

Session Games

People Play

A Manual for the
Use of LSD



by Lisa Bieberman

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“Dedicated with love to Frank Ferguson, who
gave me my first morning glory seeds, and to
Barbara Dunlap, who brought me in out of the
rain.” — Copyright 1967 by Lisa Bieberman

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INTRODUCTION

The need for a practical manual for the use of LSD has become increasingly apparent to those concerned with psychedelic issues over the past four years. With more and more laymen taking LSD and similar drugs, and with the supposed experts having nothing more instructive to say than "don't," the beginning user often has nowhere to turn for the most fundamental information. Miserable sessions are often the result of not knowing basic rules, even so prosaic a fact as how long a session lasts.

What limited literature there is on the conduct of LSD sessions is usually directed to the professional guide, experimenter or therapist. This manual is directed to the consumer himself. Just at present, advising the user to "find a qualified guide" is rather fatuous. Competent guides, available to run sessions for other than close friends, do not exist. I can't think of anyone, anywhere, to whom I could send the stranger at my door to be guided in an LSD session. And it is the rare person who is willing to wait on the faith that one can eventually be found. It is to be hoped that this state of affairs will not long continue, but with no change immediately in view we must deal with the problem as it exists today. In future years, when we can hope there will be psychedelic centers, staffed by experienced guides, a manual such as this will still be useful, because the LSD experience, personal and subjective as it is, is affected more by the individual's attitudes and behavior than by anything another can do for him.

The remaining literature available to the layman dwells heavily on poetic descriptions of the LSD state or interpretations of it in terms of Oriental mysticism. I have been struck by the number of people who take LSD after reading these books and then get trapped in some ugly little situation that anyone with three sessions behind him could have warned them about. This book is then no tourist's guide through paradise, but a down-to-earth discussion of the sorts of things that can go wrong in an LSD session and how to prevent them. For those who want a loftier view I recommend Alan Watts' *The*

Joyous Cosmology and Timothy Leary's Psychedelic Prayers from the Tao Te Ching.

I apologize to my hippie readers for the old-fashioned (1963 vintage) word "session," realizing that the current term is "trip." I learned to call them sessions under Leary and Alpert at Harvard and never have gotten used to thinking of the LSD event as a trip, which suggests going away, whereas for me LSD means an intensified being Here and Now. Simultaneously I must apologize to my non-hippie readers for the occasional use of such slang terms as "high," "turn on," "bringdown," "hung up" in places where more conventional language would be stilted. I trust the meanings will be apparent in context, and have tried not to overdo it. "High" is a somewhat misleading word for being under the influence of LSD, but I use it for brevity.

SO YOU'RE GOING TO TAKE LSD

So you're going to take LSD. You've got some, hopefully from a reliable source. You've heard a variety of reports about it, some of which must have attracted you. You have an idea of the kind of experience you're looking for, but you're apprehensive lest you have a "bum trip."

What you may not realize is that the kind of session you have depends very much on you. Perhaps you have a friend who is experienced with LSD to guide you. This is good, but nevertheless, no matter how good a guide your friend is, you will have to do most of the work yourself.

Work? Can getting high be work? Yes, a psychedelic session is very hard work, although you may do it sitting quite still and quiet. You may have to do an overhaul of your whole philosophy of life, including areas that you haven't examined for years, if ever. You may be faced with choices or decisions which will be difficult to make. Your way of life, your habits, your relationships with others will all come under scrutiny. By the time the session is through you will be very tired.

Is LSD then no fun? Is it not enjoyable? You have heard that it is an ecstatic experience. So it is, or can be.

But this is a very different kind of fun from any that you know about, from ordinary recreation or other sorts of drugs. Going into an LSD session with the idea that it will all be a lark, a carefree “high,” is a mistake that leads to some bad session games.

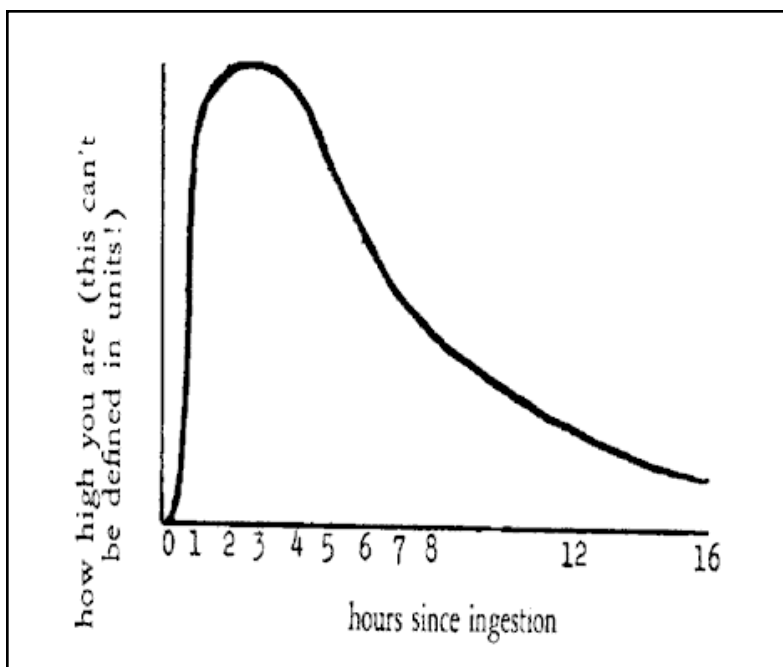
Should you take LSD at all? This book does not answer that question, not knowing the answer, and suspecting that you have your mind made up anyhow. There is no physical or mental condition known to be a definite counter-indication to LSD in all circumstances. I would not want to turn on (a) a person under 18 or (b) a person with a history of psychosis, but I would not dogmatically say that such a person could not have a good session under guidance.

