Hey, it's Tristan. As some of you know, Your Undivided Attention is part of the TED Audio Collective, and we thought our listeners would like to know about a new podcast from one of our partners that touches on some similar themes to this podcast called Rethinking. Organizational Psychologist, Adam Grant, sits down with some of the world's most creative and fascinating minds to talk about the assumptions that we take for granted, and how challenging them can lead us to lead fuller lives. You can listen to Rethinking from the TED Audio Collective wherever you get your podcasts.

When you look around at the world, it can feel like we're in a precarious moment. If you've listened to past episodes, we call this the meta crisis. This sort of era of simultaneous crises that are hitting us around the environment, domestic polarization, limits of growth, debts to GDP ratio, US China competition, the rise of decentralized technologies, like synthetic biology, and it feels like we have the capacity to just kind of destroy ourselves.

I'm Tristan Harris.

I'm Aza Raskin.

This is Your Undivided Attention, the podcast from the Center for Humane Technology. This precarious moment harkens back to an earlier time when we felt that the world was just on edge. That was in the time during the Cold War, when there was the risk that we could have global thermonuclear war. But a movement grew out of that time in reaction to the threat of nuclear war, which was the 1960s Human Potential Movement. This is a movement that was all about experimenting with all the extraordinary untapped potential that existed in all people, if you could heal their wounds and deal humanistically, psychologically, with helping us arrive at more of our untapped capacities. Places like the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California hosted key figures like Abraham Maslow, who invented the hierarchy of needs framework.

Actually, the miracles of life are repetitive. Flowers and sunsets, and so on. A miracle remains a miracle even if it happens every morning. These people somehow responded to them as miracles in spite of the fact that they happened a great deal. This impressed me very much.

Fritz Perls, who invented Gestalt psychology.

Once the patient has learned to stand on his own feet, emotionally, intellectually, and economically, his need for therapy will collapse. He will wake up from the nightmare of his existence.

Milton Erickson, who invented Hypnotherapy.
Milton Erickson: Keep your eyes open. Let your head be wide awake, and your body sound asleep.

Tristan Harris: Carl Rogers, who invented Humanistic Psychology.

Carl Rogers: Very early in my work as a therapist, I discovered that simply listening to my client very attentively was an important way of being helpful.

Tristan Harris: Virginia Satir and her work around family systems.

Virginia Satir: That's what we're playing with all the time in a good way, is helping the energy of each person to begin to open, and to flower.

Tristan Harris: In that lineage, one of the key tools that was explored was psychedelics. That's why today on the show, we wanted to invite Rick Doblin, who's the founder and executive director of the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, otherwise known as MAPS. They are a research nonprofit around the beneficial use of psychedelics. In a way, Rick Doblin is kind of the next step of a longer lineage in the journey for the human potential. Doblin's vision is for nothing less than a transformation of society through psychedelic assisted therapy, not for the drugs themselves, but for their ability to help us react to one another with compassion, to appreciate our differences, to accept criticism with love, and to find connection. Given the perma-crisis we face, it's provocative to think about a tool that when prescribed and used safely could help us overcome these win-lose games that drive up the conflict that we're trying to escape from, to heal from the constant trauma inflation that we're getting online, and to shrink the perception gaps that split us into tribes.

So this is a little bit of a different episode, but we wanted to invite you to keep an open mind about a different kind of humane technology as you listen to this episode. With that, here we go.

Welcome to Your Undivided Attention. I am so excited today to have Rick Doblin, who is founder and executive director of MAPS, which is the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies. I think this conversation is going to be really fascinating because I think both MAPS with its work on psychedelics and treating people with PTSD, and trauma with things like MDMA, I think both of our projects are really about understanding the contours of what helps minds heal, and be free. There's a question of who do we need to be? What kind of species do we need to be? What kind of consciousness or awareness or maturity do we need to have? So, I wanted to kind of start there. Your way of expressing this idea is that you believe that a spiritualized humanity that has dealt with all the crisis that we have coming up, that we can get there by 2070 with psychedelics. So, just want to first welcome you and hear how that lands for you.
Rick Doblin: Yeah. Well, MAPS' mission, as we understand it, is mass mental health, and a spiritualized humanity. So, even though we are a drug development company trying to make MDMA assisted therapy for PTSD into FDA approved and regulatory, approved for prescription use all over the world. We're involved in drug policy reform. The end goals are the spiritualized humanity. I think we won't lose the sense of our religion, our culture, our tribe, our political orientation, all the different ways that we identify as to who we are, but we will understand that there's a deeper way in which we are all connected with all of creation, with all of life, with all of the species, with all of humanity. That if we can understand, and this is where the psychedelics come in, not just intellectually understand, but experience that sense of connection, then we should be emerging out of that with more compassion, more appreciation for differences.

