



## **Entheo Sitter Guidebook**

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**Trip without falling**



## Sitter Education

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The purpose of this book is to educate trip sitters on how to support a journeyer taking moderate to higher doses of psilocybin, LSD or MDMA in a private setting in a way that facilitates positive, safe and ideal experiences for self-discovery and well-being. A psychedelic trip sitter is a key tenet to harm reduction and responsible psychedelic use. A sitter enables self-discovery and for the journeyer to access their inner healing intelligence of the psyche. To do this, the sitter acts in a non-directive supervisory role, sitting next to the journeyer for the entirety of psychedelic experience, attending to the safety and other interpersonal needs of the journeyer with full attention and open acceptance while remaining free from distraction. This seemingly simple stewardship role contributes to the set and setting, two critical ingredients for a safe and ideal experience.

Trip sitters are often a trusted friend or family member of the journeyer and are asked at least 1-2 weeks prior to a psychedelic experience if they will assist in a journey. If the sitter agrees to sit for the journeyer, the sitter will be provided this resource along with links to learn more about the psychedelic of choice so they can equip themselves with the knowledge and tools to help a journeyer through different aspects of a psychedelic experience. After the sitter reads the materials and conducts their own research, the journeyer and sitter will co-construct a journey plan to clarify roles and responsibilities. Once a journey plan is in place, both the journeyer and sitter are often ready for the trip.

As a trip sitter, being present for someone, listening and sitting with them in silence, reassuring safety, assisting them to the restroom, and offering water from time to time is often all that is required. However, there is more to learn about this role so let's now explore this in more detail.

### **Here is the trip sitter's learning objectives:**

- Identify if they are an ideal candidate to be a sitter.
- Know the roles and responsibilities of the sitter and journeyer
- Understand the importance of set and setting.
- Learn what is a difficult experience and how to support a journeyer through it.
- Become familiar with exercises in the mental health toolkit.
- Know what to do during medical emergency situations.
- Review and create a journey plan with the journeyer.



## The Trip Sitter Checklist

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### Ideal Trip Sitter Characteristics:

- You are open to learning about the psychedelic being used and the importance of the set, setting, and intention.
- You are mature, trustworthy, compassionate, self-aware, supportive and caring.
- You are physically, psychologically and emotionally stable.
- You can openly discuss, agree, and consent to a journey plan with the journeyer.
- You have the ability to stay relaxed and grounded in the presence of intense anxiety, fear and other reactions that may be expressed by the journeyer.
- In the event the journeyer cries, reveals sensitive information, is open about traumatic memories or difficult emotions, they can be met without judgment, with compassion and equanimity.
- You can maintain confidentiality.

### Bonus Trip Sitter Characteristics:

- Have experience with psychedelics.
- Personally understand the potential benefits of psychedelics.
- Have experience with trip sitting.
- Have valid first aid training.
- Are trauma-informed.
- Is a registered health professional.
- Have completed a recognized course or training program such as MAPS, ATMA or Therapsil.
- Have read [The Manual for Psychedelic Guides](#).
- Are aware of the [6 Core Competencies of a Psychedelic Therapist](#)



**When to consider not being a sitter:**

- You do not want to learn about the psychedelic and principles of harm reduction.
- You do not believe psychedelics have therapeutic potential.
- You can not support someone for the entirety of the journey.
- You will have difficulty remaining present, calm and grounded in challenging situations.
- You do not feel safe being with the journeyer.
- You do not have a safe and comfortable space to sit in.
- You do not have an agreed upon journey plan.
- There is no access to essentials such as food, water or a restroom.
- You do not have phone service in case of an emergency.
- You have unresolved psychological issues (i.e. trauma).
- You have a complicated relationship with the journeyer.
- You may feel uncomfortable hearing traumatic memories or an array of different emotions.
- You would not be able to support a journeyer through a difficult experience such as anxiety or fear.



## Roles and Responsibilities

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### **What to discuss prior to the journey in the non-psychedelic space?**

Prior to any type of trip or journey in life, it is important to discuss important details for the trip and clarify roles and responsibilities with those you are traveling with. When using psychedelics, the journeyer and the sitter must have a discussion to outline a journey plan which clarifies each person's roles and responsibilities for the journey along with what actions are appropriate for certain situations. Making clear agreements beforehand will shape expectations and facilitate a safe and supportive experience free from misunderstanding.

