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Psychedelic Users Experienced Less Psychological Stress During COVID-19 Lockdowns, Study Finds

by **Psychedelic Spotlight** (https://www.benzinga.com/user/278337) November 16, 2021 9:30 am

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This article was originally published on **Psychedelic Spotlight** (http://psychedelicspotlight.com/psychedelic-users-less-psychological-stress-during-covid-19-lockdowns-study/) and appears here with permission.

Psychedelic Users Experienced Less Psychological Stress During COVID-19 Lockdowns, Study Finds

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The impact of COVID-19 goes well beyond contracting the illness. Many countries all over the world have had to do the unthinkable and lock their citizens indoors, sometimes for months on end. An inability to exercise, work, or socialize has, of course, had a huge toll

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on people's mental health.

So, how do you maintain resilience against such a stressful situation as a lockdown?

One group of researchers have found that the answer may be to turn to psychedelics.

The Stress of Lockdowns

It's no secret that psychedelics can promote positive mental health. [MDMA](https://psychedelicspotlight.com/what-is-mdma/) (<https://psychedelicspotlight.com/what-is-mdma/>) is potentially on the path to gain FDA approval to [treat PTSD](https://psychedelicspotlight.com/mdma-study-ptsd-success/) (<https://psychedelicspotlight.com/mdma-study-ptsd-success/>), and [psilocybin is having its moment](https://psychedelicspotlight.com/dea-proposes-psilocybin-quota-increase-research-purposes/) (<https://psychedelicspotlight.com/dea-proposes-psilocybin-quota-increase-research-purposes/>) for the fight against depression. But, rather than specifically using psychedelics to treat specific mental health conditions, a group of researchers wanted to see if people that had regularly used psychedelics were more resilient to the stressful effects of coronavirus lockdowns.

The group of researchers, led by Dr. Dóra Révész from Tilburg University, [surveyed](https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsy.2021.687546/full) (<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsy.2021.687546/full>), nearly 3,000 participants from Spain, Brazil, and the US during their respective national COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020. The participants answered a battery of questions regarding their stress levels, and how they were spending their lockdown days. As well as this, the participants were split into three categories: regular psychedelic users, non-regular psychedelic users, and people who had never used a psychedelic before.

The researchers found that "lifetime use of psychedelic drugs ... was associated with less psychological distress, less peritraumatic stress, and more social support [during COVID-19 lockdowns]." Remarkably, they also found that stress was further reduced for the participants that regularly use psychedelic drugs. (That is, at least once every six months.)

Psychedelic Resilience

What's particularly interesting about these findings is the fact that psychedelics were not intended to be used therapeutically in response to the COVID-19 lockdown. The participants were not using psychedelics to combat stress during the lockdown; the researchers were simply investigating how previous use of psychedelics related to the lockdown's impact on mental health.

So, why would *previous* use of psychedelics be able to combat stress during current lockdowns? Well, the researchers also asked the participants how they were spending their time during lockdown, and found some significant differences between the psychedelic users and non-psychedelic users.

Psychedelic drug users were spending significantly more time outdoors, with more access to outdoor spaces, which may have helped this group to cope with the lockdown better. As well as this, regular psychedelic users had healthier diets, and were spending their time doing things they loved. The researchers highlighted that the psychedelic user group, "reported playing music, singing, and doing yoga, pilates, or meditation during confinement, while non-users spent more time watching COVID-related news or TV in general."

The difference between the two groups is striking. It seems that, as well as potentially having a positive impact on mental health through inexplicable mystical and spiritual experiences, the regular use of psychedelics may also promote healthier and positive habits in everyday life. Of course, these fundamental habits, like a healthy diet, are the building blocks of good mental health.

However, while this is a landmark study in the field of psychedelic science, we can't be too hasty about the conclusions. One alternative explanation is that people who use psychedelics possess the type of personality that may insulate them from stressful situations. Indeed, the regular psychedelic users differed in some personality traits, we can't be sure whether psychedelics *actually cause* a reduction in stress, or whether it is their personality that does so.

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Despite this limitation, it's interesting to find this difference in psychedelic users and non-psychedelic users. As the world finally starts to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an increasing necessity to treat the mental health conditions that have been exacerbated by this time of crisis. Psychedelics may be one of the most useful tools in the battle against worldwide poor mental health.

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