Not so much scared of differences, but celebrate them. I would say that this theory of change is what really motivated me 50 years ago in 1972 when I was 18, to devote my life to psychedelics, because I thought psychedelics are in many ways a faster way than other approaches. I think the psychedelic, mystical experience can help it, and it does not have to be approached through psychedelics. So, I think that's just an important point to make, is that psychedelics are not the only way to get there, which means that the psychedelics don't produce the experience, they reveal the experience. There are other ways through hyperventilation, through fasting, through meditation. They are properties of humanity, not properties of the drug.

Aza Raskin: So, a lot of places to go from here, but I think it would be a really helpful grounding for our listeners to understand first what is a psychedelic, and what isn't a psychedelic?

Tristan Harris: I was going to say. Yeah. Well, and I also, I want to make sure I add here that like you said, it's not all drugs. It can be meditation, other things. So, let's define a little bit, and let's be careful when we use words like "spiritualized", 'cause some people might say, wait, hold on a second, you've lost us here.

Rick Doblin: Okay, well, I think maybe the basic ground to say is that it's not the experience that's the most important. It's the context of the experience that you have. I don't want people to think, oh, you pop a psychedelic, and then you have these kind of therapeutic spiritual experiences that connect you with everybody and everything. That's very possible. The psychedelics are a catalyst, but the social context in which they're used is even more important than the substance itself. It's really the social context. So, the same way when we talk about therapy, when we talk about psychedelic assisted therapy, MDMA assisted therapy for PTSD or psilocybin assisted therapy for depression, or substance use or end of life anxiety, that it's really the emphasis is on the therapy that the psychedelics help make more effective. Alright, so what is a psychedelic? The way that I defined psychedelic when I created MAPS in 1986 was in line with the way the
word was invented in the fifties by Humphry Osmond in communication with Aldous Huxley.

The word was defined as "mind manifesting," sort of the psyche to reveal, to manifest the mind. So, we all have psychedelic experiences when we dream. I would say dreams are psychedelic. They bring out issues, moods, feelings, thoughts from our memory bank. They bring things to the surface. I think it's very important to expand the definition of psychedelic, to not just be a drug, but to also bring to the surface what has been more difficult to attain in other ways, or hidden, or suppressed. By broadening the definition, what we're doing is making it so that the experiences are human experiences. The catalyst, whether it's hyperventilation or fasting or some people marathon running, or pain, or different ways of transcendence that they're all sort of equally psychedelic in their own different ways.

I've chosen to concentrate MAPS on physical substances. What happens when you take MDMA is you have it on a short term basis, or when you take LSD or anything, Ayahuasca. These are short-term, bounded acute experiences. The goal then is to, with the integration process, is to try to make it so you take those lessons, those experiences that you've had, and you try to anchor them in your life, so that they are more, something that you can achieve without the psychedelic, without the catalyst of the drug.

Tristan Harris: Could you explain, so let's just take MDMA. What is it, and what is the experience of it?

Rick Doblin: I think one of the best ways to describe MDMA is like the feeling you have when you take a deep breath. It's like you relax into yourself, you're present, you're alive, you're there. MDMA reduces activity in the amygdala, the fear processing part of our brain. So, emotions and memories that are connected to trauma, or just connected to vulnerabilities, we can look at them more carefully. MDMA people know it as ecstasy or Molly releases oxytocin, which is the hormone of love, connection and nursing mothers. So, if I had to really describe MDMA, it's a, in as few words as possible, it's self acceptance. You take this deep breath, you settle into yourself, your mind quiets. That's why it can be useful for meditation. Your thoughts always in our mind about what are we going to do next, and where have we just come from?

You get more focused on the present moment. You feel more loving and connected. You're strengthened in your sense of who you are. You're not so vulnerable to criticisms. You're able to look at things that you wish that you had done differently without the punitive aspect in it. You're able to hear what people might say, like it's terrific for couple's therapy, because you can hear from the other person what they're saying without such defensiveness. It's something that you can take, and you just settle into where you are, and settle into
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yourself. Then, you can speak from the heart in a less defensive way, and feel connected. It lasts somewhere in the neighborhood of five to six hours.

