, and what has shifted?

What still stands out clearly from the experience?

Has anything changed in how I relate to myself or to others?

What still feels unclear, difficult or unfinished?

How am I sleeping, eating and coping with everyday life?

Over time

Integration is not about arriving at the right answer. It is about how what you experienced can live on in your life in a way that feels good to you.

What would I like to carry with me into everyday life?

What is one small step I can take this week?

Who can I talk to about what I went through?

What would I like to understand better?

When should you seek help?

Asking for help is not a failure. You deserve to be met without judgement.

Talk to a therapist experienced with psychedelic experiences if:

- anxiety, restlessness or a sense of unreality does not ease after a few weeks
- big questions about life and reality keep taking up space
- it is affecting your sleep, work or relationships
- you feel alone with what you went through

See a doctor if:

- you have physical symptoms, such as palpitations or pain, that do not go away
- you can barely sleep or eat for several days

If you are having thoughts of suicide and you are in Denmark, call Livslinien on 70 201 201, or contact your doctor or the out-of-hours medical service (lægevagten). In an emergency, call 112. Outside Denmark, contact your local crisis line or emergency number.

Many health professionals know little about psychedelic experiences, so be as specific as you can about what happened and how you feel now. Questions about medication and your health always belong with your doctor.

Who wrote this guide?

Psykedelisk Portal is a Danish knowledge portal on psychedelics, written by two therapists in Copenhagen. We bring together sober, source-based knowledge on research, tradition, risks, preparation and integration.

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Would you like to talk to someone?

Have you had an experience you would like to understand better, or do you have questions about psychedelics you would like to talk through? You can book a free, no-obligation introductory session of 30 minutes with Natalie or Tobias, in English or Danish, in Copenhagen or online. Read about us both and see who you would like to talk to.

We offer introductory, preparation and integration sessions. They are about thoughts, questions and risks, never about planning a specific experience. We do not supply psychedelics or help anyone obtain them.

psykedeliskportal.dk/en/sessions

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Sources

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This guide is for information only and does not encourage the use of illegal substances. It does not replace medical advice. Psychedelic substances are illegal in Denmark outside approved research and medical use. Talk to your doctor if you have questions about your health.