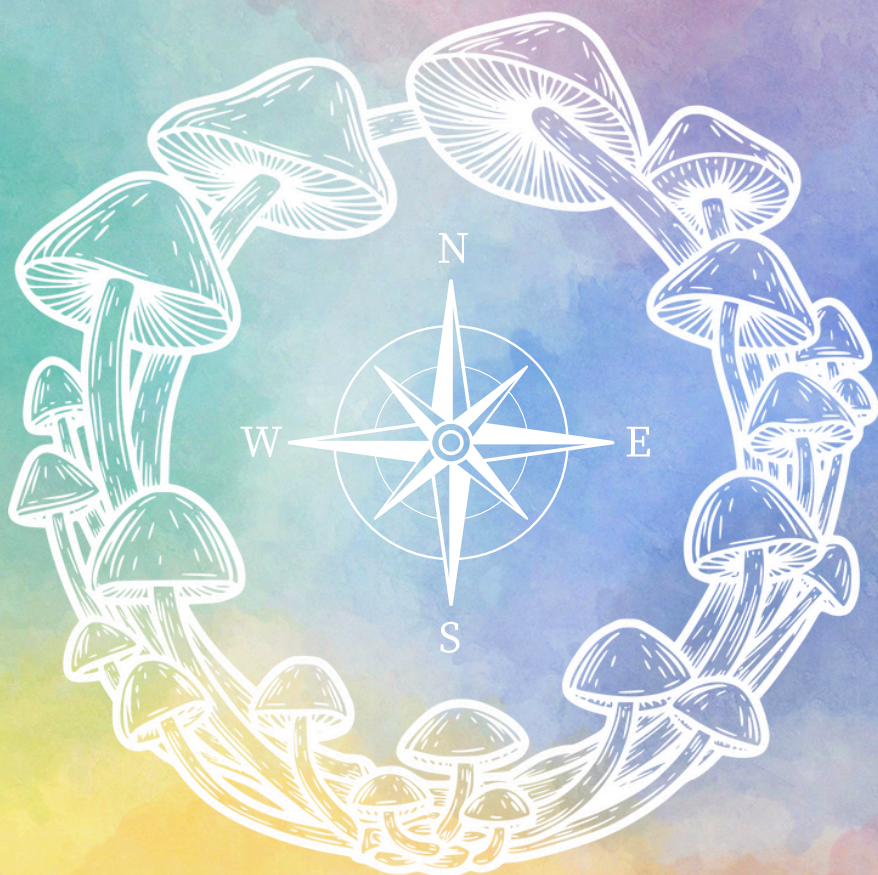


ROBIN SWAN



THE PSILOCYBIN COMPASS

A JOURNEY THROUGH SCIENCE,
HEALING AND SPIRIT

THE PSILOCYBIN COMPASS

BY
ROBIN SWAN

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I'm not a doctor, scientist, or therapist. I am someone who was raised with teacher plants and fungus. I am someone who for whatever reasons found myself attracted to the healing arts and at a very young age started asking: How can I assist others in finding their unique voice? The voice that leads to our authentic selves. How can I give people tools, roadmaps, and guidance so they can blaze their own path? This book isn't a guide, necessarily.

It's a compass—meant for anyone who feels called to explore psilocybin with curiosity, care and respect. Whether you're struggling, seeking, or simply intrigued, we hope this knowledge and understanding brings you to a deeper understanding of yourself and the medicine of psilocybin.

Psilocybin has helped many reconnect with themselves, process old wounds and find clarity. But it's not a shortcut. It's a tool—one that's powerful and has been used on every continent by all indigenous people when seeking clarity and understanding of their experiences.

From neuroscience to ancestral wisdom, we hope to bridge the gap and offer a deeper understanding of the magical medicine of the mycelium.

The only requirement from you is to be open. Open to the experience of expansion. Expanding not only your conscience but your heart. A willingness to listen to what your inner world has to say.

Let's begin.

Chapter 1

Nature's Medicine: What are Psilocybin Mushrooms?

In the wild, they're unassuming.

Growing quietly on forest floors or in grassy fields, psilocybin mushrooms have been part of Earth's ecosystem—and humanity's story—for thousands of years.

