

VINE OF SOUL: A Phenomenological Study of Ayahuasca and its Effect on Depression

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Abstract

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This dissertation investigated the impact of ayahuasca on 6 individuals suffering from chronic and/or treatment resistant depression, using a descriptive phenomenological research method. Participants were asked to describe their lived experience of depression prior to taking ayahuasca and then their experience of depression after ingesting ayahuasca. All participants were interviewed twice.

An extensive review of the literature about the topic of ayahuasca combined with the research findings regarding ayahuasca's impact on symptoms of depression revealed that experiences with ayahuasca allow access to realms of the human psyche difficult to access otherwise. The benefit of this access is the possible recognition of stored beliefs or traumas which, when reflected upon provide for cathartic, healing responses to follow. The self-insight then begets new, alternate reactions to surroundings and impacts one's relationship to others and the environment within which one is operating. Often, the experience has a numinous quality that challenges the person to engage in a new awareness-accepting the wholeness of life, healing from past wounds, and living life with greater purpose.

The study has multiple implications for treatment of depression. All six participants reported that symptoms had been alleviated within a period of 10 days. Current antidepressant medications may take up to 8 weeks before beginning to take

effect. Participants of this study had attempted numerous methods of addressing the depressive symptoms experienced; these methods included psychotherapy and antidepressant medications, as well as less traditional methods as meditation, yoga and herbal medications. Having experienced minimal relief from symptoms through those methods, each of these participants sought the experience of ayahuasca as a potential source of relief from depression. One aspect of the process was psychological pain and struggle while under the influence of ayahuasca, but this was a temporary feeling and came to be perceived as an integral part of the process of recovering from depression.

Dedicated to my father, Donald Joseph Palladino.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Introduction

Background Context of Ayahuasca

Ayahuasca is a tea with psychoactive properties originating in the Amazon basin used by native Indian and mestizo shamans in Peru, Columbia, and Ecuador. The most traditional form of ayahuasca is an infusion of *Banisteriopsis caapi* Spruce ex. Griseb. Morton (Malpighiaceae). The ayahuasca vine is common in the Amazon basin rainforests and has been recognized by native peoples to have spiritual and healing properties. The name comes from Quechua, a South American Indian language. Aya means souls or dead people, huasca means vine (Metzner, Callaway & Grob, 1999). By itself, the ayahuasca vine has consciousness altering effects and has been the subject of claims of opening the spirit world to the user, producing telepathy as well as cures for physical, mental, and social problems. The vine is traditionally said to possess its own highly benevolent, but unpredictable spirit that “speaks” to the drinker. As powerful an alteration of the drinker’s consciousness as this appears to be, the experience is heightened when the preparations include a second plant in the infusion that contains the hallucinogen dimethyltryptamine (DMT). The inclusion of the leaves of the *Psychotria viridis* Ruiz et pavon. Chacruna (Rubiaceae) produce profound visionary experiences of overwhelming intensity that are often described as of literally cosmic and transpersonal proportions. Drinkers report visions of the meaning and form of the universe, speaking with spirits and the dead, and journey to realms beyond the physical. The experience is said to be

intense, uncontrollable, both hellish and ecstatic, and is often reported as profoundly meaningful and healing.

It is the DMT that provides visionary experiences and thus access to the realm of spirits and the souls of deceased ancestors. DMT is not orally active but is metabolized by the stomach enzyme monoamine oxidase (MAO). Certain chemicals in the vine inhibit the action of MAO and are therefore referred to as MAO-inhibitors: their presence in the brew makes the psychoactive principle available and allows it to circulate through the bloodstream into the brain where it triggers the visionary access to otherworldly realms and beings (Metzner, 1999, pp.1-2).

It is unknown, how the native people of the Amazon discovered this combination. One explanation offered is that through generations of trial and error, it was happened upon, although this explanation does not come from the native peoples. They explain it as divine intervention.

The primary drug involved, dimethyltryptamine (DMT), is a natural substance that is in the bodies of all mammals, and one of the most powerful hallucinogens known. Once the tea is made it is considered illegal in most western countries because it contains DMT. DMT was made illegal as a manufactured hallucinogen before it was known it existed in natural form in the plants used to make ayahuasca.

Background Context of Depression

As many as 40 million people in the United States will suffer some form of depression in their lifetime (Holden, 2005). For some, depression will be a short episode, however, for millions it becomes a chronic experience of emotional pain that impairs many areas of their lives. Depression is difficult to treat, especially in its chronic form. According to Holden (2005), a study by the World Health Organization, ranked depression as the fourth most pervasive burden of mental health and discovered it to be the number one ranking non-fatal burden of disease. This study described sufferers as

experiencing 12% of total years, lived experiencing this disability. Additionally, according to the cross sectional WHO world health survey, which was carried out in 60 countries, it was found that the one year prevalence of a depressive episode affects 3.2% of the population (Timonen and Liukonen, 2008). Current methods for coping with depression are psychosocial interventions and anti-depressive medications such as Wellbutrin, Paxil, Prozac and Zoloft.