The way we do it in therapy is we give an initial amount and then two hours later we give half the initial amount in order to prolong the experience. It kind of extends the plateau. Stan Grof had a beautiful phrase about how psychedelics can help your ego be transparent to the transcendent. If we can see ourselves as something connected to much larger, to everything, that then we can be transparent to the transcendent, and MDMA really helps that a lot. So, you could say it sort of cleans the window of the ego. I think that that's how I would describe what a psychedelic is and what MDMA is.

Tristan Harris:
You've mentioned sort of qualities of the experience, that it creates this self-acceptance, it creates sense of not taking things personally in a critique. There are couples who are talking to each other, and they're lovingly having a conversation about things that might normally be really triggering, and their system is flooded with oxytocin. You said, was it the nursing mother sort of feeling, like that kind of deep warmth and love that is sort of ubiquitous, and that a monk for meditating for 10 years may not be able to access that state, but suddenly there's this shortened timeline. So, now that we've sort of named one of the experiences, why would something like this be seen as a tool to evolve human consciousness or be in the face of the meta crisis of all these things? We just described a set of effects, but why do people who have had this experience say that this has something to do with an ability to answer the big crises that we kind of face? I think connecting the local to the global, because that's so often how this kind of shows up.

Rick Doblin:
Well, one of the key factors that we know about in terms of oxytocin is this sense of connection and empathy. So, that it does help you to move out of this self-referential frame that we're often trapped in all the time thinking about ourselves. It quiets that sense of self, so you can see the other, and you want to see the other more for who they really are rather than who you want them to be. So, there's this curiosity about where are they coming from? There's also this sense of empathy and connection. We know in neuroscience, there's something called mirror neurons that help us understand who we're talking with. We come into kind of a concordance with them in certain ways. Now, into the frame of trauma. There are so many traumas that people have experienced in their lives that color how they see the world, and they make it so that people sometimes cannot see through their trauma.

So, for somebody with PTSD, the world is a threatening place. They're always being triggered. If they can address the source of their trauma, and sort of place that as part of their experience, not all of their experience, place it in the past, not the present, they can see the other and the world in a clearer, more accurate manner. So, when we think about how is it that certain kind of conflicts can go down the generational line for a thousand of years? Why do we have Shiites and
Sunnis killing each other over what happened more than a millennium and a half ago about Muhammad and his successors, or in Catholics and Protestants killing themselves, or Orthodox Jews thinking that everybody else is off the path? We have these frames of reference that are guided by our past traumas, and we don't see the world as it is.

We see it in a way through these dirty glasses. I think when you can help people work through their past traumas, then they're able to see other people in a different way. One example is not MDMA, but this will be an Ayahuasca story. There are Israelis and Palestinians that are doing MDMA and Ayahuasca together, and it's a small group, and they're more culturally open. They're not the hardcore haters, but they still have a lot of their issues with the other. There is one story about how during an Ayahuasca session, one of the Israelis, and Israelis who are not Arab Israelis, all have to go through the military. This was someone who had been a former soldier, and he had said that listening to Arabic music, it always triggered him. This was the enemy. This was something he didn't like.

This was something scary. He was on alert. Again, through the sort of trauma lens. He's on alert every time he hears this Arabic music. Under the influence of Ayahuasca, he could hear it in a different way. He could hear it in a beautiful way, and he could see and appreciate something that had previously frightened him, and made him think this was the other. I think that's one of the ways in which psychedelic experiences, and the MDMA experiences by helping people work through their burden of trauma from the past. You can undo them through successful therapy. I think through MDMA, we will be able to see other people in a less threatening lens, and other cultures, other religions, other concepts, to see them more for what they are, and to search out for what we share in common, rather than be frightened about what's different. That grounded sense of connection can be the basis for trying to work through our disagreements, and our conflicts with other people.