I do believe that a healthy adult can have a safe and beneficial psychedelic experience, provided he knows what to do and his expectations are not unrealistic. Some of the common unrealistic expectations are: (1) that LSD will cure something; (2) that LSD will give you psychic powers; (3) that you can have a super sex experience on it; (4) that your LSD experience will be like your friend Joe’s, or like some experience you have read about; (5) that it will be like marijuana, only more so; (6) that if you don’t like it you can always take a tranquilizer and shut it off; (7) that LSD will improve your memory or I.Q.

If you are approaching an LSD experience with any of these notions as baggage, get rid of them now. LSD is not magic. It will not make you smarter, or give you any special powers. Your experience will be your own, and not like any you have heard of. LSD gives you a new perspective on your life for several hours, and since it is your life you will be looking at, it will not be like anybody else’s session. LSD is not much like marijuana at all, potheads’ boasts to the contrary notwithstanding. The session may or may not help “cure” some of your psychological problems, but you can’t count on it.

In fact, it’s best to set aside all expectations as much as possible. LSD will almost certainly be different from anything you might expect, so why not go into it acknowledged-

ing that it is unknown territory. This may have the advantage of rescuing you from the self-defeating game of How High Am I? Like the proverbial watched pot that never boils, some people manage to hold themselves down by continually looking for symptoms and trying to see whether they are high yet. Since you don't know what the LSD state is like, there is no point in trying to figure out whether you have gotten there. Assuming it is genuine LSD, and you have taken enough of it, it will do its part. If you must know how high you are, look at the clock. The time schedule of an LSD session goes something like this:



Before you take LSD, make a graph like this, putting your starting time in place of 0, and the subsequent hours in place of 1, 2, 3, etc. Then if you ever want to know how high you are, just check your graph with the clock. This may seem like a quaint idea, but it can actually be very useful. It can keep a session from breaking up too soon (the game of Let's Call It a Day). It can also save you from

spiritual one-upmanship games, in which people worry about whether they have achieved as high a “level” as their friends. I have known people to take too much LSD because they feel that they have not yet achieved an “ego death” or a “first bardo.” Forget all about “levels.” They are pretty meaningless. You will learn what the LSD state is for you, after several sessions. Don’t worry if it isn’t like somebody else’s description. You cannot compare how high you are with how high Joe is. So go by the clock. If nothing remarkable has happened after an hour and a half, you got gypped.

One hears a lot about “preparation” for the LSD experience. You may wonder what sort of preparation you should undergo. Actually you have been preparing all your life, and those many years of preparation will outweigh anything you can do in a short time before the session. Being told to prepare for a session is a little like being told to “prepare to meet your Maker” a few hours before you are going to be shot.

If there is any last-minute preparation for the LSD experience, it would be in the nature of refreshing in your mind the things that are dearest and most sacred to you. Don’t plunge into Oriental philosophy, unless you are already a lover of it. The psychedelic state is no more eastern than western. Think about the things you care about, the people you love, the things you hope to do with your life. Try to clear your mind of negative emotions—resentments, jealousies. Say something nice to your mother-in-law, or whoever fills that place in your world. A good conscience is the best preparation you can have.

On the technical side, preparation consists in making sure that the physical and social conditions of the session are as they should be. Decide well in advance who is going to participate in the session. You should all know, like and trust one another. The more you have shared of life in common with your session-mates the better. Until you are very experienced you should avoid taking LSD alone, and also avoid two-person sessions. This is especially true for unmarried couples, no matter what their sexual relation-

ship. A two-person session is very difficult, because it puts the whole burden of social interaction on the two people. Talk is difficult on LSD. This is no problem in a group, since the group can sit quietly and nobody will be embarrassed. But in a two-person group a silence becomes awkward. Unhealthy hang-ups on what the other person is thinking and games of Mind Reader result. A relationship can be badly strained when two inexperienced people take LSD together. For your first several sessions stick to three or four member groups. Groups larger than five are to be avoided as to distracting.

If none of you are experienced it is a good idea to have a friend along who does not take any LSD.

Throughout this book there is frequent mention of being “experienced” in the use of psychedelics. When are you experienced enough to take LSD alone or to do the other things beginners are warned against? This is a function of responsibility and maturity as well as the number of sessions. You should have had at least four, and have satisfied yourself that you can get through a session—all 16 hours of it—without panicking, becoming confused or unduly depressed, or becoming burdensome to others. You should be aware of what is going on at all points in a session and be able to act on your knowledge as rationally and efficiently as if you were not high. You should be able to carry out the plans made at the start of the session. You should be able to carry on a normal conversation should the need arise. In other words you should be at home in the psychedelic state.

All participants in a session should get together beforehand and agree on the time and place, and composition of the group. All should agree to stay together for at least ten hours. All should have enough knowledge about LSD to be able to avoid bad session games, and should agree not to play them.

The place chosen for the session should preferably be someone’s home, if possible a place that is familiar to the members of the group. Make sure you can stay there undisturbed for at least 16 hours. It should be clean, attrac-

tive and comfortable. Clutter and mess should be cleaned up. It is a good idea to have mattresses and cushions enough for everybody to have a place to lie down if he wants to (though sitting up is best for most of a session). Blankets and kleenex should be provided. There is no need to import objects of art or special things to look at unless they are particularly meaningful to one of the participants. Otherwise the simpler the better. If music is wanted it should be quiet, melodic music, nothing loud or weird, and it should not be played during the second through fourth hours. Privacy is essential—if the home is one at which visitors are accustomed to drop in, a “Do Not Disturb” sign on the door or something of the sort is called for. Nobody should be allowed to come in or go out during the session. It should be possible to go to the bathroom without venturing into public territory. Telephone should be disconnected to prevent both incoming and outgoing calls. A country or suburban setting is best, where you can see something green out of the window and get some fresh air when you open it. If you live in New York City you asked for it.