Description of the Study

In this study, the impact of ayahuasca was considered with respect to subjective well-being, perceived self-efficacy, autonomy, competence, and self-actualization of one's intellectual and emotional potential, which is based on the definition of mental health as set forth by the World Health Organization (World Health Organization, 2001). Level of depression was screened with the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale. Ayahuasca was examined for its possible impact on components of mental health with specific regard for the impact on symptoms of depression. This impact was tracked using phenomenological interviews. Initial interviews occurred one week to nine days after taking ayahuasca and a follow-up interview occurred one week to 10 days later as associations with the experience are multifaceted and may have changed during the days following the initial interview.

Significance of the Study

In the past 15 years or so there has been a resurgence of interest in psychedelic drug research as researchers have begun to reevaluate their potential. In recent years, researchers have enlisted human volunteers to assist in exploring the possibilities that there are therapeutic benefits in psilocybin, DMT, MDMA, ibogaine, and ketamine.

Between 1972 and 1990 there were no published human studies in the U.S. Their disappearance from investigation was the result of a political backlash that followed the promotion of these drugs by the 1960s counterculture. This reaction not only made these substances illegal for personal use but also made it extremely difficult for researchers to get government approval to study them. Things began to change in the 1990's, when "open-minded regulators at the FDA decided to put science before politics when it came to psychedelic and medical marijuana research" (Brown, 2007, p.1). From 1990-1995, psychiatrist Rick Strassman performed the first human study using psychedelic drugs in around 20 years and investigated the effects of DMT on human subjects. He has stated that psychedelics affect a variety of mental functions which include perception, emotion, cognition, body awareness and one's personal sense of self. Psychedelic drugs are a class of drugs he has distinguished from every other class of drugs, because the former depends heavily on environment and the expectations of the subject. For this reason, he finds it imperative that these drugs be coupled with psychotherapy. Furthermore, his contention is that psychedelics may be therapeutic in that they draw out elicited processes known to be therapeutically useful, such as transference reactions and the resolution of them; enhanced symbolism and imagery, increased suggestibility; increased contact between emotions and ideations; controlled regression. The caveat is that this is all dependent on set and setting and any of these properties could be channeled towards a negative experience, if the support and expectation for a beneficial experience are not present (Brown, 2007).

In the U.S., ayahuasca research pertaining to psychological implications has only been significantly undertaken within the last 20 years or so, and has initially

demonstrated therapeutic usefulness in treating depression, drug addiction, and trauma. The focus of research has varied, but Charles Grob at UCLA along with colleagues have launched an in-depth study of the physical and psychological effects of ayahuasca (Grob, McKenna, Callaway, Brito, Neves, Oberlaender, Saide, Labigalini, Tacla, Miranda, Strassman & Boone, 1996). The conclusion of these studies have indicated effectiveness in treating substance abuse.

Catharsis and abreaction are commonly associated with ayahuasca. In psychodynamic theory catharsis is the release by which relief from unexpressed conflicts is presumably brought to the patient (American Psychoanalytic Association, 1990). Reportedly, with the use of ayahuasca, catharsis is precipitated on the physical level as a vehicle for cleansing and detoxification. Spiritual catharsis occurs at a deeper level as ayahuasca purges “negativity”, “toxins”, personal "baggage" and "garbage" accumulated through one's lifetime (Blanco, 2006). The pace and depth of this process depends greatly on the individual. According to psychodynamic theory, abreaction is a process of regression back to the situation or source of a problem or trauma (American Psychoanalytic Association, 1990). This process allows one to relive the experience to gain new understanding and insights enabling resolution or closure. Ayahuasca users report that the frequent result is liberation from guilt or fear or other psycho-spiritual forces, which may have bound the individual previously. The process often results in candid re-evaluation of one's life course with a strong tendency and resolution to pursue positive changes to improve one's life with renewed purpose and mission (Blanco, 2006).

It is interesting to note that ayahuasca is among many "folk" medicines with a record of centuries of human use without apparent negative physical consequences so

long as specific dietary and other preparatory guidelines are followed. In most Amazonian cultures the majority of the population see ayahuasca as a beneficial holistic medicine when applied by those knowledgeable in its use and effects (Shannon, 2002).

A number of syncretic religions have emerged that feature ayahuasca consumption as a central sacramental element (Shannon, 2002). Membership of these religious communities continues to grow and as further testimonial of the transformative potential of ayahuasca increases, the greater the need to study this plant's properties. As it is important to note the varied contexts in which ayahuasca is used in order to appreciate its potential therapeutic value, a review of these syncretic religions is described below.

The Church of Santo Daime consumes Daime (the name given to ayahuasca in this setting) as a sacrament, at least three times in a ceremony. The term Daime refers to the drink and also to the animating principle believed to reside within it. Daime is regarded as a divine being or as the Divine and is believed to be a fountain of life, vitality, and health on a personal level and more widely held as a source of all knowledge and supernal wisdom. The use of the hallucinogenic brew in the Santo Daime Church, obtained from infusing the shredded stalk of the climbing plant *Banisteriopsis caapi* with the leaves of other plants such as *Psychotria viridis*, is growing in urban centers of Europe, South and North America. Despite this diffusion, little is known about its effects on emotional states.

