

On Sunday, June 2nd, at 4:20 p.m. I took 2 grams of mushrooms with my dad and friend John.

I felt a mixture of skepticism and excitement. Until four years ago, I had been the poster child of purity. Jesus prayed to me—okay, not really, but I firmly believed I would never touch a drug in my life, at least until 25 (probably because of some crap about your brain only maturing then or something). This ended when I got drunk for the first time during my graduation party. And again when I took weed edibles after being convinced by my brother the summer before going off to college.

Doing mushrooms was a little higher than my usual pay grade.

This, combined with the fact I tried taking mushrooms with my brother and dad a few months before and felt *nothing* gave me doubts about how the trip would go.

Alongside my skepticism, I was also intensely excited. For a long time, I have been interested in spirituality, self-actualization, and self-improvement. Many of the people I respect talk about mushrooms being a significant part of their growth. I was hoping I could turn it into a transformational experience as well.

I was in good hands. John had taken mushrooms more than six times before, and while my dad hadn't taken them for many decades, he had first done shrooms a little older than I was (20), as well as other psychedelics like LSD.

We decided to take them in our hotel room, hoping we could walk outside in nature during the trip. We measured out 2 grams of mushrooms, placed them on some peanut-buttered crackers (delicious), and consumed them with a glass of lemon juice (my friend heard somewhere lemon juice might make the mushrooms take effect faster). Peanut butter was the perfect choice because it completely masked the mushrooms flavor.

Afterward, we sat on the couch and discussed what we hoped to get out of the trip. My dad wanted to navigate his relationship with alcohol and his terrible sleep (I have no idea if mushrooms can help with this, but that's what he wanted). I wanted to deepen my connection to nature, broaden my ability to feel emotions so I could write more deeply, and grow my love for my friends and family.

About thirty minutes in, my dad and friend said they were feeling the tinge of something odd. They looked at me and asked how I was feeling. I felt nothing. I was very disappointed. Was I going to have another dud experience? An hour passed, and John and my dad started to act strangely.

Still, I felt nothing. Disappointed, I stood up to go get a glass of water.

That's when it began. Suddenly, I could feel every single muscle fiber in my body. I'm a regular gym goer, so I know what it feels like to have a mind-muscle connection, but this was a whole different level. Muscles I would usually never be able to feel without doing an exercise or ever I

could vividly sense. My back, hamstrings, and calves, felt like added fingers. My father and John had been hiking together the days before the trip, and I could feel the soreness and repairing process in each muscle.

Then, my body started to move on its own. I began swaying my legs back and forth and uncontrollably doing the basic salsa dance I learned in my last semester at Cornell. I looked at my dad and John and raised my hands, exclaiming, "I'm not doing anything." They both started laughing hysterically.

As I pondered this bizarre sensation, I looked over to the dining table in the hotel. The chairs and table started to teleport inches left, right, up, and down. My dad had started playing classical music in the background and I began feeling something I only later found out some mushrooms users experience—Synaesthesia--the normally distinct senses begin to mesh together in bizarre ways. The chairs began to move in sync with the classical music becoming smaller, bigger, thicker, thinner, and every possible such dimension. Colors turned red, yellow, blue, green, and more. The material of objects changed with the wood of the chairs, table, and door continually switching between oak, birch, cherry wood, and more.

It was absolutely mesmerizing.

I remember sitting back on the couch and watching the hotel room in awe. I couldn't stop saying, "This is so cool, I can't believe the mind can do this."

John and my dad asked me how I was feeling. I remember trying to find the words but thinking: *no words could ever do justice to the beauty of this moment.*

Up to this point, I still knew I was Aidan. My ego was intact. The trip could have ended there, and it would have been a cool, sensual experience. Nothing life-changing.

I had no idea what I was in for...

How do I even begin? What follows is and perhaps will be the most mesmerizing, meaningful, and beautiful experience of my life (maybe if I had a guide with me next time it could be even better although the first will always be special).

At one point, while on the couch, I looked out the window at the trees outside. Perhaps it was because my dad was in the seat in front of the window, but Aidan or the self I call "I" disappeared. In its place, I experienced a rare effect psychedelic users call ego replacement and became my dad.

I saw the beauty of nature through his eyes. My dad is an environmental professor with a deep love of the environment and animals. As a kid, he tried to get me into the outdoors as much as possible, going to places like Yellowstone, the Tetons, The Adirondacks, and more. Until then, I had appreciated nature but never *loved* it. All that changed looking out the window.

The tree outside began fading into a million colors while blooming into different geometric patterns. The tree was me, and I was the tree. I could feel my roots embedded into the earth and extend into its core, connected to the wonder of nature that is this planet.

I have never felt such a feeling of awe, glee, and jubilation in my life; I rarely cry, but in that moment, I began weeping.

I cried more than I have ever in my entire life. I could feel every teardrop falling down my face and to the floor.