Do not hold a session on a beach, in a field or woods, unless, again, you are very experienced. There is too much opportunity for disorientation, fear occasioned by meeting strangers, physical discomfort and games of Where’s Harry? By staying in a familiar room you have the physical environment taken care of and you don’t have to concern yourself with it; confusion and distraction are minimized.

You should arrange to have both the session day and the day after it free.

SESSION GAMES

In addition to providing a suitable setting for the session, and approaching it in a tranquil state of mind, you should know how to avoid certain pitfalls. These are such that one might not be aware of them without knowing something about what sessions are like. Almost everyone sooner or later slips into one of these traps, but if you

have been told about them in advance you can get out quicker. I have called these things-to-be-avoided “Session Games” (with apologies to Szasz, Berne, Leary, and others whose specific definitions of “game” I have not bothered to adhere to). This then is a primarily negative manual, in that it tells you what not to do. Given good preparation and a knowledge of what not to do, what to do should not be a problem.

When told what not to do in a session, many people ask, “Why—is it dangerous?” Most of these games, with the possible exception of Get Me Out of This, are not likely to be dangerous. I advise not playing them, not because they will hurt you, but because the session will probably be pleasanter and more rewarding if they are avoided.

Some people will probably feel this manual is too negative. They will say that by discussing all the things that can go wrong in a session I am giving people a lot of things to worry about. That is not my intention, so let me state clearly: it is altogether possible that you will not be tempted to play any of the games this book warns against. It is altogether possible that your session will be a delight clear through. I hope that it is so. In that case you will not need a manual, but it won't do you any harm to have read this one.

GET ME OUT OF THIS

is the worst of all session games. In its most severe form it can turn a session into a nightmare for everyone involved. But you don't have to play it, if you make up your mind not to.

It is very common that sometime during the onset of a session, between ½ hour and 1½ hours after ingestion (that sharp rise on the graph), you may feel scared, uncomfortable or confused. This may not happen, but if it does, it doesn't mean that something's wrong—it's just part of the process of getting high for a great many people, especially inexperienced ones. Just why this is so is not easy to explain, because it is a peculiar subjective feeling. It may take the form of a feeling of losing control, of

not being able to keep track of your thoughts, or the idea that something is going on that you don't understand. The sense of losing control is in part illusory: you are actually in complete control of your body, if you had to use it, which you usually don't, since you only have to sit there. You may not be quite in control of your thoughts. Actually, of course, you never are, even when you're not on a drug, but on LSD you seem to have more thoughts, going faster and less logically. Your thoughts easily go off on a tangent, so that you may lose the sense of continuity, and moment seems to follow moment without the usual thread of sense connecting them. This can be bewildering, but it is not bad or dangerous, and can actually be quite fun if you don't fight it.

The reason you can control your body while your thoughts are racing on this way is that your body moves so much more slowly than your mind. For instance, if you were to get up to go to the bathroom you would think of a great many unrelated things while crossing the room, but when you came to take each next step you would remember what you were doing and take it. To you it would seem as if you were taking an incredibly long time to cross the room, but to an observer you would be moving at about your normal speed. It's important to remember that the sense of incompetency is an illusion, and if you do have to do something, to go ahead and do it, without worrying about the excessively long time that it seems to be taking.

But to get back to the game of Get Me Out Of This—there may come the time, early in the session, when you feel uncomfortable. At this point you may think: Why did I ever get into this? I was happy enough the way I was. I don't want to get high! I want to come down!

Now the one thing you must not do is holler "Get me out of this!" Because the more you fight it, the harder it is to shift gears and go with it. Furthermore, by trying to enlist other people in the fight, you make the problem much stickier. You see, anything you do that affects the world outside your head is a lot harder to undo than the

things you only think. (Like many other aspects of the LSD experience, this is an intensification of what is true in “ordinary” life.) If you *think* “Get me out of this” you can quickly remember that this is the wrong way to go, and correct yourself. But if you *yell* “Get me out of this!” you’ll upset all your companions, and have them solicitously buzzing around you—and you don’t want that, believe me.

If you persist in this game, it can snowball. You’ll feel worse and worse, want even more to get out of it, provoke more anxiety in your companions, causing you to feel even more confused and helpless, and so on. This can end in screaming scenes and frantic calling of doctors. That’s what’s called a “freak-out.” You may hear “freak-outs” talked about as though they were something that just happened, but actually they can be prevented — and the person who can do the most to prevent them is you, by not playing the wrong games.

You see they can’t get you “off” LSD before it runs its natural course. Asking your friends to bring you down is as practical as asking your fellow passengers on a transatlantic jet to stop the plane and let you off in mid-flight. I don’t advise stocking so-called “antidotes.” These are hardly ever effective when taken by mouth. To terminate a session prematurely requires massive doses of a sedative given by injection, and amateurs are not in a position to provide this. Taking a tranquilizer or sedative orally can do more harm than good, by pinning your hopes on being brought down—hopes which are not fulfilled, and which keep you in your bind of fighting the experience. Once you have started an LSD session you have got to go all the way through it, come hell or high water. If you can’t make up your mind to do this beforehand, don’t start.

What should you do then, when you start to feel scared or unhappy? Well what would you do in a non-drug situation that was scary and unavoidable? You’d try to be as brave and cheerful as you could be, and to keep up your companions’ spirits as well as your own. The same ap-

proach can work wonders in the LSD session. Holding hands around the circle is a good way of communicating courage and support. In the LSD state you can change your mood very quickly. Here, as with physical action, there may be an illusion of incompetency. You may think you're so frightened or so depressed that you couldn't possibly smile, or get to like the experience. But just try for a moment to take your mind off your own anxiety and think of your friends around you, and you'll be amazed how quickly you'll feel much better. This sounds like a platitude from Sunday School, but somehow those Sunday School truths are truer on LSD than just about anywhere.