Santos, Landeira-Fenandez, Strassman, Motta and Cruz (2007) investigated the effects of ayahuasca on psychometric measures of anxiety, panic and hopelessness in members of the Santo Daime. Standard questionnaires were used to evaluate state-anxiety, State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Adults (STAI), Appearance Schemes

Inventory- Revised (ASI-R) and hopelessness, Beck Hopelessness Scale (BHS) in participants that ingested ayahuasca for at least 10 consecutive years. The study was done in the Santo Daime church, where the questionnaires were administered 1 hour after ingestion, in a double-blind, placebo-controlled procedure. The study included nine participants, six males and three females. While under the acute effects of ayahuasca, participants scored lower on the scales for panic and hopelessness related states. Ayahuasca ingestion did not modify state or trait anxiety. The results suggest that ayahuasca may be helpful in alleviating hopelessness and panic related symptoms. The sample size relatively small, however.

A further reason to study ayahuasca was offered by the Brazilian government, which initially made the use and possession of ayahuasca illegal. Influenced by the anti-drug policies of the United States, Brazilian officials began to ask who these churches or ayahuasca drinkers were, what were they doing in the forests, and what political problems could result in churches where people were hallucinating in four-hour services. The government in Brazil, in their attempt to shut down ayahuasca use came into conflict with the União de Vegetal (UDV). The UDV, the largest church using ayahuasca has a conservative membership of over 6,000, unified in pursuing their religion. Drawing support from researchers, scientists, anthropologists, and others familiar with their religion, the UDV forged a cooperative relationship with the Brazilian government to conduct an organized investigation of their religion and use of ayahuasca. This investigation, done with a matched group study, found the ayahuasca drinkers of the UDV to be functioning better socially, physically, and psychologically than their matched controls in the general population (Grob et al., 1996). The study established that the

regular use of hoasca (the name they use) within the environment of the UDV was safe and without adverse long-term toxicity. Moreover it had lasting, positive influences on physical and mental health.

The ayahuasca used in the church was sampled and sent for analysis, and the visionary hallucinogenic component in the tea was determined to be DMT. The LD50, (which in toxicology refers to the median lethal dose), of ayahuasca, the dose at which it would be lethal to half the population given it, is estimated at approximately 7000ml. However, this amount is great enough that the water in the tea alone would cause renal failure. The typical dose of ayahuasca at a ceremony is 20ml. Ayahuasca itself produces nausea in some people and can induce vomiting at doses of 25ml. The possibility of ingesting a lethal dose is remote, and there is no record of such an incident ever occurring. Barring an allergic reaction to the plants themselves, ayahuasca is non-toxic. As a result of the investigation of ayahuasca and the UDV, the government of Brazil determined that neither presented a substantial enough risk to warrant interfering with the practice of religious freedom, and the law banning ayahuasca use was overturned.

Similar freedoms have been granted in Peru, Amsterdam, and, after a long and contentious battle, the United States itself in 2006 (Supreme Court syllabus, 2006). Given the vociferous defense of its use by the UDV and the investigation by a source seemingly in opposition to the practice of drinking the ayahuasca provides compelling evidence of ayahuasca's relevance in a field designed to assist humans seeking relief from psychological stresses and/or socially confining inhibitions. It is of considerable interest that such research on a large population would support the healing factors involved in

ayahuasca use and as clinical psychology focuses on alleviating emotional suffering, it is appropriate for ayahuasca to be studied.

Jacques Mabit (1996) had extensive experience with ayahuasca as traditionally employed by indigenous healers and founded a rehabilitation center featuring ayahuasca as the tool for treatment of drug addiction. Located in the upper Peruvian region at the outskirts of Tarapoto, sessions are held in accordance with the rituals practiced indigenously and are coupled with individual and group psychotherapy sessions along with Western medical supervision (Mabit, 2002).

Evidence leading to the supposition that ayahuasca is relevant to Clinical Psychology is therefore offered by a range of different avenues in which it has either begun to be explored or already has a history of use and an established following. Ayahuasca is particularly significant for psychology since it can serve as an avenue to exploring the unconscious. Reports by those who drink ayahuasca note that “significant benefits are the psychological self-understanding, personal growth, and spiritual experiences that the brew induces” (Shanon, 2003, p.39).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Literature of Ayahuasca Research

Investigations into ayahuasca came to the attention of the West through Richard Spruce in 1856 and have since been a subject of fascination on and off for researchers. In 1966, William S. Burroughs heuristically researched ayahuasca and its effects. *The Yage Diaries* chronicled his correspondence with Allen Ginsburg. Eschewing religious and sacramental rites associated with the drink, he described drinking in New York City hotel rooms, kicking out companions who fell ill from the ayahuasca, and combining it with alcohol. Initial interest in the therapeutic use of ayahuasca derived from his desire to overcome heroin addiction. Lacking concern for the typical parameters in which ayahuasca is traditionally consumed, he portrayed his mostly harrowing, occasionally enlightening history with ayahuasca. Burrough's ally, Ginsberg, recorded journeys more spiritually intense, "visit the moon, see the dead, see God" (1966, p.78) and yet also sought advice from his friend, as this was much deeper and more anxiety provoking than he felt when on LSD.

Terrence McKenna's work on entheogens was a harbinger for increased interest in plant medicines. In *Food of the Gods: The Search for the Original Tree of Knowledge* (1993) he hypothesized that as the North African jungles receded toward the end of the most recent ice age giving way to grasslands, a branch of our tree-dwelling primate ancestors left the branches and took up a life out in the open, following herds of ungulates nibbling what they could along the way. The psilocybin containing mushrooms growing in the dung of these ungulate herds resulted in enhanced visual acuity, spoken

language, and the ability to form images in another person's mind through the use of vocal sounds.