In these discussions prior to the journey, it is important to agree on, in writing or verbally, what therapeutic touch is appropriate. Commonly, therapeutic touch means hand holding as requested by the journeyer during various parts of the trip during a difficult experience. If both people consent and agree that hand-holding can be provided, the journeyer and sitter should practice this prior to the journey. Be aware that touch is received differently based on certain cultures and experiences (i.e. trauma) people have had. If touch is not consented to and the journeyer requests it while they are in a non-ordinary state, providing alternatives such as a pillow or blanket to hug might be the next best thing to support them.

While the journeyer is in the experience, always go with the previous level of consent if requests are being made. Do not change the agreed upon plan during the psychedelic experience since the journeyer cannot provide valid consent. If you are a journeyer, consider what would happen if all your innermost secrets came out? As a sitter, consider how you would receive this information and would it impact your ability to provide a safe and supportive space for the journeyer. If the journeyer and sitter are friends or family members, could this information complicate the relationship?

Once you have both decided and agreed upon what is appropriate, the journeyer should orient the sitter to the space and where to find supplies such as food, water, pillows, blankets, medication, emergency contact information or anything else relevant to the journey.



## Roles and Responsibilities Checklist

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- **The journeyer will:**
  - not leave the space while in a non-ordinary state.
  - not engage in risky behaviours such as driving a vehicle, cycling, climbing or sexual acts.
  - provide the sitter with educational content on the psychedelic and how to trip sit.
  - advise the sitter of what psychedelic and dose is being used.
  - adhere to the agreed upon journey plan during the experience.
  - disclose in advance your experience with psychedelics.
  - have the psychedelics tested.
  - have the set and setting prepped.
  - provide a comfortable, safe and clean space for the sitter to sit and supervise in.
  - tell the sitter about your intention, any specific worries you have, and your mantra.
  - let the trip sitter know how they can assist you if you have a difficult experience during your journey.
  - prepare emergency contact information of close family or friends.
  - outline any relevant physical or mental health conditions you have.
  - consider and arrange necessary peer support for after the experience.
  
- **The trip sitter:**
  - will be and remain sober, present, attentive, undistracted, calm, empathetic and supportive
  - will read the educational content on the psychedelic and how to trip sit.
  - will provide care or assistance as agreed upon with the journeyer prior to the journey.
  - will hold a safe space for the journeyer.
  - will provide compassionate support if a difficult experience arises.
  - will be present for the entirety of the journey and at least an hour afterwards.
  - will not engage in sexual touch.
  - will not reveal the details of the journey with others and maintain confidentiality.
  - will not record, take videos or pictures of the journey.
  - will not take personal responsibility for the outcome of any journey.
  - Prevent the journeyer from falling off the bed or couch.



## Sitter Intentions and Actions

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**“If you want to have fun, take them (psychedelics) alone or with friends and spend the day in a beautiful setting. If you want to learn something about yourself and your relationships, take them with a therapist.”**

**– Rick Strassman**

**1) Prepare:**

- Know what psychedelic and dose is being used. Educate yourself about the psychedelic of interest.
- Understand how the sitter contributes to the set and setting.
- Become familiar with the journeyer’s intentions, curiosities, specific fears or worries and support preferences.

**2) Maintain general safety:**

- To be present and sit undistracted beside the journeyer for the duration of the experience.
- To maintain a warm, uncluttered and comfortable environment.
- Offer water and assist the journeyer to the restroom if needed.
- Complete the journey plan with the journeyer.

**3) Harm reduction, experience optimization:**

- To provide a calm, non-judgemental, non-directive, accepting and supportive presence during all aspects of the journey.
- To keep the journeyer focused towards their inner experience.
- Support the journeyer during a difficult experience.
- Ensure the journeyer does not call friends, family or colleagues while in the psychedelic experience or engage in other risky behaviours.
- To stay at least 1 hour after the journey for peer support.
- Ask the journeyer if they have peer support for the 24 hours or more after the journey.

**4) Keep the journeyer within a safe distance at all times.**

- Sit on the side of the bed where the journeyer is most likely to exit.
- The sitter should not leave the journeyer at any time unless the sitter feels unsafe.
- For journeyer’s who attempt to leave the room, gently redirect them back towards the couch or bed.
  - i) If the journeyer wants to move or walk, stay seated, and have them move within the room you are in. Again, try and gently redirect them back towards their inner experience.



