**The Therapeutic Potential of Ayahuasca**

Ayahuasca is a traditional Amazonian shamanic practice involving the ingestion of a plant brew made from the leaves of the Banisteriopsis caapi vine and the stalks of the Psychotria viridis shrub. The brew is made by combining the fibers of which the Banisteriopsis caapi is composed with those of the Psychotria viridis shrub. The combination of these fibers facilitates the extraction of alcaloids from the leaves of Banisteriopsis caapi, which act as a monoamine oxidase inhibitor (MAOI) and thus allow for the activation of the entheogenic properties of the Psychotria viridis shrub. This combination of natural ingredients promotes experiences that are understood to be tests for personal and spiritual growth, and do not always correspond to the expectations of the participants, but rather beneficial and transitory events of the mind without being tied to plate events, situations and relationships. Anxiety and fear are considered adverse reactions by session participants, but rather beneficial and desirable effects.

**About**

Ayahuasca is considered an entheogen, a substance that triggers a deep and often transformative experience, primarily for personal and spiritual growth. Some effects of this entheogen include increased mindfulness and cognitive flexibility, improved therapeutic change, potential neuroprotective properties, and neuromodulatory effects that could promote adult neurogenesis. Such effects can be seen in Parkinson’s disease, treatment-resistant depression, and even in the medical treatment of PTSD.

**What is ayahuasca?**

Ayahuasca is a traditional Amazonian shamanic practice involving the ingestion of a plant brew made from the leaves of the Banisteriopsis caapi vine and the stalks of the Psychotria viridis shrub. The brew is made by combining the fibers of which the Banisteriopsis caapi is composed with those of the Psychotria viridis shrub. The combination of these fibers facilitates the extraction of alcaloids from the leaves of Banisteriopsis caapi, which act as a monoamine oxidase inhibitor (MAOI) and thus allow for the activation of the entheogenic properties of the Psychotria viridis shrub.

**How can ayahuasca be therapeutic?**

Ayahuasca has been used by Indigenous communities in the Amazon for centuries to promote mental and spiritual well-being, social harmony and cohesion, and for strengthening social relations. These effects can be seen in experiences with conventional eating disorder treatment and ceremonial ayahuasca for the healing of eating disorders. In Parkinson's disease, ayahuasca-assisted therapy has been shown to improve motor functionality and subjective well-being. In treatment-resistant depression, ayahuasca has been shown to have rapid antidepressant effects. In PTSD, ayahuasca-assisted therapy has been linked to improved scores in PTSD.

**Difficult experiences**

Experiences with ayahuasca can be difficult and are considered part of the transformative process. However, they are generally not considered adverse reactions by session participants. The potential for difficult experiences can be reduced by using the ayahuasca brew in a professional setting under the guidance of a trained shaman or therapist.

**References**

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3. Bouso et al., 2012; Bouso et al., 2015; Soler et al., 2018
14. D'Alessandro, 2010
17. Nielson and Megler, 2013