McKenna does not attempt to defend his hypotheses through rigorous scientific evidence. He rather identifies himself as an ethnobotanist, and credits ayahuasca with:

Direct healing into parts of the body and unexamined aspects of an individual's personal history where psychic tension has come to rest. Often these methods exhibit startling parallels to the techniques of modern psychotherapy; at other times they seem to represent an understanding of possibilities and energies still unrecognized by Western theories of healing (1993, p. 229).

McKenna evokes the notion that nature, both in whole and in many parts, is magically self-reflecting, aware, and we who would not normally gain access to these insights are aided by the plant kingdom.

McKenna's work heralded a renewed interest in ayahuasca. In particular, Ralph Metzner already known for his work with psychedelics alongside Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert, further elaborated on ayahuasca's effects. His *Ayahuasca: Human Consciousness and the Spirits of Nature* (1999) provided essays and journal writings from a wide assortment of people who have experienced its effects including scientists, psychologists, chemists, curious laypeople, and religious practitioners. Metzner has been a hallucinogenic and mystical researcher for over 35 years, which may have been an influential factor, since most of the people contributing personal accounts were interested in the spiritual/religious function of the ayahuasca journey and experienced it within such a context.

In the 1990's Strassman, researched DMT and later published *DMT: The Spirit Molecule: A Doctor's Revolutionary Research into the Biology of Near-Death and Mystical Experiences* (2001). DMT is the active ingredient in ayahuasca, inactive unless

combined with a monoamine oxidase inhibitor, such as harmine. DMT is an ingredient naturally created in small doses during normal human metabolism. In Strassman's research his case studies consistently reported images of "aliens" or "elves" which eventually persuaded him to alter his relational approach to volunteers. Rather than interpret, he thought to wait, and then later try to fit the pieces into some coherent theoretical framework, perhaps even invent one if current preconceptions of the nature of reality couldn't accommodate the data. Although a researcher of science, Strassman ultimately found he needed to adopt an approach that was unlike previous studies and concluded that:

(1) DMT is produced naturally in the human body by the pineal gland, and the appearance of the pineal gland in the developing human fetus at 49 days post-conception corresponds to the arrival of the soul in the body (with the DMT chemical serving as a kind of doorway between material and astral worlds); (2) that certain meditative practices, such as chanting, cause a vibratory effect in the brain that stimulates the pineal gland to release DMT, thus inciting certain spiritual experiences; and (3) that the phenomenon of alien abduction is so similar to certain DMT trips that they're likely the same thing (2001, p. 314).

Regarding the latter point Strassman theorized,

Returning to the TV analogy . . . DMT provides regular, repeated, and reliable access to `other' channels. The other planes of existence are always there. . . . But we cannot perceive them because we are not designed to do so; our hard wiring keeps us tuned in to Channel Normal. It takes only a second or two--the few heartbeats the spirit molecule requires to make its way to the brain--to change the channel, to open our mind to these other planes of existence" (2001, pp. 315-316).

Benny Shanon (2003) explored the relation between ayahuasca experiences and how participants interacted with the environment. He found that although trained as a cognitive therapist "Ayahuasca brings us to the very limits of what rational psychology can comfortably know or answer" (2003, p. 98). He adopted a stance that was

phenomenological-analytical in order to better discover an authentic account of ayahuasca's effects.

Ritual use of ayahuasca was found to induce a reduction in minor psychiatric symptoms in a pre-post test study of outside participants in UDV and Santo Daime ayahuasca rituals (Barbosa, Giglio, & Dalgalarroude, 2005). This study also raised the question of whether the setting and expectations of the participants—rather than only ayahuasca itself—were responsible for the changes. The researchers suggest that the importance of suggestibility in altered states of consciousness, combined with the ritual expectation of significant self-transformation, may be an important consideration in the effectiveness of ayahuasca as a therapeutic tool. They stated that long-term follow up of the participants was needed to determine if the apparent positive emotional changes were maintained or disappeared over time.

Evidence of health and safety in American members of the Santo Daime church using ayahuasca was noted by Halpern, Sherwood, Passle, Blackwell and Rutteberg (2008). Participants in this study attended services weekly. Physical exam and test scores revealed healthy participants. Participants also reported psychological and physical benefits from ayahuasca. Nineteen subjects met lifetime criteria for a psychiatric disorder, with six in partial remission, thirteen in full remission, and eight reporting remission that seemed to be precipitated through Church participation. Twenty-four had drug or alcohol abuse or dependence histories with twenty two in full remission, and all five with prior alcohol dependence describing Church participation as the turning point in their recovery.

Psychophysiology and Neurochemistry

Ayahuasca is the most complex of the psychedelics, requiring at least two substances to be psychoactive, a betacarboline and DMT. Harmine, the primary betacarboline in Ayahuasca, was the first antidepressant (Ott, 1996). It was used to treat tuberculosis in veterans' hospitals. It was noticed that depressed patients being treated with harmine had a higher instance of remission from depression. Because of the danger of MAOI reactions, the betacarbolines were generally abandoned for safer antidepressants developed soon afterwards. DMT has undergone human tolerability tests and has had recent clinical trials to determine its mechanism of action. It has been shown that DMT is cross-tolerant with mescaline, psilocybin, and LSD (Strassman, 2001). This suggests similar mechanisms of action in the brain. It has also been reported that most people cannot distinguish between the effects of these drugs (Ott, 1996).