**5) Keep the journeyer as the central focus:**

- Be present.
- Keep cell phone use to a minimum, no computer games, and no phone calls unless for emergency purposes.
- Engage in light reading or meditation when you are not needed.
- Maintain appropriate previously agreed upon boundaries and level of consent.
- Suggest the use of a journal, particularly near in the last hour or two of the journey, so the journeyer can capture key insights.





## Set and Setting

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**The Set and Setting** has been regarded as one of the most influential factors that can shape the complexion of the psychedelic journey ([ref](#)). It is the interplay between the psychedelic, the mindset (often referred to as the set), the sitter, the setting and the music that create the conditions for an ideal experience. A trip sitter who has prepared for the journey and is present to the needs of the journeyer with a calm, non-judgemental, accepting and supportive presence will nudge an experience towards a more beneficial and positive one. Because psychedelics amplify every aspect of an experience, sitters must be mindful and aware of what they could bring to the experience since this can be projected onto the journeyer. Journeyers want to have safety and the perception of safety for self-discovery both of which a sitter can provide.

**The Set** is understood as anything related to the internal state of a person, including personality, preparation for the experience, intention, as well as mood, expectations, fears, and wishes. ([Metzner and Leary, 1967](#)). If the sitter and the journeyer trust each other, feel prepared and safe together this will likely be heightened during the experience. Conversely, if the sitter is distracted, highly anxious or uncertain, this can be projected onto the journeyer affecting the nature of their experience and mindset.

**The Setting** is understood as anything related to the environment in which the experience takes place, including the physical, emotional, social, and cultural environment. Journeyers who are in a familiar and safe environment with a sitter they are compatible with and trust will tend to be more comfortable, have more positive thoughts and emotions versus those who are in an unfamiliar setting with an unfamiliar person. Using a setting that is familiar, decluttered, comfortable, and inviting is a key priority in order to facilitate safety, the perception of safety and the ideal experience. Having a sitter who has prepared and who has reviewed the journey plan together with the journeyer will contribute to that same feeling of safety and comfort, but also create a shared understanding of roles, responsibilities and expectations.



## Talking through the difficult experience

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### What is the difficult experience?

A difficult experience, otherwise known as a ‘bad trip’ is a challenging psychological reaction that occurs during or after taking a psychedelic. A bad trip can be characterized as transient experiences of intense fear or grief, an experience of rebirth or death, reliving personal trauma, feelings of insanity, isolation, physical distress and paranoia ([ref](#)). Difficult experiences may arise due to resistance, not wanting to feel or surrender to some aspect of the journey. Importantly, more resistance leads to more suffering and ‘if we resist it persists’. Taking higher doses of psychedelics, more frequent use, being in a negative emotional state, mixing with alcohol or other drugs, not having a trip sitter, having an unsettled sitter, and not prepping the set and setting are all potential factors that could lead to a difficult experience. Even though journeyer’s may take the necessary steps to reduce harm and make way for an ideal experience, this does not preclude someone from having a difficult experience.

Being present is the act of consciously and compassionately sharing the present moment with another through active engagement and focus. Being fully present is central to every aspect of the psychedelic journey but particularly important when navigating a difficult experience. Although this seems simple, it takes effort and energy to sustain presence. Being present means you are aware of and in control of your own thoughts, biases, reactions and personality characteristics. If a journeyer is experiencing intense fear or anxiety, become aware of what experiences the journeyer might be projecting while remaining calm and relaxed. You must also be aware of what you might be projecting onto the journeyer. If the sitter looks and acts distressed, distracted or tired, this can become a potential source of unnecessary worry within the journeyer. Being present allows the trip sitter to stay in the moment and act intentionally from a place of calm, non-judgemental, accepting and supportive awareness.

Although these difficult experiences are rarely life threatening, they can be a source of psychological suffering that ranges from mild to intense lasting minutes to hours, with some journeyers reporting negative effects enduring for months after. Despite these difficulties, it is important to note that journeyer’s often report that they still benefited from the challenging portions of their experience with some endorsing they would want to repeat the exact same journey again ([ref](#)). As a trip sitter, trust in the process and consider that these difficult experiences may be happening for a reason. Similar to how a cut can heal on its own, the body’s inner healing intelligence can work to also heal the psyche.