If you're simply not up to being brave, the other thing you can do is Collapse. Just put your head in your lap, and abandon yourself to whatever-it-is. You can't go wrong that way—and you'll soon find out that whatever-it-is isn't going to hurt you at all.

At this point it may be useful to debunk some of the ideas that make people think there is something to fear. Probably the fear itself is caused by something deeper than misinformation, but the rational mind has a way of fastening onto certain bugaboos and making of them reasons to go on being afraid.

The commonest fear is of not being able to come down. As I have pointed out, it is true that you can't come down for several hours, but some newspapers and magazines have done a great disservice by circulating the belief that some people who go on an LSD trip "never come back." This nonsense is responsible for much unnecessary terror. Of course you come back. This is just common sense. LSD, like other drugs, has a time-schedule of action. There is no more chance of you still being high on LSD a week after taking it than there is of your still being under the influence of alcohol, caffeine, or Benzedrine a week after a single dose of one of those drugs. The typical duration of an LSD session is 12 to 18 hours, plus four to eight hours to sleep it off—perhaps a little longer if an excessively

large dose is taken. Even people who freak out come down on schedule, feeling like fools for having made such a fuss.

People having their first session are especially susceptible to the belief that they will not come down—this goes for those who are having ecstatic experiences as well as for those who are scared. Probably this is because they have not learned to take into account their altered sense of time. This is part of the reason why a clock is a useful thing to have in the room.

Another common fear is of dying. There are various reasons why people get the idea that they are dying during a session, but you need not get hung up on this if you just remember that nobody has ever been known to die of LSD—and it's been around for more than twenty years and has been taken by hundreds of thousands. No lethal dose for humans has been found, even though people have taken as much as ten times the usual full dose.

Some people worry about losing their control and doing something wrong or crazy. This is an illusion. The actuality is just the opposite—that it takes a certain amount of will power to do anything at all. You don't have to worry about what you'll do. The easiest thing is just to sit there, and in most cases, that's exactly what you should do. Since LSD has been heralded in the press as a producer of temporary insanity, we will probably be seeing criminals use it as an excuse for their crimes. The jury may buy it, but this is just nonsense. LSD doesn't take away your knowledge of right and wrong or your control over your actions.

As long as LSD is an illegal, or semi-illegal drug in some states, users will worry about being arrested. This shouldn't be a problem if you keep the following things in mind: (1) you should not let anyone in who is not a part of the original group; (2) if despite plans you do come into contact with an outsider he will not know you're high. It's not obvious to him the way it is to you—you don't have to make explanations; (3) even if he suspects you're high he can't prove it; (4) simply being high is not grounds for arrest. If it will make you feel safer, make sure there are no

drugs in the house.

A fifth thing people worry about in sessions is whether their companions are playing some sort of trick on them. These are the “paranoid” feelings you hear about: you may think your friends are looking at you strangely or that their words have hidden meanings. The knowledge that you have chosen your session-mates from among people that you trust, and that the paranoid feelings are a common occurrence on LSD should be enough to keep you from getting too embroiled in these fantasies. Think of something nice about your friend and he will *look* nicer and less menacing.

What it comes down to is that there is really nothing to be afraid of in the session. This will be clearer if you analyze the situation as follows: Suppose you *didn't* take LSD, but just decided to get together with a few friends and sit and think for 16 hours with occasional conversation. You might get bored, but you'd be in no special danger. Now in the LSD session, the *external* situation is just the same as the one described. The only difference is in what's going on in your nervous system. Your body chemistry has been changed in such a way that for 16 hours you will experience and think very differently from the way you usually do. But that can't hurt you. The next morning you will wake up pretty much your old self except that a very unusual 16 hours will have been added to your store of life experience.

So you don't need to get out of it. And if you refrain from trying to do so you will have averted the worst thing that can go wrong.

If one of your session-mates is playing Get Me Out of This do not tell him you will bring him down, and do not offer to get him a doctor or an antidote. Do remind him that the experience is transient if that's what he's worried about, and do assure him of your support. But don't make a fuss or try to be a psychoanalyst. It's usually useless to ask what's wrong, as he probably can't explain. Given your trust and confidence, he can work through his own fears.

I have been discussing the game of Get Me Out of This as it occurs early in a session. Occasionally it is also played around the seventh hour, during the “re-entry” period. Here the problem is less likely to be fear than to be physical discomfort, tiredness, depression or disappointment at coming down. These problems are seldom severe if you’ve done what you should during the earlier hours, and if you stay where you are and don’t play Let’s Call It a Day. The rule is the same: don’t try to get out of it. This phase too must proceed at its own pace. If your muscles are tight, a little Librium or marijuana can help relax you. Alcohol and heavy eating are to be avoided.

THIS ONE DOESN’T COUNT

is a game played whenever you take a psychedelic for any trivial or unearnest purpose.

The commonest instance is when taking a drug whose potency you are uncertain of. So you try a little to see if it works. And it does. And then you discover that you are going to have to go through the whole thing, and you really hadn’t planned on it.

Then there are sessions entered into for the purpose of testing some impersonal scientific hypothesis about the effects of the drug. Let’s take some LSD and see how fast we can memorize nonsense syllables or how big our pupils get.

There is nothing wrong with testing scientific hypotheses under LSD, but this is best left until you are sufficiently experienced to do these things without losing your grip on the spiritual nature of the experience.