Research indicates that soon after the tea is ingested the harmine, harmaline, and tetrahydroharmine cause monoamine oxidase inhibition in the digestive tract, allowing the DMT, harmine, harmaline, and tetrahydroharmine to pass into the blood stream and eventually into the brain. Once there, all four act as serotonin agonists to increase the effect of serotonin inhibition of the GABA systems in the brain (LeDoux, 2002). Dopamine is elevated as well. The brain has two base neurotransmitters that regulate neuroactivity in any given area of the brain. One is GABA, which acts to inhibit brain activity, essentially the neurological braking system, and the other is glutamate, which provides both speed and excitation to post synaptic neurons, the accelerator pedal, so to speak (LeDoux, 2002). Serotonin and dopamine, both of which are used to regulate GABA act as modulators that attach to neuron gate receptor sites. This braking system is

suppressed by the beta carbolines in ayahuasca, which increase levels of the two modulating neurotransmitters. This “takes the brakes off” neuroactivity in areas of the brain, especially in areas that use serotonin and dopamine as primary neuromodulators. DMT itself is a serotonin agonist, attaching to at least two of the serotonin receptor sites.

Gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) in the prefrontal cortex is inhibited, and as a result prefrontal cortex activity rises. The person’s thought processes become uninhibited, and the ability to judge and repress is inhibited as a direct result. At the same time, elevated dopamine levels have inhibited GABA in the limbic and midbrain, causing increased neural activity in the areas of the brain responsible for integration of memory and experiencing emotion.

A study of a sample of regular drinkers of ayahuasca in the Uñaio De Vegetal (UDV), has shown platelet serotonin uptake sites increased in drinkers of ayahuasca by as much as 25% (Callaway, Airaksmen, Mckenna, Grob, & Brito, 1994). No pharmacological agent other than ayahuasca has been demonstrated to increase uptake site density in platelets. This long-term physiological effect may indicate that ayahuasca causes the body to adapt to more efficiently use its natural serotonin, thus producing lasting benefit for depression. This may help to explain the findings from the Grob et al. (2007) study of long-term ayahuasca users, that compared a group of 15 long-term users with 15 controls with no prior use of ayahuasca and found remission from certain psychopathology and substance abuse problems among the long-term users with no evidence of personality or cognitive disturbances. No long-term safety issues or side effects were found. However, the small sample size makes it difficult to generalize.

In another study, neurochemical effects of ayahuasca on regional brain electrical activity in humans were undertaken with the use of low-resolution electromagnetic topography. It was determined that ayahuasca caused changes in brain electrical activity primarily in the cortex and limbic systems (Riba, Anderer, Jane, Saletu, & Barbanoj, 2004).

Further inquiry into ayahuasca inspired examination of its effects on binocular rivalry (Frecska, White, & Luna, 2004). This study's objective was to investigate whether binocular rivalry survives in the altered state induced by ayahuasca. Binocular rivalry is a phenomenon of visual perception in which perception alternates between different images presented to each eye. Further clarification is that when one image is presented to one eye and a very different image is presented to the other, instead of the two images being seen superimposed, one image is seen for a few moments, then the other, then the first, and so on, randomly for as long as one cares to look. In general, the study concluded that "Ayahuasca-induced survival of binocular rivalry at high rates of stimuli applied to the eyes in rapid reversals may be related to slow visual processing and increased mean dominance periods may result from alterations in visual pathways" (2004, p.86). The rationale for the study was due to the preliminary report that in contrast with healthy controls, schizophrenic patients can maintain binocular rivalry even at very high rates of the visual stimulation. This is also called dichoptic stimulus alternation, which was used in this investigation.

The prior thirty years of EEG psychedelic research suggested that psychedelic substances tend to decrease alpha and theta power and enhance beta power in the EEG frequency spectrum. Echenhofer and Stuckey (2004) in Brazil first researched a major

correlate with ayahuasca. Very high coherence was discovered among the majority of EEG recording locations in the EEG gamma frequencies (from 36 to 64 Hz) during the eyes closed ayahuasca condition compared to the eyes closed baseline condition.

The implications of this research is that neuroscience studies suggest that moderate levels of gamma coherence occur in the “binding” together of the many elements comprising normal consciousness into a unified experience. In a related study, Richard Davidson (2004) posted preliminary EEG findings showing that highly advanced Tibetan meditators also have advanced EEG gamma coherence during meditation.

Spiritual and Transpersonal Dimensions

Davidson’s study prompted Echenhofer and Stuckey (2000) to look at the possibility that high EEG gamma coherence may be a marker for states of heightened awareness common to the sacred use of meditation and entheogens and that these states may involve enhanced binding processes. Echenhofer and Stuckey (2004), studied the patterning and dynamics of enhanced EEG gamma coherence during the ayahuasca experience. The researchers did find similar patternings between states of meditation and the ayahuasca experience. By replicating and extending the prior research, new lines of investigation for EEG and consciousness-oriented research are opening. A further aspiration of researchers, Echenhofer and Stuckey is to use the EEG and experiential correlates to develop biofeedback protocols, which in turn, might be used for spiritual and therapeutic purposes to assist individuals to reproduce the specific patterns of EEG gamma coherence during ayahuasca experience. This might enable them to voluntarily access shamanic states without using an entheogen.