**If a journeyer is having a difficult experience, they may be experiencing [\(ref\)](#):**

- Resistance and not surrendering to different aspects of the experience
- Reliving past traumas
- Visions of personal issues
- Troubling visions of fear provoking entities
- Sensory overload
- Agitation, paranoia and confusion
- Concern that one has done irreparable harm to their physical or mental health
- Thought loops. This is when a journeyer experiences the same distressing experience, thoughts or emotion on repeat.
- Tangible feeling of darkness, impending doom, despair and hopelessness.

In the case of a difficult experience, the journeyer may or may not look to be in distress. Some may verbalize their difficulty, some may be tossing or turning more than usual. In most instances of difficulty, journeyers can get grounded by using their anchor or mantra, letting go and surrendering to the experience. If the distress persists for more than 2-3 minutes, continue to be present with the journeyer and begin walking them through the 3-steps: how to change your mind.



## 3-Steps: how to change your mind?

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**Step 1, be calm, be present and reassure safety.** Remaining a source of calm, trusted, and compassionate energy is often all that is needed to tame anxiety, fear or paranoia. Validate and reassure them a few times - “this is scary but not dangerous, you are doing well.” Gently walk them through their mantra if needed. Encourage them to trust, let go, be open, breathe and surrender. Accept whatever comes up and be curious where their mind is taking them. If this does not ease their issue within a few minutes, move to Step 2.

**Step 2, make them more comfortable.** Offer blankets, pillows and water. Have the journeyer move into a different position such as lying on their side or back. Watch and wait for a minute or two to see if they settle. A good next step from here, if needed, is to change the music to the journeyer’s second playlist. If they are still having difficulty ask if hand holding would be helpful. If this does not help, move through Step 3.

**Step 3, active listening and talking through.** The trip sitter actively listens and helps the journeyer work through the experience. For more on how to perform Step 3, let's be inspired by the guiding principles outlined by the [Zendo Project](#) below:

### 1. Sitting, not leading

- Be a calm meditative presence of acceptance and compassion. Promote feelings of trust and security. Let the journeyer’s unfolding experience be the guide. Don’t try to get ahead of the process. Explore distressing issues as they emerge.

### 2. Difficult is not necessarily bad

- When the experience is difficult, this is where key insights can appear whether they are readily apparent or not. Consider that it may be happening for an important reason. Gently have them approach the fear and difficult aspects of their experience with curiosity and openness.
- Let them explore the happy, fun, and challenging emotions. When a person resists confronting or escaping from emotions, this can lead to longer lasting consequences after the journey.

### 3. Talk through, not down

- Without distracting from the experience, help the person connect with what they are feeling. Invite the person to take the opportunity to explore what’s happening. Go through the experience with the journeyer.

1. Start by making gentle and soft eye contact, keep the body posture relaxed, open, and turn towards them.



2. Ask them “what are you experiencing” or “where are you and what does it feel like?”
3. Now practice active listening:
  - Wait for the journeyer to finish speaking, defer judgment, and paraphrase what has been said.
    - "What I'm hearing is... ," and "Sounds like you are saying... ,"
    - Then pause ...
    - Allow them to respond and clarify.
    - Repeat as needed.
  - Help them connect with the content with trust and security. Validate their experience and reassure them:
    - “This is scary but not dangerous, you are doing well.”
    - “This is difficult, but you are doing great, keep breathing, this will pass”.
- If you need support during the psychedelic journey or the journeyer needs immediate emotional support consider calling the [Fireside Project](#), a psychedelic support line. For other support and resources click [here](#).



## Mental Health Toolkit: taming anxiety and panic

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It is not uncommon for journeyer's to experience transient, low to moderate levels of anxiety and fear at different times during a psychedelic experience. The journeyer may be resisting, feeling restless, wound-up, or on-edge, having difficulty concentrating, difficulty controlling feelings of worry or stuck in a thought loop. The most common antidote to these issues for the journeyer is to let go and to surrender to their experience. Another simple way to get through difficult aspects of a trip comes from the trip sitter providing reassurance, walking them through the mantra, providing a gentle hand hold or using the 3 Steps: how to change your mind. This is first line care.