An LSD session will always be an intense encounter with reality. Every session counts. If you remember this foremost when going into a session, you will be able to keep other purposes in their place.

EVASION GAMES

The four games that follow: Baby, Couch, Drunk, and Let’s Have an Orgy overlap to some extent and have at their common root an attempt to evade responsibility in

the session. Probably we all play various games to avoid responsibility in our daily lives, some of which LSD tends to cut through and expose to us. Some people, in an effort to avoid the discomfort of being exposed to themselves, plunge into a number of distracting games which seem to be attempts to prove that they are really drugged, irresponsible and don't know what they are doing; or they may try to become completely dependent on someone else, like a child. Alcohol parties are the prototype for this kind of game in our culture. Because alcohol, in large doses, really does cloud consciousness and impair functionality, there is some truth in the claim that a drunken person is not fully responsible. This gives the game players tremendous latitude to make fools of themselves, excusing it later on the grounds that they were drunk.

On LSD there is no such excuse. Consciousness is heightened, not clouded, and there is no particular impairment of muscular coordination, beyond, perhaps, some initial dizziness. If you get into any of the following games you'll know it's your own fault, whatever you may let others think.

Baby

A young man I know who has just passed his first birthday has a standard procedure whenever he sees something interesting or pretty. He grabs it and gleefully pulls it to pieces. Some people in sessions are almost like this. They go about digging their fingers into things, crushing things, and dropping them any old where. They throw soap suds or kleenex around the floor. Now ordinary objects can be very fascinating when you're high, holding some of the newness and wonder that they must hold for a small child. But do be gentle. Don't destroy what you appreciate. Otherwise you will have a gruesome re-entry, as you come down to a room that is a complete mess. And you'll have to clean it up—or you'll never find your shoes.

Another variant of Baby is where a session participant acts helpless and expects others to look after him. He

communicates only in monosyllables or meaningless noises, wants others to pay attention to him and fetch him food and water. I suppose Freudians would call this “regression to the oral stage,” but I call it playing Baby, as a reminder that it doesn’t just happen to a person, but is within his control. If you play Baby, you will miss the joy of sharing the experience with your friends. Besides, you will feel like a fool later, and nobody is likely to want to turn on with you again.

Couch

is a game where you decide the session was made for your personal psychoanalysis and start telling whoever will listen all about your childhood traumas and current neuroses.

Now a degree of self-exposure in a session is good. As you see through some of your phobias and hang-ups you feel elated and want to tell somebody, and you often find that your friends have been hung up on the same petty thing that you have, and you laugh over it together and enjoy the feeling of relief.

Playing couch is another matter. Pouring forth your entire stream of consciousness out loud is not honesty, it’s an attempt to monopolize attention, and it also tends to keep your mind in a rut, shutting out new ways of looking at your problems.

People who play Couch are terrible bores. Of course it’s different if you are turning on with a psychoanalyst, and that’s what he wants you to do. I can’t imagine wanting to turn on with a headshrinker, but there’s no accounting for tastes.

Drunk

The person who plays drunk tries to avoid any existential encounter in the session by reducing it all to silliness. He knows that anything he may be experiencing is “only the drug” so he’s not about to let it move him. He giggles and snickers incessantly, moves with exaggerated clumsiness, and generally acts the buffoon.

Like Baby and Couch this is a case of carrying to extremes something that is a normal element of the session. There is an aspect of absurdity and humorousness to ordinarily serious things which is one of the delights of the LSD experience. It would be a strange session in which nobody laughed.

The trouble with the guy who plays Drunk is that he won't leave room for anything else. Nothing can be sacred to him. He can't say anything sincere without immediately qualifying it with a nonsensical or cynical remark. Often he shows that he thinks of his "indulgence" in LSD as a dissipated or naughty thing to do. In other words he does everything he can to shield his little ego from the impact of LSD by pretending that he is just on a drunk. He cheats himself and brings his companions down.

Let's Have an Orgy

is like Drunk, only worse. At one of my first morning glory sessions there was a boy who kept stamping the floor nervously and insisting "Let's put on some records and have a fuck'n party"—somewhat to the confusion of others who, just feeling their way into this new state of consciousness, were not at all in the mood for a party, but wondered whether they were being party-poopers for not going along with these demands.

Some people, faced with the strange and disquieting initial effects of LSD, respond by flinging themselves into a frantic pursuit of sensual pleasure. It is a kind of way of playing Get Me Out of This without the screaming. And like Baby and Drunk it draws on the cultural association of drugs with irresponsibility and wild behavior. To help convince himself, the player usually tries to draw his companions into the game. The forced nature of this behavior is obvious when you realize that LSD actually decreases, at its peak virtually eliminates, physical cravings. Loud music, food, sex games, jumping around, can do little to comfort the person whose real problem is that he wants to drown out his thoughts.

If one of your session-mates is playing this game, do

not feel that you have to play it with him in order to be a good sport. Sit quietly and encourage him to do the same. The real pleasures of the session, including the sensory, come without seeking them, without straining, without *doing* anything.

WHERE'S HARRY?

is a game most often played around the fifth hour of a session, though it can crop up any time.

You think you'd like to wander off from the group and go do such-and-such (eat supper, see what Harvard Square looks like when you're high, visit Joe, etc.). If you slip out on a pretext of going to the john nobody will notice for a while. You feel confident that you'll be o.k. After all, it's your session, don't you owe it to yourself to see all the things you can while you have a chance?

You do not. In the first place it's very inconsiderate. Your companions will notice your absence very soon. Time passes slowly for them—even a ten minute absence can seem like an hour. You are in a state where you are easily distracted. Once you wander off there's no telling when you'll get back. And all the while your companions can think of little else than "Where's Harry? Is he all right? Shouldn't we send somebody to look for him and make sure?"