Hoffmann, Keppel, Hesselink, and da Silveira Barbosa (2001) recorded the EEG data from 12 subjects participating in a shamanic Ayahuasca ritual in Brazil. After three doses of the tea, their EEG data showed statistically significant increases in alpha (8-13Hz) and theta (4-8Hz) mean amplitudes compared to baseline. The authors suggest that this effect is different from that of other hallucinogens, which tend to decrease alpha and increase beta activity; they also believe the ayahuasca state is more like the states caused by marijuana, which, like meditation, also stimulates the brain to produce more alpha waves. They further speculate that the state produced by ayahuasca is one of relaxed alertness that may give the drinker access to subconscious processes, thus potentially making ayahuasca a useful psychotherapeutic tool.

Alex Polari de Alverga (1999) wrote an account of his years spent as a political prisoner during military rule in Brazil. After release and a disintegrated view on humankind, he recounts his spiritual transformation under the guidance of Padrinho Sebastião Mota de Mela, one of the founders of the Santo Daime religion. *Forest of Visions* is a study of the inner workings of the Santo Daime utopian community of 500 in the heart of the Amazonian rainforest and is also the personal account of the way in which ayahuasca aided in one person's experience of connection to the Divine.

Psychological

The UDV study also indicated a higher level of cognitive functioning than the control population and several significant differences in personality traits as measured by the Tridimensional Personality Questionnaire (TPQ). The TPQ, measured novelty seeking, harm avoidance, and reward dependence, was administered to the 15 experimental long-term hoasca-drinking subjects and to the 15 hoasca-naive control

subjects. The novelty-seeking domain included UDV subjects having greater stoic rigidity versus exploratory excitability and greater regimentation versus disorderliness. A group difference was found of greater reflection versus impulsivity, but no group differences were found along the spectrum of reserve versus extravagance (Callaway, Airaksmen, Mckenna, Grob, et al, 1994).

The UDV experimental subjects were found to have significantly greater confidence versus fear of uncertainty with a trend toward greater gregariousness versus shyness with strangers, as well as greater uninhibited optimism versus anticipatory worry. Totalling the four spectrums of the harm avoidance dimension, a significant difference was found between the study group and the control group (Grob, et al., 1996).

The findings of the UDV study were obtained with instrumentation different than previous studies of psychedelic users, and care must be taken not to generalize between instruments that may be measuring different traits. Also a small sample size prevents generalizing. On the face of the results it appears that the personality traits of frequent ayahuasca drinkers from the UDV are different than those of other reported hallucinogen users. They appear to be less novelty seeking, more socially adapted, more personally organized, and less reward seeking, which may be correlated with stimulation seeking. They claim that frequent drinking of ayahuasca has caused remission of some psychological and physical problems as well. Unfortunately these results are tentative and from a small sample.

Tolerability of ayahuasca (Riba et.al, 2001), concluded that ayahuasca induces changes in the perceptual, affective, cognitive, and somatic spheres, by a combination of stimulatory and visual psychoactive effects of longer duration and milder intensity than

those reported for intravenously administered DMT. They also found that the cardiovascular system tolerated ayahuasca well, producing some increase in systolic blood pressure. The subjective effects of ayahuasca were measured using the Hallucinogen Rating Scale (HRC), the Visual Analogue Scale (VAS), and the addiction Research Center Inventory (ARCI) scale. It was found that the effects of ayahuasca were dose-dependent, stimulatory, and psychedelic. The researchers noted modifications of perception and rapid progression of thought, visions, and memories, often with emotional content. Five of the six subjects described their experiences as pleasant; one subject's experience was dysphoric. The subjective experience of ayahuasca was described as similar to intravenous injections of DMT, but at lower levels of intensity and of longer duration. The study also noted that any disorientation experienced during the experience was transitory, unlike other hallucinogens, which can cause cognitive distortions for prolonged periods.

A year later, the study of the subjective tolerability of ayahuasca and its EEG effects was combined (Riba, et al., 2002). These researchers concluded that the subjective effects of ayahuasca could be correlated with EEG measures. They also found that ayahuasca followed the same patterns of EEG activity as other serotonergic hallucinogens, but also had characteristics of pro-dopaminergic drugs. Dopamine receptor agonism was then postulated as mediating the effects of Ayahuasca on the central nervous system as well. These findings were of particular importance because of the claims of psychological healing and detoxification. Serotonin and dopamine imbalances are thought to be central to many forms of psychological disturbance and

addiction. This study suggests that ayahuasca activates both serotonin and dopamine receptors.

By 2002 the potential for the use of ayahuasca in treating drug addiction, which has mechanisms involving both serotonin and dopamine, was being recognized. Traditional healers had already been using ritual and ayahuasca to treat addictions to alcohol and other drugs for many years, and the study of these traditional approaches effectiveness was under way at the Takiwasi Center in Peru. The use of traditional healing rituals, which included ayahuasca, was reported as having benefited 62% of patients treated for addiction (Mabit, 2002).