Aza Raskin: A poet friend once told me that our fears are our maps to our freedom, in the sense that if you fear something, there's an insecurity. So, you will get triggered and you'll sort of programmatically act some way. The way you're describing the experience of MDMA really reminds me of my experience with an Ashtanga practice, yoga, where what I was very surprised to discover is that something I do on the mat, in a physical activity doesn't just affect my physical activity off the mat, but affected something really profound, which is how well I was able to receive feedback, when people tell me something hard about some way that I'm showing up that's causing harm, and I'm probably profiting from. The way it worked is what you're learning to do in yoga is to breathe calmly and slowly while your body is working very hard, releasing every muscle, that's not the one that's working very hard.
So, now when I receive feedback, I can actually listen because my body doesn't tense up. I'm not driven by my fear. I can hear what's being said, and that gives me the opportunity to transform. If we can show up, if we can see other people more accurately, if we can hear them more accurately, that begins to change how we all act. Am I getting sort of your theory of change right?

Rick Doblin: Yeah, exactly. Another thing about the day after MDMA where we suggest that really it's a two-day experience. The first days is, you do it. The second day, you integrate it. You rest. It takes a lot out of you. You rest. You think about it. The day after MDMA, I feel very clearly that there's a tiny bit of a lag between when somebody says something, and my normal quick response. It sinks deeper, a millisecond or something, it sinks deeper, and I can come from a deeper place. I think writ large, we are so reactive. There's so much happening, so much of it is unconscious, that how we respond, that as you're describing of this, you don't leap into your patterned responses. You can let things sink a bit deeper. You can be a better listener. It doesn't take more than a fraction of a second to do that. Our brains are operating at such a speed with just a fraction of a second. We can come from a deeper place.

Tristan Harris: I want to make some more links here to social media, and just so that listeners are tracking from our normal topic space to this. Part of what you were just sharing, Rick, is the invisible ways that her minds are not clean. So, a lot of things we're talking about social media is that we're not actually seeing the world in some honest state, we're we are trapped inside of a fun house mirror that we can't actually see. Our glasses are dirty. We can't tell that. Much like a person who has been traumatized throughout their life, which all of us have been in some different ways, there's a diminished limiting, distorted picture that we're getting back. Unless you had the self-understanding to know what trauma is, and the particular ways that it creates a slightly different attunement reaction, ways of pointing our attention, then you wouldn't know that, because we don't walk in the world thinking that we're wearing a dirty pair of glasses.

I want to remind listeners that this is why on this podcast we've covered some possibly eccentric topics like breathing and the power of breath. Why would we interview James Nestor on breath? Because breath is a psycho technology. Just that slight delay in how we're reacting, and responding to how things hit us and sink into us can produce an enormously different response in how we're all showing up in the world. So, when I think about social media, it's like a hyper trauma factory, because if I click on and say, one Black Lives Matter video, Twitter will be happy to show me video after video of African Americans getting beaten. If I'm an Asian American person, and I click on one video of anti-Asian American hate, I will see infinite evidence of that thing happening to a way that's like, way more than I would be able to think about in my own mind or hear about from friends.
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It's guided by Al, the most powerful supercomputer in the world that's routing the most outrageous thing to my brain. So, one of the ways we think about social media as it's a trauma inflation factory, because no matter what it is that you can't help but look at, which is one also way of just thinking about what traumas might do to our attention is like, well, we can't help but look more at. It sends our attention to those things. Meanwhile, it decreases empathy for those traumas because other people aren't seeing that same newsfeed of the inflated trauma. I'm both getting a double dose of the trauma, and I'm getting a double anti-dose of the empathy, because other people don't have that shared experience. Unless we can sort of say, this is your brain on trauma. This is your brain without the trauma. This is your brain on social media. This is your brain without the social media.

There's just a million ways that our minds are hijacked in some way. Unless we have this tool of self-understanding, Yuval Harari, we've had on this podcast from Sapiens, and a lot of people remarked that the most powerful thing that he and I said in a conversation was just: "The most important thing that people can do, the greatest tool is to know ourself, to get that different view of ourselves."

**Aza Raskin:** You can think of social media apps as almost installing an app in our brain, that is to say you use Instagram and Facebook and suddenly there's a new app that's been installed in your brain, which is, I need to get attention. I like care about the likes. It shifts the way I view the world. I use TikTok, and there's a new app installed in my brain, which is I need to be finding the right place to create content, and the right dance to be doing. One of the things I'm hearing you say about psychedelics is that it's one of the very fastest tools to uninstall those apps from our brains. So, we get back to a little bit more of like a state from which we're not acting other people's or technology's desire for us. I wanted to talk a little bit about psychedelic enthusiasm. 'Cause I think there's this view that if you just give people psychedelics, they will have these mystical, sacred experiences, and there's a programmatic direction that it moves people's minds. One of the things you talked about is that UDV, this Ayahuasca church, is pro-Bolsonaro.

