

Trippy: Scientists Using Hallucinogens to Treat Depression

April 13, 2010 By [David Evans](#)

Turning back the clock more than 40 years, researchers are once again experimenting with hallucinogenic drugs as a treatment for a variety of ailments. Are we on the verge of creating another Timothy Leary or Ken Kesey? Probably not, but the trip is likely to be mighty interesting.

In the [story](#), appearing in *The New York Times*, the researchers provide assurance that they're being extremely cautious this time around about over-hyping their positive results. Nevertheless, what they've found so far is compelling.

Clark Martin, a 65 year-old man from Vancouver, Washington, told the *Times* about his own experience in one of the studies, when his chemotherapy-induced depression failed to respond to standard treatments. He entered a study where researchers led him on a controlled six-hour trip with psilocybin, the active ingredient in "magic" mushrooms.

“All of a sudden, everything familiar started evaporating,” he recalled. “Imagine you fall off a boat out in the open ocean, and you turn around, and the boat is gone. And then the water’s gone. And then you’re gone.”

“It was a whole personality shift for me,” he continues. “I wasn’t any longer attached to my performance and

trying to control things. I could see that the really good things in life will happen if you just show up and share your natural enthusiasms with people. You have a feeling of attunement with other people.”

According to Martin, this single trip down the rabbit hole helped him overcome his depression and improve his core familial relationships--and the effects have persisted for a year. Researchers think the treatment could be particularly useful in people confronting terminal illnesses--and they're actively testing this theory.

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