You may feel that of course you're all right and it's silly for them to worry. Nevertheless they will, and this is quite natural. There is still a certain amount of distance between you and the unbedrugged world. Your friends aren't sure but that you could get into some kind of trouble. It seems as though you've been gone for an awfully long time.

In the second place, you are confusing categories if you think that seeing as much as possible during a session means wandering around and seeing as many physical places and things as possible. The trip is internal. Moving around and seeking a large variety of external stimuli is only a distraction.

A third reason is that people who are going through a

session together form a small community. Staying together helps keep everybody turned on, by mutual reinforcement. You would find that people outside are not so easy to communicate with, not having been through this very intense experience with you and your friends. Your friends need you to help maintain the group feeling, and you need them. So stay together. This doesn't mean you should shut yourself off from your non-psychedelic friends—but there will be time enough to see them when you're not high.

If another member of the group pulls a Where's Harry? on you, do not send a person who's high after him, as this will just change the game into one of Where's Harry and Bill? If there is someone there who hasn't had any LSD, you can send him to find Harry and try to persuade him to come back, or at least make sure he's o.k.

MIND READER

The feeling that you know just what is going on in somebody else's mind, or that they are thinking the same thing you are thinking, often occurs in sessions. Sometimes you're right and sometimes not. The question whether actual telepathy takes place during sessions (or at any other time) is a controversial one. But one thing is certain: at least *sometimes* when you think you know what your companion is thinking, you are definitely *mis-taken*.

Verbal attempts to establish whether your effort at mind-reading has been successful are most unsatisfactory when conducted during a session. This is because verbal exchanges under LSD consist of about one-tenth words and nine-tenths innuendo. Unfortunately, the innuendo which the speaker intends to communicate, or things he has communicated, is often very different from what the listener thinks he meant. The result ranges from hilarious confusion to paranoid suspiciousness and annoyance.

Facial expressions are not an adequate indicator of thoughts either, because you can see them distorted, and can project your own feelings onto them.

An unfortunate byproduct of the game of Mind Reader is that the player may feel let-down and betrayed when his companion fails to act on the understanding which the Mind Reader erroneously thinks has been reached. Or the Mind Reader may become paranoid when he thinks he perceives hostile thoughts in his companions. Also, he may confuse his companions if he adopts an "I know what you're thinking" or "You know what I mean" attitude. The companion wonders desperately how to respond in this situation where he is in the impossible position of not knowing what his friend thinks he knows his friend thinks.

The rules to follow in order to avoid these hang-ups are: (1) Don't assume that you know what your companions are thinking, even if it feels that way; (2) Don't assume that they know what you are thinking; (3) Avoid extended conversation during the peak of the session. Do not try too hard to make sure that you understand what one another are saying; if this effort becomes too involved, give it up and have a period of silence; (4) When you do speak, speak literally rather than figuratively, in brief concrete sentences; (5) If asked a question, give a literal, straightforward answer.

If you wish to experiment with ESP during a session, this should be agreed upon by the members beforehand. Like other scientific tests, this is best postponed until you have had several experiences with LSD.

I HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS

Novices in LSD sessions sometimes become convinced that they know the answers to all the mysteries of life and the universe. The very people who are most dogmatic about this are often the most confused and perplexed around hour seven when they are returning to ordinary consciousness.

Go lightly. There are valid insights to be had in the psychedelic state, but their value lies in their applicability to daily life. Remember that you are in a transient state, and think of how you can put your insights to work to

help you lead a better, richer life in your ordinary consciousness. Do not force your ideas on your consciousness. There is nothing wrong with expressing your thoughts, but you should respect the fact that your companions have thoughts of their own.

If you ever feel that you have all the answers you may be sure that you don't—no matter how many sessions you have had.

MESSIAH

The Messiah player not only has all the answers, he's going to tell the world about them. He runs out into the street or grabs the phone and tries to call the President. Anyone who interferes with him is preventing the salvation of the world and is put in his place.

One can't help sympathizing a bit with this guy. The world does need saving. If only it were so easy. Alas, the insights of LSD, vivid though they may be to you, are not readily communicated. Being essentially nonverbal, they are not even easily remembered. You will be batting above average if you can save yourself.

The urgent message you have to convey to those outside, if it is really communicable and worth communicating, can be conveyed tomorrow, more effectively because you will be in a state of mind nearer to that of your audience. Write it down.

US AGAINST THEM

There is something about LSD revelations that makes them seem so obvious you can't figure out why you never saw them before. This tempts some people to jump to the conclusion: It's Them. They (the squares, the Establishment or what have you) don't want people to know this. They're keeping it secret.

Now this doesn't make much sense, because They would have to take LSD Themselves to have this particular secret to keep—and They don't. But the legal restrictions on psychedelics add impetus for many to leap to this implausible hypothesis, and to build on it a view of

society divided into the Good Guys and the Bad Guys.

There are two separate questions here: Why are the psychedelics banned? and Why do you not ordinarily have the degree of illumination that you have when you're high? I doubt these questions have any connection with one another, because the people who ban LSD don't know much about the nature of the experience. Politicians who make laws are usually motivated by a complex mixture of the desire to promote the public welfare and the desire to promote their own careers, conditioned always by what they know and what they don't know. Some undoubtedly sincerely believe that LSD is dangerous, and that passing a law can reduce the harm. Others may not give a hoot about LSD, but see a chance to make political capital out of the issue. What is extremely unlikely is that a group of evil men in a smoke-filled room conspired to keep some cosmic secret from the public knowledge.

The reason why you do not have a certain kind of consciousness without the aid of LSD is probably just that your nervous system doesn't work that way. *Should* it work that way? Is the psychedelic state the natural state, which you have been deprived of by your particular kind of upbringing?