**Rick Doblin:** Yeah. They're the first one that went to the US Supreme Court, actually, and got protection for religious freedom to have Ayahuasca use in the United States in their ceremonies. In order to survive these Amazonian churches, they're called Syncretic Churches. They had to sort of blend with a dominant culture, with a Catholic Church. As a consequence, they are hierarchical, homophobic, patriarchal, and in some ways authoritarian. So, they actually aligned with Bolsonaro in Brazil.

**Tristan Harris:** Just for listeners, Jair Bolsonaro is the now former president of Brazil who recently lost an election to Luiz Lula da Silva. Bolsonaro was a big supporter of deforestation, cattle farming, to keep mowing down the Amazon to make room for soybeans, mining and logging, and was very populist as a leader.
Rick Doblin: So, we have an example of a very powerful psychedelic, Ayahuasca, that has helped many, many people to mature in their understanding of who they were, to be more spiritualized. It's been tremendously helpful. Ayahuasca being a mixture of Amazonian plants that produces a very strong psychedelic experience. When it’s encased in a social structure that interprets the experience in different ways, you don't necessarily get the liberation, the bonding with everybody that we're talking about.

Tristan Harris: It's interesting that Ayahuasca, you would think being this experience that connects you more to nature, more to the sacred, more to all of this, could be pro a president that wants to mow down the Amazon.

Rick Doblin: Yeah, yeah. It's in Congress. So, again, it just emphasizes that the cultural context is more important than the experience itself.

Tristan Harris: We've focused a bit on the drug itself, but I wanted to see if you could talk about the importance of psychedelic assisted therapy. You can see psychedelics as a kind of God-like power of its own that is now being decentralized, that has the power to transform human consciousness, to transform who we are, and how we see. I think of the class of experiences that we're talking about as a kind of class of transformative experiences. Social media transforms our identity, our values, what we're seeking in the world. Psychedelics are transforming our basis of what we care about, how we show up, our reactivity. With this god-like power to transform people en mass into some other state, there's a sense that we have to match that power with the wisdom, love, and prudence of gods. So, I think of set, setting and integration. Could you talk about how set and setting and integration might be the wisdom, love and prudence that's attached to, or shouldn't be unbound from that god-like power of psychedelics?

Rick Doblin: Yeah. I think a good way to sort of illustrate the importance of the setting, the psychotherapeutic context. I spoke about this in my TED talk, but the first time I ever worked with someone with PTSD was in 1984. The story is that I had sold MDMA. This was back when it was still legal. I had sold MDMA to a friend of mine, and he had done it with his girlfriend, who I did not know and had never met. Under the influence of MDMA, the memory of a past trauma came up where she had been raped and almost killed. She'd been in and out of mental institutions, she'd been depressed by it. She had PTSD. She thought she had come to some new balance that she could sort of go through the world in this new way, but this MDMA experience brought up this trauma in a way that she couldn't run away from.

She felt terribly suicidal. So, she ended up checking herself into a mental hospital to avoid self-harm. She was there for about six days or so, and they stabilized her, but they gave her the same old medications that she had had before that had not worked. Once she got out, she was more suicidal than before, because she thought there really is no hope to get away from this trauma. That's where
my friend called me up and said, is there anything you can do? I felt I'm learning to be a psychotherapist, but I'm not fully trained. This woman is suicidal. He said she has got no other options. She had done the best of Western science and Western medicine and psychiatry. So, I agreed to talk to her on the phone, and I said, if she agreed not to commit suicide when we were working together, I would be willing to work with her.

Then, I got some women friends, we created this safe place around her, and then under two experiences, she was able to work through her trauma. Over time, she has then become a therapist, and now she's one of our main therapists, and she trains other therapists. The point of this is that she took MDMA without a psychotherapeutic context, and experiences came up that made her worse off. It's the same drug, but the context made her worse off. Then, when we did it in a therapeutic context, she went through terrible fears and anxieties about what had actually happened. This person, this had been quite a long time before in a different country, but he'd said if she ever told anybody about it, he'd kill her. She couldn't even say hi his name without it triggering all these thoughts that she'd be killed.