If first line care does not get the journeyer through their difficult experience use the following to help bring back a sense of calmness:

### How to tame anxiety and panic?

- 1. Stay present.** Remain a source of calm, compassionate and supportive energy.
- 2. Use validating and supportive statements:**
  - “This is scary but not dangerous, you are doing well”, “This is difficult, but you are doing great, keep breathing, this will pass”.
- 3. Settle with the breath:**
  - Use a breathing exercise - ideally, get the journeyer seated with feet flat on the floor. Have them focus on their breathing using a 4 second inhalation, 4 second hold, 4 second exhalation. Repeat 10 times or more.
- 4. Settle with movement:**
  - Try walking on the spot if breathing did not help. Have the journeyer sit at the edge of the bed and march on the spot, drawing awareness to their feet. This technique helps people move from their thoughts back into their body, and may help them regain control of their breathing.
  - If they regain control of the breath, have them focus their breathing using a 4 second inhalation, 4 second hold, followed by a 4 second exhalation.
- 5. Settle with the senses:**
  - Before starting this exercise, have the journeyer engage in slow, deep, long breaths to bring them to a calmer state. Once finding the breath, go through the following to help further grounding.
    - i. If you are still having trouble, ask the journeyer one thing they can taste, two things they can smell, three things they can hear, 4 things they can touch and 5 things they can see.



If the journeyer has outlined medications they take for panic in their journey plan, ask if they want to use this. If none of these techniques help, call emergency medical services where the journeyer is often taken to hospital and often provided fast acting medications to settle them. Most journeyers are discharged from hospital within a few hours and are rarely admitted. The journeyer should seek psychological treatment to reduce any risk of enduring negative impacts from the difficult experience.



## Emergency Situations

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- If the journeyer is experiencing severe fear or anxiety, use the **mental health toolkit**.
- If the journeyer remains in severe psychological distress despite using the mental health toolkit call 911 and if applicable, notify the emergency contact.
- If the journeyer is in medical distress, call 911 immediately and notify the emergency contact.
- Medical distress may look like:
  - Difficulty breathing.
  - Chest pain.
  - Seizures.
  - Loss of consciousness and is unresponsive.
- If the sitter does not feel safe and or boundaries have been violated, contact the emergency contact and develop a plan on how to have the journeyer supported for the remainder of the experience.
- If you or the journey have questions or need immediate emotional support during or after the experience consult with your primary healthcare provider and consider calling the [Fireside Project](#), a psychedelic support line.





## The Journey Plan

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The journeyer and trip sitter are to complete the journey plan together prior to the consumption of the psychedelic. Both the journeyer and the sitter should clarify any questions but also discuss any specific worries one or the other may have. Therapeutic touch practices such as hand holding beforehand can also be supportive in this process. Preparing in advance will lead to an experience free from misunderstanding and lead to greater levels of trust and safety.

**The psychedelic being used and dosage:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Journeyer's experience (novice/competent/expert):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Anchor or Mantra:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Relevant journeyer health and or medication information:**

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**The trip sitter can provide assistance if the journeyer requests or needs:**

- Extra comforts such as a pillow or blanket. Y / N
- Assistance to the restroom. Y / N
- Offer water every 1-2 hours. Y / N

Notes:

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## The Journey Plan

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### Therapeutic touch provided by the trip sitter:

- Hold the journeyer's hand upon request. Y / N
- Provide alternatives to touch such as a stuffed animal, pillow or blanket. Y / N
- To assist a requested change in the journeyer's resting position. Y / N

Notes:

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### Taming anxiety, fear or panic:

- The sitter can provide or facilitate:
  - Reassurance and supportive statements: Y / N
  - Remind the journeyer of their mantra: Y / N
  - Use active listening techniques: Y / N
  - Breathing techniques: Y / N
  - Movement techniques: Y / N
  - Grounding with the Senses: Y / N
  - Use a prescribed anti-anxiety medication. Y / N

Notes or medication list:

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**Any specific worries or concerns either party have? How can you accommodate for these?**

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## The Journey Plan

### Emergencies:

- The sitter will call 911 if:
  - The journeyer loses consciousness or is in medical distress.
  - The journeyer enters a psychosis.
  - The journeyer is unable to settle from anxiety or panic.
  - The journeyer is at risk of harming themselves and or the sitter.

### Notes:

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