Benefited, in this case is further explained by a study (Mabit, Giove, & Vega, 1996) of the first seven years of activity at the clinic (1992-1998), which has examined drug addicts or alcoholics who completed at least one month of treatment, and have at least two years of time out of the clinic. The sample was 211 courses of treatment (175 first-time patients and 36 returning patients). Two-thirds of the patients consumed mainly a highly addictive and debilitating cocaine-based paste. 80% consumed alcohol alone or in addition to other drugs. More than half of the patients (53.5%) had already tried treatment, one-third of which had tried psychiatric services. For 49%, the gateway drug was alcohol, and for 42%, cannabis. The average age was thirty years and the average duration of consumption of psychoactive substances at the time of entrance was 12.5 years. At 31.3%, with a tendency to augmentation, the index of retention (percentage of prescribed exits out of total exits) gives proof of the relative acceptance of this therapeutic method. The voluntary exits make up the majority (52%) compared to prescribed exits (23%), runaways (23%), and the rare expulsions (3%). In addition to

evaluating the relation to addictive substances, especially those that the subject consumed this study considered personal evolution (internal structural change), the indications of social and professional reintegration, and the capacity for familial restructuring.

According to these criteria, it distinguished three categories: "good": favorable development, problems apparently resolved thanks to a true structural change manifested upon several life levels. "better": favorable development with evident structural changes, but vestiges of the original problem still present. "same or bad": relapse of consumption of substances, although often more discrete, no convincing structural change, frequent abandonment of substances for alcohol. Out of the total, then, 31% were "good" and 23% "better," while 23% were the "same or bad" and 23% unknown.

The Need for Research on the Topic in Clinical Psychology

Having looked at the basis for ayahuasca's neurological action, its basic action is that of a neuro-stimulant. Also, considering EEG research on brain wave output, it can be seen that ayahuasca produces stimulation within specific ranges of brainwave activity over wide areas and tends to change the hemispheric alternation of activity from rivalry to concurrent activity. There is much speculation over what these effects may have on the psychological states of the drinkers, and although much of it suggests positive effects in the context of ritual use, there is also an assumption that the effects of ayahuasca are innately curative.

The traditional indigenous view of ayahuasca as seen through the current Western literature is that it is a healing medicine with many uses, and that it has the power to produce significant positive changes. This view is, however, taken from Westernized psychologically-minded perspectives that do not completely match the cultural contexts

from which ayahuasca was originally derived. The traditional uses of ayahuasca have a decidedly practical and pragmatic purpose, whether it is the cure of illness by dealing with the appeasement of supernatural forces, or application to any need or desire simply as a universal palliative. Western scientific investigations of ayahuasca have generally operated on the underlying assumption that ayahuasca may have a positive effect on those who use it. This assumption is based on traditional reports of ayahuasca as a medicinal substance with positive effects, but the westernized scientific investigations are focused on more modern and psychologically-minded concerns than the traditional cultures in which ayahuasca originated. Ayahuasca is being investigated as a possible treatment for alcohol and drug abuse, and for an agent of general psychological growth and integration. These concerns would be phrased differently than the indigenous populations from which ayahuasca came. Indigenous populations may describe uses of ayahuasca as a way to treat a soul-sickness or a possession.

The UDV investigation was the first to focus on whether ayahuasca was physically harmful to those who drink it and to investigate into the state of the psychological health of those who drank it regularly, in the context of the UDV in Brazil. That research study had as its context the question of harm, based on the conflict the UDV was having with the government of Brazil over ayahuasca use as a sacrament. It also focused on social aspects of behavior, which might indicate if the people drinking ayahuasca would present a concern to the general society.

The research that has followed the UDV study has proceeded from researchers with direct interests in ayahuasca as a traditional medicine, and the translation of ayahuasca use from traditional indigenous practices, to more modern contexts. The

assumption in much of this research is that ayahuasca is already a medicinal agent, and that what needs to be accomplished in order for it to gain wider acceptance is a model based on scientific research and evidence outlining how its benefits are achieved. This is evidenced by the context in which much of the research is conducted. The general methodology has been to produce studies on subjects during or just after traditional indigenous shamanic rituals, or church-based rituals, during which they had consumed ayahuasca. The assumed context is that ayahuasca is a sacred medicine.

The EEG data itself has been reported accurately, but the interpretation of the EEG activity has often been biased towards trying to prove ayahuasca produced possible positive effects. This inference is poorly supported by current functional understanding of brain activity. That an area of the brain has increased activity during an ayahuasca exposure is certainly measurable, but what that activity means is not; any more than listening to the magnetic field produced by a supercomputer can be translated into the complex lines of code running within it. Further, if, as has been suggested, the effect of ayahuasca is to place the drinker into a suggestible state, then positive changes reported may be completely dependent on the setting of ayahuasca use and the expectations of the consumer, rather than the direct effect of ayahuasca itself.

Statement of the Research Problem and Question

The Research Problem

Given the scarcity of professional literature on the topic of ayahuasca and its lived-effect upon individuals suffering from depression, my research proposes to bring to light more information of the phenomenology of ayahuasca's effect, if any, on mild to moderate symptoms of depression. Although there is accumulating investigation into the

neurochemical effects of ayahuasca on its users and understanding of its effect on serotonin receptors, there is as of yet no literature illuminating how one's encountering of ayahuasca is actually experienced and lived out when suffering from chronic and/or treatment resistant depression. As valuable as scanning the brain is to understand properties of ayahuasca, there is no other way to measure the subjective experiences of individuals other than to ask them. Particularly given its reputation as an MAOI, the manner in which an actual person with dysthymic symptoms experiences the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of ayahuasca is examined. Interviews conducted have intended to reveal the relationship between dysthymic individuals and actual perceived responses to ayahuasca.