Psilocybin is the naturally occurring compound found in over 180 species of mushrooms. Once ingested, your body converts psilocybin into psilocin, which interacts with serotonin receptors in your brain. Only a few stand out in terms of popularity, potency and cultural use:

- *Psilocybe cubensis* – the most commonly cultivated and widely known species, often used in modern therapy and self-exploration. These are the most visual of the psilocybin family. Providing a lot of color and animated surroundings.
- *Psilocybe semilanceata* (Liberty Caps) - These fungi are considered more potent than *Psilocybe cubensis*, containing higher and more variable levels of psilocybin and psilocin. *Semilanceata Psilocybe* mushrooms are primarily found in temperate grasslands, especially in areas with rich and acidic soil. They are known to grow solitarily or in small groups in meadows, pastures, and lawns. They are considered the world's most widely distributed psilocybin mushroom appearing on all continents.

- *Psilocybe azurescens* – one of the most potent known species. It's among the most potent of the tryptamine-bearing mushrooms, with reported psilocybin content up to 1.8% by dry weight. *Azurescens* prefers decaying wood and sandy soils rich in woody debris, and is found in coastal dune grasses of Oregon and Washington.

How They Work: A Quick Science Glimpse

Each species can offer slightly different experiences due to variations in psilocybin and psilocin content, as well as other alkaloids. Knowing what species you're working with can help you prepare more mindfully and responsibly. This isn't about "tripping" for the sake of it. It's about what happens *beneath* the visuals—how these fungi open a door to a different way of thinking, feeling and experiencing yourself.

Psilocybin mimics serotonin, the “feel-good” neurotransmitter. But it doesn't just lift your mood—it rewires your perception. Scientists have found that psilocybin reduces activity in something called the **Default Mode Network**—the part of your brain tied to ego, self-criticism and repetitive thinking.

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Chapter 2

Sacred Origins: Spiritual use of Mushrooms

Psychedelic mushrooms are found on every continent across the globe. Maybe you have heard of the "Stoned Ape Hypothesis." Baseline, it is the theory that our brains evolved from the process of eating psychedelic mushrooms.

This theory proposes that psilocybin mushrooms played a significant role in the cognitive and emotional evolution of early humans.

Tribal nations across the globe have used various plants and fungus to aid in vision questing, healing, and additional ceremonies that were known to have heightened the awareness of the individual to gain an understanding of the situation.

All psychedelic experiences are ceremonies. This creation of life that is neither plant nor animal is here to open the pathways you may have closed or never even knew about. They will show you what you need to see, not necessarily what you are seeking. Making sure you are in a safe environment with people you trust is key. The difference between a microdose and journey dose is life altering and something you can not step off in the middle of the experience.

Fungus, however, is not for everyone. It is important to acknowledge that there are closed ceremonies, kept sacred by the indigenous keepers of this earth.

Be mindful when trading for this experience that you are working with someone who has been trained by the culture they are representing. Make sure if you are trading dollars for your experience that you are not paying a self proclaimed shaman who has decided that they are the chosen one to lead you.

If you are working with a therapist in this spiritual realm again make sure they are vetted and contributing back to the location and tribe that gifted them the right to make and use the medicine.

When you choose to make a journey of magickal mycelium you must take into account it can last up to 8 hours. Make sure your environment is not only secure, but you also have food, comfortable clothing, and a non-tripping person who knows you are on the journey and can be available for you if needed.

It is not recommended to take a journey or a heroes' dose if you are expected to be responsible in any setting or if you are in an environment or location that makes you uneasy. Depending on your metabolism a journey dose can start at 1000 mg to up to 5 grams.

Understand that what you put out into the world, yourself, and others will always find a way back to you. Mycelium is a true teacher in the way that you have no option but to face whatever or whoever it is that has caused you to shrink and hide from yourself, the world, and others.

Chapter 3

Psilocybin and the Brain: Our inner connectedness to all things

Okay, let's geek out—just a little.

When you ingest psilocybin, your brain doesn't just “see colors” or “feel weird.” Something much more fascinating happens.

Much like our central nervous system (CNS), the mycelium is the control center of the forest floor. Human beings are an evolutionary pivot derived from plants and minerals; when we engage with the mycelium it can feed our central nervous system.

The vegetative part of a fungus interacts with our central nervous system through various mechanisms, including electrical impulses, nutrient exchange, and the release of bioactive compounds. While fungi lack a traditional nervous system, they exhibit sophisticated communication and signaling abilities that can influence nervous system function in both positive and negative ways.

- **Serotonin Receptors:** Psilocin binds to 5-HT_{2A} receptors—linked to mood, imagination and sensory perception.
- **Default Mode Network (DMN):** This is the “me, myself and I” network. It loops thoughts, worries and ego-based identity. Psilocybin dials it down, making space for stillness and insight.
- **Neuroplasticity:** Your brain becomes more flexible. New connections form. Old patterns loosen.