Suddenly, the tree outside began withering away, dying as if climate change was coming prematurely. My glee turned to anguish and sorrow. The pain was indescribable, as if every part of me was ripping apart at the same time. I deeply felt my dad's pain being an environmental professor grappling with the dying of the Earth.

If you think that's weird, it only gets weirder.

Once I exited this nature trance, I was back on the couch with my ego as Aidan. My dad was still in the seat next to me, but now a pompous, pretentious king, and I and John his subjects. He fluttered his hands back and forth with a feminine energy and exclaimed, "This classical music is all the same; it goes up and down back and forth." He picked up his phone and started searching for other music. "Aidan what's that song you said represents you again? The one that's all happy, la di da di da"—he fluttered his hands again. I couldn't take him seriously with his kingly robes and crown, I began laughing hysterically.

But it wasn't as funny as I was hoping because over the next whatever amount of time in the real world, I got stuck in a time loop, experiencing this same role-playing scenario--although different words--over the entire rest of the trip. It was horrible Deja Vu.

In one of these time loops, I turned to John to see if he found it as amusing as I did, but when I looked over, he had his eyes closed and was sitting back, looking sickly. "I don't feel so good."

I remember feeling intense anxiety and empathy for John. I wanted to help him. I *needed* to help him. But in my frame of mind, holding a train of thought was impossible. It was like my association network was on overdrive. Every sense—touch, hearing, tasting, sight, smell—could send me down a different path. A memory, a new thought, whatever.

Then, I experienced the deepest sense of ego death throughout the whole trip.

Aidan was gone, a faint flicker, a passing thought that came in and out for only a few seconds at a time. I literally felt myself *melt* into a sludge on the couch, and fuse with John. I could feel his heartbeat and sense every artery and vein in his body. I was John, and John was me.

I came face to face with what I can only describe as the eternal force running the entire Universe. How do I describe this?

I was everything, everywhere, all at once

I was a planet, a fetus, a medical doctor, my girlfriend, a caveman, a star, everything in the past, present, and future simultaneously. Romantic music was playing in the background—I think it was "Wait For Me From Hadestown." I could *feel* love, so much love, between lovers, between my dad and mom, and everyone else in my family and friend group, but also between everything in the Universe and everything else. The song switched to "A Million Dreams By The Greatest Showman" and I could *feel* countless individuals' dreams being crushed, pursued, and realized.

Fundamental truths about the Universe flashed into my mind. Every single truth will sound cliché to you reading this now, but to the awareness experiencing them at that moment, they were *it*. Here they are:

- Everyone is everyone
- Everything is relative. We are our own gods.
- Love is the answer to everything.
- We are the awareness behind everything.
- There are many different ways of knowing behind propositional and procedural.
- There is intense meaning in the present moment whether doing something, or nothing.
- Our normal realm of consciousness is an infinitely small sliver of the full range of conscious experience.

According to John while I was in this state I was laying on the couch, moving all my body parts in weird directions. Particularly, I kept grasping for something. I think I was grasping for some semblance of my self. Aidan. I remember thinking, *how the hell will that man describe this** to people afterward? How is he going to help people understand? They never will.

As I exited this state and slowly returned to some semblance of self, I remember John asking me how I felt. I sat mouth agape.

Once again I said, "words could never do this justice."

"So give me a song," he said back.

I remember thinking he had come to some cataclysmic insight. Music is the vessel of emotion. I opened my phone and went to Spotify. But once I got there, I found it impossible to find a song that fully described my experience. There was still too much going on. So, I went to my favorite song playlist and started randomly playing things.

Closing my eyes, I once again experienced ego death as I meshed with the music and saw crazy visualizations in my mind. I was flying through space, then I was in Minecraft, then I was inside the ocean. I remember that, at one point, John wanted to play some of his music on my phone. Jokingly, I asked him to guess the password. He looked me straight in the eyes and correctly guessed it first try.

You could say I must have told it to him sometime before the mushrooms trip--which is possible--but at that moment, it felt like I had sent him the password using the cosmic energy of the Universe, as stupid as it sounds. John was me, and I was John. We both started laughing hysterically. My dad came in from the hotel bedroom, which he must have gone to at some point. He was no longer tripping and started cooking us dinner.

It was almost 9:00 p.m., four hours and forty minutes after taking mushrooms. I had only checked the time once. It felt like both a super short amount of time and infinity.

I was still tripping. For a while, I thought I was a caveman inventing fire on the floor, but slowly, I, too, started to come back to myself and sat on the couch to process what had just happened. I'm still trying to process what occurred and how I want to implement it into my life.

I understand now what people mean when they say psychedelics aren't addicting. I don't have an intense craving to do it again anytime soon. I want to do them again at some point, but the experience is so emotionally intense and thought-provoking that doing them again too soon would do the trip a disservice. It will take a lifetime to fully implement and explore everything I learned from just this one trip.

