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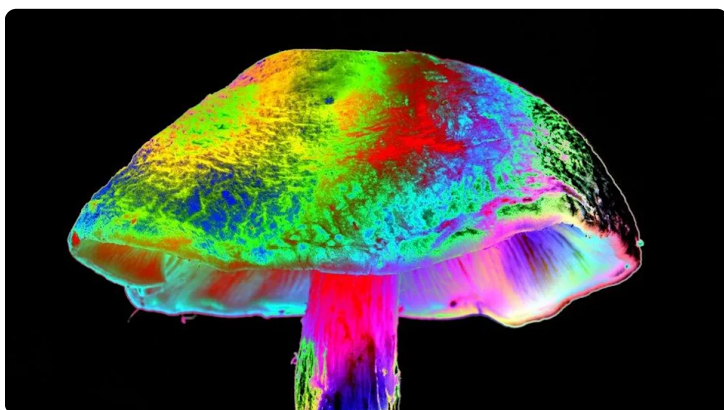


BBC NEWS | BBC

# 'I felt more joy than I thought possible'

Victoria Gill - Science correspondent, BBC News

April 19, 2022 · 5 min read



Magic Mushroom

"I had the full-blown mystical revelatory experience - the big psychedelic multi-coloured light and sound show."

This is how Steve recalls his first dose of a hallucinogenic drug, psilocybin, the psychedelic compound found in magic mushrooms.

His experience was part of a clinical trial that some scientists are calling a major step towards a revolution in the treatment of depression. It is a trial complicated by the fact that the drug it is testing is illegal. Psilocybin is a Schedule 1 controlled substance; its use is very strictly regulated.

Part of the definition of a Schedule 1 drug is that it is not used medicinally. But this trial, which scanned of the brains of participants after their treatment with psychedelics, painted an extraordinary physical picture of the effect and

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break a depressed person "out of a rut of negative thinking" - that psilocybin "reintegrates" a depressed brain, making it more fluid, flexible and connected.

So how does it feel to have your brain reintegrated by psychedelic drugs?

"It's an ineffable experience - words like the ones we're using now are just not enough," Steve told [BBC Radio 4's Inside Science](#).

"With the first dose, I felt joy like I've never experienced - and more like myself than I've ever felt."

But the second dose in the trial, he said, was very dark.

Steve, who is now in his 60s, was diagnosed with depression more than 30 years ago.

Traditional antidepressants simply did not work for him.

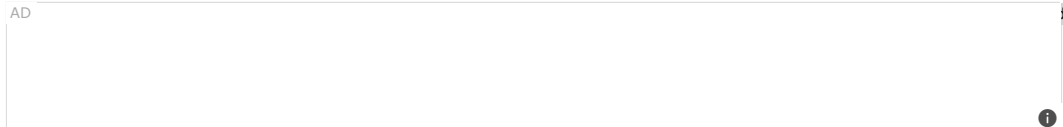
Those existing drugs work by increasing the levels of a chemical called serotonin in the brain. That is one of the chemical messengers that relays signals from one part of the brain to another; low serotonin has been associated with depression since the 1960s.

But while antidepressant drugs that "correct" that serotonin imbalance numbed the lows for Steve - lows that he said

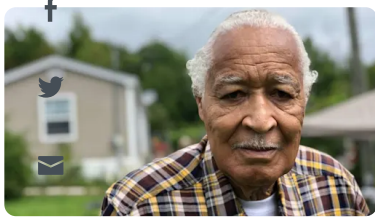
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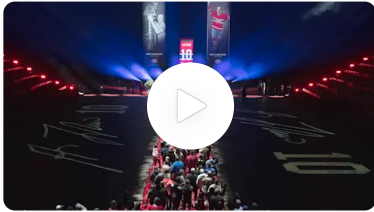
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