I don't think so. There is no evidence that any culture, anywhere, ever produced a race of permanently turned-on individuals. The psychedelic state, which is suited for contemplation and for over-viewing the universe, is probably not well suited to the kind of daily work that produces the necessities of life. Remember that the psychotics and Holy Men who are (somewhat romantically) supposed to have attained a permanent high generally have to be supported by others.

Does this mean that you can take nothing of the experience back with you? Obviously this is not so, since psychedelic experiences seem to make such a profound impression on those who have them. Any insight which you can formulate verbally can be brought back, and will continue to be useful even though it no longer has the emotional immediacy of the session. Some of the ecstatic glow

can be remembered, but only dimly; and you will realize when you have a second session how much you had forgotten. The effort to bring back and apply to your life what you have learned from LSD is a continual challenge.

It is to be hoped that you will not go back with an arrogant view of humanity that divides the world into We who have Been There and They who have not. A sense of community with your fellow LSD users is natural and good, but if you sever your relations with non-users and look down on them as squares you will become irrelevant, and your message will not be heard.

LET'S CALL IT A DAY

is the commonest of session mistakes, and perhaps the one least deserving of being called a game, since it so often results from ignorance, rather than from any dishonesty or evasion. It is simply the attempt to terminate the session too early.

An LSD session lasts at least 12 hours, more often 16. But as you can see from the graph [figure 1], there comes a time between the fourth and sixth hours when the intensity of the experience drops sharply and the remaining hours are a kind of leveling out. This time has sometimes been called the "re-entry period." The re-entry period retains the accelerated thoughts of the earlier parts of the session, with somewhat more visual distortion and somatic sensations, and less of the euphoria and flexibility of mood. It feels a lot more like the normal state than the earlier hours, but it is not the normal state. Most people who have not been told otherwise assume that the session is over when they reach this point around the fifth hour and try to go back to everyday activities, go out, eat dinner or try to sleep.

This is a mistake, because rushing back to everyday activities tends to dissipate the insights of the session, and it also tends to be depressing or a "bringdown." Sleep is impossible, and premature attempts usually make you uncomfortable. Eating too early in the session can make you feel sick.

Actually some of the most valuable work of the session can be done during re-entry. This is the time when you can think over the insights of the session, from a vantage point somewhat closer to your usual state. In fact whether your experience is merely an isolated event or is relevant to your life as a whole may depend largely on how you use your re-entry time. Stay in one place, together with your session-mates. You can talk more now than you did before, but periods of silence are still helpful. Sit quietly and meditate; don't become distracted. This takes patience, because re-entry hours pass *very* slowly. By the eleventh hour it is o.k. to eat a light meal or to go off by yourself if you want to. After sixteen hours you should go to bed and get some sleep. If you have difficulty sleeping at this time a light dose of Librium or phenobarbital will help. You will be somewhat high until you go to sleep.

A FEW TIPS

A session is tiring enough without staying up all night. Get a good night's sleep and start in the morning.

Shun mirrors. On LSD you probably look awful to yourself in the mirror, probably because your pupils are dilated, and you see all your pores. You don't *really* look that bad.

Don't stare at a companion, just because his face is changing into a multitude of different forms. He doesn't know why you're staring.

Respect the undrugged state — you have to live in it. Write your memoranda in a form that will make sense to you tomorrow.

To avoid bad session games:

Stay in one place.

Don't talk too much.

Be considerate of your companions.

SO YOU'VE HAD LSD

First of all, if you haven't had several hours sleep since you took the LSD you're on the wrong page. Go back to the page headed "Let's Call It a Day." Come back to this section tomorrow morning.

So you've had LSD. It was your own unique experience. You may be wondering whether various aspects of your session were typical or not. Undoubtedly some were and some weren't. Since you are a unique person, your experience was not quite like anybody else's. If in the coming weeks you find, talking it over with your friends, that something happened to you which nobody else is expressing, that, at any rate, is very typical.

For the next several days you will experience a mood which is a little different than your usual one. If the session went well, you'll probably feel better than usual. But if the session was disappointing you may be depressed. If so you should be aware that this is an after-effect which will go away within about two days. The experience of an altered mood after a session lasts about as long as the physiological tolerance to LSD and may quite possibly have a physical, as well as a psychological basis.

You may be wondering whether you should take LSD again, and if so how soon? I advise waiting at least three months. Why so long? Well, hopefully this session has given you a lot to think about. You should have time to work on integrating what you have learned into your everyday life. After you have lived with it for several months you can come back to LSD from a new point on your life path and find new messages and new meaning. But if you take LSD too frequently it can become a disruptive force: instead of gaining strength and understanding you may only become more confused. Also the experience may lose its profundity, may become commonplace and ineffectual. In general I find that the longer I wait for a session the more meaningful and helpful it is.

(If this talk of meaning leaves you cold because your experience wasn't very meaningful, it may be that you got

gypped on the dose, or it may be that your state of mind kept you from letting go. I'd still recommend waiting a few months before trying again.)

I think most people, just after a session, realize intuitively that they should not turn on again soon—but sometimes they forget how they felt and do it anyway. Therefore you should make a decision now about how long you are going to wait and stick to it.

If you do take LSD again, your next session will be different from the first—in fact each following session will also be different. There is something very special about a first session which is never quite repeated. Do not try to repeat or relive past sessions, but be open to what each new experience has to add to what you have learned.

Now that you have had this experience, what do you do about it? People have been asking this question ever since psychedelics were discovered, and it has never really been answered. Do you go turn on everyone that you can (hoping that maybe *they'll* figure out what to do about it)? Do you emulate the hip crowd, adopting their “psychedelic” fashions and jargon? Should you become a monk? Take up Buddhism or astrology? To whom should you turn for advice?