Why It Matters Emotionally

When the ego takes a backseat, grief can rise. So can clarity. So can joy. Psilocybin doesn't numb you—it amplifies what's already there, but held beneath the surface.

It's not about “getting high.” It's about waking up.

Chapter 4

The Healing Frontier: Psilocybin in Modern Therapy

Once considered taboo, psilocybin is now being studied in some of the world's top medical institutions and the results are shaking the ground beneath modern psychiatry.

Clinical trials at Johns Hopkins, Imperial College London and other research centers are showing that psilocybin, when combined with professional guidance, can alleviate depression, PTSD, addiction and end-of-life anxiety.

And not just temporarily. In some cases, the shift lasts months—even years.

What the Science Is Saying

Psilocybin works because it creates neuroplasticity.

Psilocybin promotes the growth of new neural connections and strengthens existing ones, which is crucial for the brain to rewire itself after injury.

- Psilocybin has demonstrated anti-inflammatory effects, which can help reduce the damaging inflammatory response that often follows brain injury. This is crucial in reducing the side effect of migraines as well as helps those who have suffered from chronic migraines

- Psilocybin has been shown to reduce vasogenic edema (brain swelling) and the buildup of phosphorylated tau, a protein associated with neurodegenerative diseases. Psilocybin reduces brain swelling and the accumulation of phosphorylated tau, a protein linked to neurodegenerative diseases.

It is important to emphasize that psilocybin is not a standalone cure for brain trauma, It is a great tool that offers high potential that could be used as part of a comprehensive treatment plan.

Chapter 5

The Importance of Set, Setting Intentions when working with teacher fungus

Whether you are micro dosing or hero dosing, knowing your intention will allow you to have a more defined experience.

We refer to this fungi in particular as a teacher as it is here to teach you, guide you, and even reprimand you. They raise the vibrational patterns of your brain causing memories and emotions to flow more freely. They are removing the ego's judgement while allowing the user to fully experience the levels of emotions that resided within them.

Here are three things to take into consideration:

The Three Pillars

1. **Set** = Your inner world

Are you anxious? Curious? Nervous? Open? Take time to ground yourself before beginning.

2. **Setting** = Your outer world

Choose a calm, safe, distraction-free space. Nature helps. So does soft music, a blanket, maybe a trusted friend nearby.

3. **Intention** = Your why

You don't need to have a perfect answer. But asking "*What do I want to understand?*" can anchor the experience in meaning.

Think of it like planting a seed. The quality of the soil, light and care makes all the difference in what blooms.

Chapter 6

Inside the Experience: What Really happens on a Psilocybin Journey?

To be clear here there is a huge difference between a micro-dose and a macro-dose. A microdose is the experience you will have that is very light: a feeling of lightheartedness, a clearer head, perspective of situations and anxieties that might be on your mind.

It takes the edge off of life so to speak, creating a softening of said edges. Micro dosing is a light experience that can lift your mood for two to four hours then gently melt away. The user will be left feeling relaxed and ready for a good night's sleep.

A hero's dose, or a macro-dose, which is somewhere between two and 5 grams; mostly 3.5 grams is the recommended amount. A hero's dose lasts anywhere from 4 to 10 hours. Your size, sensitivity, and tolerance matter when dosing. It is like riding a wave; moments will be very intense filled with color and emotions, while other moments you may feel completely sober

The Arc of a Journey

1. Lift-Off (First 30–60 min):

Sensory shifts. Colors deepen. Time slows. Laughter or tears may surface.

2. The Peak (2–4 hours):

Ego may dissolve. You might feel awe, oneness or confront shadows. Emotions flow freely. This is the heart of the journey.

3. Return (4–6+ hours):

Slowly, reality comes back. You may feel tender, reborn, tired—or amazed.

It's not about hallucinations. It's about **revelations**.

You're not escaping yourself—you're meeting yourself more honestly than ever before.

Chapter 7

Microdosing vs. Macro dosing: Two Gateways to Transformation

There's no one "right" way to work with psilocybin. Some people dive deep with full-dose (macrodose) journeys. Others take small, sub-perceptual amounts (microdoses) to gently shift their baseline experience of life.

Microdosing: Subtle, Steady Shifts

A microdose is typically about 1/10 to 1/20 of a full dose—low enough that you don't "trip," but high enough to feel subtle effects over time.

People microdose to:

- Boost creativity
- Improve mood
- Ease anxiety
- Enhance focus
- Break unhelpful habits

Protocols vary (e.g., 1 day on, 2 days off) and results can take time. But many report feeling "more themselves"—calmer, more present, more aligned.