I wish more people were comfortable using psychedelics and the FDA legalized them because the potential I see for therapeutic use and self-actualization is HUGE. Of course, there are massive dangers if you don't use them in the right headspace or environment. But the experience for me, among friends and family, is something I will remember for the rest of my life.

For the rest of this post, I will reflect on some of the lessons I'm taking away from the trip, as well as how I might implement them into my life.

Key Lessons I Learned From The Trip

You should know before reading this, that I hope not to come across as some preachy 20 year old saying "they know the secrets of the Universe." The stuff I say below could be totally wrong. But in the moment of the trip experience, they *felt* incredibly true. That's all.

Everyone Is Everyone

Every person connects through the shared human experience.

While we might be of different races, social classes, genetics, and whatever, we all share this thing we call life. During the trip, I experienced what it was like (or perhaps just my perception of what it is like) to be a fetus, a medical doctor, a caveman, my father and friend John, and so much more. Racism, sexism, and every ism stop making sense once you treat all of humanity as one group acting together as one.

Love Is The Answer To Everything

It sounds super cliché, but I have never felt love so profoundly as during my trip.

There were multiple times when I experienced intense warmth for not only my family, friends, and girlfriend, but for the world and Universe. Love is respect for another figment of consciousness. It's not a noun, but an action. When you are loving someone or something, it's very hard to do wrong, except out of ignorance.

You Are The Awareness Behind Everything

In the everyday life of normal life, it's easy to blend with our feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors.

But during the trip, I came to realize this is not us. I experienced ego death—"Aidan," as I conceptualized him, was not there—I was pure consciousness. Even without my sense of self as "Aidan," there was still an awareness that I could sense the world.

When we are in tune with this awareness, we can notice when our ego gets in the way of our loving nature. When we blend with our egos, we often act out of line with this loving nature. Meditation and mindfulness is the process of learning to tap into this awareness more deeply and notice when we start to blend with our egos.

Radical Acceptance

While tripping, I had virtually no control over what was going on.

Feelings, thoughts, and sensations seemed to pop into and out of existence almost at random. If I tried to control the experience, it would have been hell.

Yet, how often do we try to control our real-life experience? We like to think we have a degree of control over our feelings, thoughts, and actions, but even these things are not fully in our control. Having this trip is making me appreciate the power of giving up total control in real life as well.

Everything Is Relative. We Are Our Own Gods.

Each figment of consciousness has a relative view of the Universe, which comes from its own unique organism-environment relationship.

In this way, we are our own gods, creating a perspective on the world unique to anything else's. A frog doesn't perceive the world the same way as we do. We don't perceive the world the same way as another person does.

There Is Intense Meaning In The Present Moment

While on shrooms, I was completely and utterly present.

There were zero thoughts about what would happen after the trip. It was bliss.

In our real lives, however, we often live in the past and the future. I often find myself thinking of a regular meal with my parents as "just another meal" instead of savoring each bite with two other figments of consciousness. Of course, we can't always live in the present; otherwise, we wouldn't make plans. However, I intend to try to do so more in the future.

"Normal" Consciousness Is A Small Realm In What Is Possible To Experience

We treat our undrugged state of consciousness as the "real" world, but we only see it this way because it's the state of consciousness we are in most of the time. In reality, "normal" consciousness is in itself a hallucination. We perceive the world uniquely to others because of our organism-environment relationship. Clearly, there is no one objective "right" way to see things; it's all subjective.

There is an infinite range of other degrees of consciousness available. One's that are no less real or fake than "normal" consciousness. One of the beauties of psychedelics is they help you notice the hallucinatory nature of consciousness so you can better tap into the awareness behind everything and act with virtue.

There Are Many More Types Of Knowing Than Just Propositional Or Procedural

Our society tends to prize propositional knowing--semantic knowledge of things--and procedural knowing--knowing HOW to do things--above all else.

But this shrooms trip made me realize there are types of knowing beyond this. For example, perspectival knowing--knowing what it's like to experience something from a certain perspective. You can never get the perspectival knowledge of what this shrooms trip was like, even through the words I describe it with. It's impossible. Linear writing can't encapsulate the associative nature of my trip.

We need to put more value on other types of knowing that go beyond propositional and procedural because I think they have more to do with wisdom.

So ya, that was my mushroom experience and some of the lessons I took. I intend to use mushrooms and other psychedelics in the future, but probably not for many months. If you're

someone who has long thought of drug use of any kind as "wrong," I hope this has changed your mind to some degree.

Of course, I'm not telling you to do shrooms right after reading this. That's your choice, and you're responsible for all the ramifications that might come with doing so. If you end up trying shrooms, research beforehand and create a safe environment to explore them.

Hopefully if you do you can come out with an experience you'll remember for the rest of your life like I have.