A complicating factor is that at the present time of writing (early 1967) the word “psychedelic” seems to be an adjective that sells soap. A great deal that has little relevance to the LSD experience goes under the name “psychedelic.” Don't be hasty to plunge into what somebody else calls “psychedelic” if it doesn't make sense in terms of your experience. Suspend judgment on it and see what sort of people are involved in it and where it is leading them. The same goes for cults that other LSD users may belong to. Cults and fads are transient. Try to distinguish them from that which is of lasting truth in your experience.

Because the use of LSD is a controversial social issue you will have to decide what part you will play in the social and legal conflicts over this issue. It may be my own bias, but I feel that everyone who owes something of value

to LSD should take *some* part. There is something eroding to one's integrity about keeping silent and doing secretly what others are going to jail for. Of course you do not want to go to jail yourself and thus curtail the good you can do. It is necessary to learn the law in your area (from the statutes, not from rumor) and to learn for what people are prosecuted and for what they are not. One is not, for instance, prosecuted for writing or speaking out about his experience or the LSD issue in general. Some may choose to be prosecuted in order to make a test case, but this course of action is not for everyone, and if you are considering something of the sort you should plan it very carefully with the help of a lawyer.

The ways in which people incarnate their vision are as individual as their lives, and this book can go no further in telling you how to do it. You will find some of the answer in your sessions and in your life experiences between sessions. It may be as simple as living, or as difficult.

APPENDIX ON OTHER PSYCHEDELICS AND DOSAGE

What this book says about LSD goes also, in a general way, for peyote, mescaline and psilocybin, and sometimes for morning glory seeds and baby wood rose seeds, although these latter don't seem to work for everybody. The main difference is in timing.

While LSD takes effect within an hour, mescaline requires a little longer, and peyote and morning glory seeds take from three to four hours. The duration of the experience is a little shorter with mescaline or peyote. I have not taken psilocybin, but I am told that its effects last about half as long as those of LSD.

When using peyote, mescaline, or seeds, there is often some nausea. For this reason these substances should be taken on an empty stomach, and a travel sickness pill such as Dramamine taken along with them. If nausea occurs, lie down and keep still; do not vomit before three hours have passed. Usually the sickness will go away as you get higher. Nausea hardly ever occurs with LSD; if it

does it is all right to vomit, because the LSD will no longer be in your stomach.

The psychedelic dimethyltryptamine (DMT) has exceedingly brief effects (half an hour or less). For this reason it seldom has the philosophical impact of the other psychedelics. The quick-and-easy quality of DMT sometimes leads to its over-frequent use and resultant cheapening of the psychedelic experience. This drug should be used no more often than LSD.

Dosage

The beginner should take a full dose, if anything one that is a bit on the large side to help overcome resistance. Later you may find that a smaller dose is adequate for you. There is no reason to take a larger dose than is necessary to induce the psychedelic experience, as these excess quantities are probably just wasted. Adequate starting doses are as follows:

LSD 200 to 400 micrograms

Mescaline 500 to 800 milligrams

Psilocybin 40 to 60 milligrams

Peyote $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ oz. dried peyote

Morning glory seeds (Heavenly Blue or other common blue or white varieties) 300 to 400 seeds ground fine (or about 2 tablespoons ground seeds)

Baby wood rose seeds (*Argyreia nervosa*) . . . 10 to 18 seeds (ground)

Never take a partial dose of morning glory seeds or baby wood rose seeds, as this usually causes sickness and little else. With other psychedelics it is possible to use small doses for lesser experiences or to accompany someone who is taking a full dose. Quantities of LSD as small as ten micrograms have a noticeable effect; probably 25 micrograms is an adequate small dose for most people.

The duration of the session is about the same as with a full dose.

It is appalling, but true, that one who buys LSD today often does not know what he is getting. The cap that is said to contain 500 micrograms may contain only 100, or it may contain amphetamine or other adulterants. This is because of the elimination of open competition that results whenever a commodity is forced underground. There is no remedy except to boycott dealers who cheat, and the amateur often has no sure way of knowing whether he has been cheated. As a minimal precaution, I advise boycotting any so-called "LSD" that comes in a capsule. Because of the extremely small quantities of LSD that go to make up a dose, the logical and most convenient way of distributing it is to put it in liquid solution; the solution can then be dripped onto a sugar cube or absorbent paper. Putting it in a capsule is inconvenient, and the only motivation for doing so that I can think of would be to add other, bulkier drugs to the mixture, which, because of their greater volume, could not easily be dissolved in a few drops of liquid. If you buy cubes, paper, or liquid solution, you may be shortchanged, but at least you will not be consuming unknown drugs. It is not true that the cubes "degenerate" rapidly. Any reasonably pure LSD that is shielded from light should remain potent at room temperature for at least a year.



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In addition to providing a suitable setting for the session, and approaching it in a tranquil state of mind, you should know how to avoid certain pitfalls.

These are such that one might not be aware of them without knowing something about what

sessions are like. Almost everyone sooner or later slips into one of these traps, but if you have been told about them in advance you can get out quicker. I have called these things-to-be-avoided “Session Games” (with apologies to Szasz, Berne, Leary, and others whose specific definitions of “game” I have not bothered to adhere to). This then is a primarily negative manual, in that it tells you what not to do. Given good preparation and a knowledge of what not to do, what to do should not be a problem. Some people will probably feel this manual is too negative. They will say that by discussing all the things that can go wrong in a session I am giving people a lot of things to worry about. That is not my intention, so let me state clearly: it is altogether possible that you will not be tempted to play any of the games this book warns against. It is altogether possible that your session will be a delight clear through. I hope that it is so. In that case you will not need a manual, but it won’t do you any harm to have read this one.