So, under the influence of MDMA, she would tell the story, say his name. What was different was not the drug, it was the same drug, but it was the context. The context was that when these emotions come up or these memories come up, that the way to go through is to let it take over, surrender, see where it goes. So, Stan Grof has also had this beautiful saying that the full experience of an emotion is the funeral pyre of that emotion. Like for grief, if you have someone that has died and you are just so in mourning that you can't, it's overwhelming to let out your emotions, that then you have this kind of prolonged grief, and you're sort of stuck in it. It's similar to PTSD in certain ways, but once you can finally cry, once you can finally let it out, then you can move beyond it.

So, set and setting, when we think about that, that was actually Timothy Leary that came up with that idea. So, what the set is your own internal mental context, what you're coming to an experience with, what's your past history. The setting is the context in which you have the experience. That can be a religious setting, like the Native American Church use of peyote, or it can be a therapeutic context. So, the setting is where you take it, and the interaction between the set and the setting makes the difference of what happens.

Just when you're talking about that Stan Grof quote, a friend of mine told me recently that grief is love with nowhere to go. It makes me think about PTSD, as fear with no place to go. That these kinds of psychedelic experiences give you the license, like the permission to have it have a place to go. I want to expand a second from this idea of set and setting to an even broader version of set and setting, which is to start looking at the sort of competitive economic landscape into which psychedelics are being introduced. So, an example from our space is even if a designer at YouTube wants to put safeguards on what videos get
shown, and they did do this to when you watch a video, it shows you the even more extreme version of that video. They started to put safeguards on, TikTok starts eating their lunch, because they're just much more engaging, and they need to move to short form video, and they take away all the safeguards 'cause they're now competing.

I know Ketamine, which is another psychedelic, has been pushed out into the market and legalized. There's a kind of standard profit motive. I’ve heard a lot of really negative stories for people that go in for a Ketamine Assisted Therapy session and get very little attention, very little integration, and have in the end a pretty bad traumatic experience. You have chosen a format of a non-profit owning a for-profit. I know that you’ve spent a lot of time thinking about, okay, it's not just the drug, it's the set and setting. The setting can be all of our macro economic climate in our markets. I’d love for you to just walk through some of the risks that you see. Some of the ways you've seen of binding the technical term multi-polar trap. If we don't do it, somebody else will. Yeah, I'd love your insights.

Rick Doblin: Yeah. So, one of the concerns that I have about the for-profit psychedelic companies is this idea of acting like traditional pharma, where you try to patent everything, even if you did not invent it. So, there's patents for ideas that people didn't invent, but once you get a patent, it's very expensive for other people to challenge the patent. So, Big Pharma also has enormous resources, and some of these for-profit companies also have large resources. They will patent stuff, and then they will drain other people’s resources from trying to challenge the patent, so they're out for profit maximizing. So, we do have MAPS as a non-profit owns a for-profit, but it's a modification of capitalism called the Public Benefit Corp. So, I think that's one of the concerns. I think the other concern is to try to get coverage by National Health Insurance and by private insurers. There'll be a tendency to try to minimize the expensive part, which is the therapy, and just try to have the healing potential being the drug.

I worry about that a lot. Another aspect that I worry about is about the training of the therapists. I didn't mention this earlier, but one of the reasons that I felt that MDMA was the likely drug to make it first through the system, when that's what's happening now, is that the therapists are more effective if they've done the drug themselves. We know this, so you wouldn't go to an Ashtanga teacher that never did yoga, or a meditation teacher that never meditated. So, this concept that therapists should have an experience with their own substances they’re giving is sort of universally accepted in the therapeutic community. It's not essential, but you learn more if you do that. MDMA being the gentlest there's less resistance in the field of psychiatry and psychotherapy for people having their own MDMA experience than having psilocybin, which is more challenging or having LSD.
It makes more sense for therapists to have their own experiences. I do worry, and to give you a good example of the worries of this patent problems. 1986 is when I started MAPS. 1986 is also when a company was started in a for-profit context to develop ibogaine for opiate addiction. They decided to do it in a for-profit way. As it turned out, they thought that would be the best way to raise resources. They were doing a study, the researcher found a long-lasting metabolite noribogaine of ibogaine, that had some effect on reducing cravings. She patented that. It turned into big patent fights, and that destroyed the field for over 20 years until the patents expired. So, I think for-profits have a lot of potential problems. On the other hand, MAPS has raised 135 million dollars in donations in our history. In the last couple years, the for-profits have raised in excess of a billion and a half.