Note: Microdosing is not magic. It works best when paired with intention, reflection and lifestyle awareness.

Macro dosing: The Deep Dive

Macro doses (1g to 5g+) offer immersive, often mystical experiences. These journeys can:

- Reveal buried trauma
- Trigger catharsis
- Shift core beliefs
- Awaken spiritual insight

But this depth also carries **intensity**. It's not a casual trip—it's a ceremony. Always approach with respect and ideally, support.

Both practices are valid. One is a whisper; the other, a wave. What matters most is listening to what you're ready for.

Mushrooms are not harmful. You can not overdo them. They do not cause people to become something they are not. Knowing your limitations is important in making the right decision. Just know that no matter what, you will always be fine. Even the worst experiences can offer the biggest healing to the user through the integration process.

Chapter 8

Personal Responsibility

Let's get real: psilocybin is not a toy. It's also not a fit for everyone.

While it's generally considered physiologically safe, it can pose psychological risks—especially if used carelessly or with underlying mental health conditions.

Who Should Avoid It?

- Individuals with a personal or family history of **schizophrenia or psychosis**
- People currently experiencing **severe manic episodes**

Anyone unwilling or unable to surrender control (this journey requires letting go)

Responsibility Is Everything

Psilocybin can open doors—but it doesn't walk you through them. That's your work. So be honest:

- Are you doing this to heal or to escape?
- Do you have a plan for after?
- Are you in a stable place emotionally?

If the answer is no, it's okay to wait. This medicine isn't running away. Neither is your healing.

A Word on Set and Support

Some difficult trips can be avoided—or softened—by proper prep, intention and emotional readiness. But if you do face a “bad” trip, know this:

Even the dark has wisdom. Often, the most uncomfortable moments are the ones that end up changing everything.

Chapter 9

Integrating your discovery

The journey doesn't end when the visuals fade.

In fact, that's when the real work begins.

Integration is the process of turning insight into action—
weaving what you experienced into how you live, relate and
grow.

How to Integrate

- **Journal it out.** Write while it's fresh. Even fragments hold meaning.
- **Talk to someone.** A trusted friend, therapist or integration coach can help unpack the experience.
- **Change something.** Whether it's a habit, a belief or a boundary—do one thing differently.
- **Come back to it.** Reflect weeks or months later. You'll be surprised at what deepens.

Without integration, even the most profound trip can fade like a dream. With it? You begin to rebuild your life—one insight at a time.

Chapter 10

Global Shifts and Personal Stories: Legalization and Lived Experience

We're living in a moment of massive shift.

What was once hidden and stigmatized is now being spoken of on podcasts, in documentaries and even in political offices. Psilocybin is stepping into the light.

The Legal Landscape

- **United States:** Cities like Denver, Oakland and Portland have decriminalized psilocybin. Oregon is pioneering legal therapeutic use.
- **Canada:** Special exemptions have allowed psilocybin for end-of-life care and some therapeutic cases.
- **The Netherlands:** Legal “magic truffles” are used in retreats and personal exploration.
- **Global Trends:** A slow but steady reawakening is happening. Laws are still evolving, but public opinion is shifting fast.

Real Voices, Real Stories

- *“Psilocybin helped me forgive my father after years of silence. I finally saw him as human.”*
- *“I met my grief head-on. It cracked me open and somehow I feel more whole.”*
- *“I remembered a part of me I forgot existed. She was wild. She was free. She was me.”*

These aren't just anecdotes. They are testimonies. Markers of change. And they remind us: this isn't about the mushroom. It's about what it reveals in you.

Bonus Section: Inspired by “How to Change Your Mind”

Resources:

1. <https://michaelpollan.com/books/how-to-change-your-mind/>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X8LRb4jfZ9g>
(Netflix Episode 02.)

Bridging Popular Culture and Personal Awakening

A reflective chapter that draws inspiration from Michael Pollan’s Netflix series, exploring:

- Why public opinion is shifting
- How mainstream voices are embracing psychedelics
- Key takeaways from the show
- What this cultural moment means for personal seekers

Optional Subtopics for Extended Content

- The Role of Music in Psychedelic Therapy
- Nutrition, Breathwork and Fasting for Preparation
- Creating a Home Ceremony or Solo Ritual
- Psychedelics and the Inner Child
- Psilocybin and the Creative Process
- The Dark Side of the Journey: Difficult Trips and Their Meaning
- Choosing a Retreat or Facilitator: A Checklist



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