The access to capital is really important. There's also an enormous amount of suffering going on. So, we need more resources. So, I'm not opposed to for-profits, nor am I opposed to patents for original inventions, but the traditional strategy in pharma to try to block other companies from doing stuff with patents is very disturbing. The minimization of therapy to try to make it as inexpensive as possible other than the drugs, so that the insurance companies will cover it. When I started MAPS, nobody would even think to do a for-profit psychedelic company, because there's so many political obstacles. Keeping the drug war alive was based on demonizing drugs, demonizing drug users, putting people in prison for extensive periods of time, going after minorities, and the medicalization of psychedelics, and even cocaine, or opiates, or all these things were seen as a threat to the narrative, particularly also with cannabis, the narrative, these are drugs that have only risks, no benefits, and that's why they're illegal.

So, we've seen with the medicalization of marijuana, the legalization of marijuana in many states, that the general sense that the drug war has been an enormous failure. So, that there's less resistance to moving forward with research that could identify context where benefits outweigh risks for psychedelics marijuana for other previously demonized drugs. So, that's a really good sign and that has permitted really the rise of the for-profits. There are dangers there and there are things that I'm worried about, but I do think that these for-profits can also do a lot of good in their access to resources, and into all the different research they're trying to do.

Tristan Harris: Just maybe to close, would you speak to your vision of the end game here for how we might, with your work and the lifelong, by the way, work that you have done in this space to try to make. Most people don't take on cathedral projects that exceed their lifetime. You are doing that. I think in the vein of what we're talking about. Would you just respond to that?

Rick Doblin: Yeah. The vision that I have is that we anticipate before the end of 2023 that we would have FDA approval for the prescription use of MDMA assisted therapy for
PTSD by trained therapists, ideally, whose training can include one MDMA session. We think that DEA rescheduling will take place. They have to do it within 30 days. So, early 2024 is when it should be available, and most if not all of the states of America and also Israel, Canada and Europe is going to be a year or two behind. We think what will then happen is about a decade of the rollout of maybe 5/6,000 psychedelic clinics with tens of thousands, 50,000 or more therapists, or a hundred thousand trained in this area, with millions of people going through these sessions. What we hope is to have a million MDMA sessions in this decade. Then, those people will tell the stories to other people and then that will end up changing the cultural narrative, such that we will move to a post-prohibition world, not just for psychedelics, but for other things as well. Legalization, I think, will generate more and more interest, I think in people going to the trained professionals in these clinics covered by insurance. So, I think under the stresses of the world as we're coming forward, people are shutting down. They're becoming more irrational. They're becoming more tribal.

I think we need whatever techniques we can develop from meditation to yoga, to psychedelics, to breathing, to help people deal with the constant frequency of change that is never in human history. It seems like things are changing faster than they ever have, and often in negative ways. What Einstein said was that the splitting of the atom has changed everything except for our mode of thinking, and hence we drift towards unparalleled catastrophe. What shall be necessary if mankind is to survive is a whole new mode of thinking.

So, the question is, what is that new mode of thinking? My interpretation of what Einstein was driving at was that it was this understanding that we are all interconnected, and that we have much more in common than we have that separates us, and our technology has exceeded our humanity. I think that even though Einstein didn’t say it, that points to the same thing. We have developed our cognitive capacities, so that we can communicate to each other electronically. You can make this available to so many people, the internet, the Webb Telescope that’s out in space. It's just amazing. We do not have the spiritual and emotional maturity to handle the technology that we have developed. So, we need to build people’s resilience, their emotional capacity to respond, to be empathic. I think and sincerely believe that over multiple generations, as you say, that psychedelics can find their rightful place and make a major contribution to helping us survive and thrive.

Tristan Harris: Rick Doblin launched MAPS in 1986, a year after MDMA was criminalized, and he received his Doctorate in Public Policy from Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, where he wrote his dissertation on the regulation of the medical uses of psychedelics. Rick studied with Dr. Stanislav Grof, and he was among the first to be certified as a Holotropic Breathwork Practitioner. MAPS is now in its final step before the FDA would approve prescriptions of MDMA by trained therapists. You can learn more about their work and sign up for a clinical trial on their website, which is in the show notes. If you’re intrigued by psychedelics or
other psycho technologies and don't know where to start, we have some suggestions for you in our show notes, including a link to our episode on the Power of Breath with James Nestor. *Your Undivided Attention* is produced by the Center for Humane Technology, a nonprofit organization working to catalyze a humane future.

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