The Research Question

Using a phenomenological approach, the research question is; what are the effects of ayahuasca on symptoms of mild to moderate depression, which is chronic and/or treatment resistant. The study has been limited to the experience as it has been perceived by 6 different individuals over a two week to twenty day period, wherein one initial interview occurred and then a subsequent follow up interview took place.

Definition of Terms

The key concepts in my research question are dysthymia and ayahuasca. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* Fourth edition (DSM-IV), published by the American Psychiatric Association, characterizes dysthymic disorder as a chronic depression, but with less severity than a major depression. The essential symptom involves the individual feeling depressed almost daily for at least two years, but without the criteria necessary for a major depression. Low energy, disturbances in sleep or in

appetite and low self-esteem typically contribute to the clinical picture as well. Sufferers have often experienced dysthymia for many years before it is diagnosed. People around them come to believe that the sufferer is "just a moody person." Note the following diagnostic criteria:

1. On the majority of days for 2 years or more, the patient reports depressed mood or appears depressed to others for most of the day.
2. When depressed, the patient has 2 or more of:
 1. Appetite decreased or increased
 2. Sleep decreased or increased
 3. Fatigue or low energy
 4. Poor self-image
 5. Reduced concentration or indecisiveness
 6. Feels hopeless
3. During this 2-year period, the above symptoms are never absent longer than 2 consecutive months.
4. During the first 2 years of this syndrome, the patient has not had a Major Depressive Episode.
5. The patient has had no Manic, Hypomanic or Mixed Episodes.
6. The patient has never fulfilled criteria for Cyclothymic Disorder.
7. The disorder does not exist solely in the context of a chronic psychosis (such as Schizophrenia or Delusional Disorder).
8. The symptoms are not directly caused by a general medical condition or the use of substances, including prescription medications.
9. The symptoms cause clinically important distress or impair work, social or personal functioning (APA, 2000, p.376).

Ayahuasca, as defined in this study is a hallucinogenic drink. It has also been called yage, or yaje, in Colombia, ayahuasca in Ecuador and Peru (Inca "vine of the dead, vine of the souls," aya means in Quechua "spirit," "ancestor," "dead person," while huasca means "vine," "rope") caapi or daime in Brazil, it is prepared from segments of the vine *Banisteriopsis Caapi*. Sections of vine are boiled with leaves from any of a large number of potential admixture plants resulting in a drink that contains the powerful hallucinogenic alkaloids harmaline, harmine, d-tetrahydroharmine, and often N,N-dimethyltryptamine. Traditional use considers it a medicine and it has been used

traditionally for millennia with intent to enter the sacred supernatural world, to heal,
divine, and worship.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Methodology and Procedures

Research Approach: The Phenomenological Approach

My philosophical stance towards research is empirical and is in the tradition of phenomenology, which encourages exploring the structures of consciousness in human experience. Having its roots in the philosophical perspective of Edmund Husserl and further addressed by philosophical discussions of Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty, it is suited for studying the human sciences, especially psychology,

...Researchers search for the essential, invariant structure (or essence) or the central underlying meaning of the experience and emphasize the intentionality of consciousness where experiences contain both the outward appearance and inward consciousness based on memory, image and meaning (Creswell, 1998, p.52).

The philosophical context of phenomenology was developed in the late 19th century when Dilthey distinguished between naturwissenschaften and geisteswissenschaften, between the natural sciences and the human sciences. Natural science studies the physical world and its phenomena. Human science involves the analysis and explication of human life by studying lived experience (erlebnis). The distinction between natural science and human science is clarified by understanding that consciousness is the distinct human faculty that sets human beings apart from nature. Phenomenology is devoted to the study of consciousness and objects of consciousness, which are the essence of lived experience.

Edmund Husserl is the principle architect of phenomenological philosophy. Seeking to establish a universal science by radically grounding the foundations of consciousness, Husserl stated that consciousness is required if knowledge is to be

achieved. Without consciousness there is no perceptible world. Phenomenology then studies how objects and events appear to consciousness. Objects of consciousness are distinct from objects in the natural or real external world. Husserl demonstrated this distinction by differentiating between the real and the unreal. Real objects exist in the world. Unreal objects exist in consciousness. Phenomenology studies the object that presents itself to the mind. For Husserl, a careful detailed, analysis of objects as they appear to consciousness can reveal the nature, meaning and essence of these objects because these are given intuitively and grasped immediately through the experience of the phenomenon.

Husserl's phenomenological method requires one to set aside the question of the real existence of the contemplated object in order to embark on a detailed analysis of the mental structures involved in perceiving particular types of objects. In order to achieve this attitude, several modes of bracketing are required. First, because Husserl was aware that a description of phenomenon could be shaped by other sources or experiences. Second, he suggested that we consider the phenomenon only from the perspective of consciousness itself. For example a physicist employs models, such as waves and particles, to explain the phenomenon of light. A phenomenologist relies on what is given. Light is what I perceive visually. No other assumptions or judgments are made. We are already in contact with the thing itself and do not require other theories, hypothesis, or models to understand the phenomenon as it appears.

Husserl's student, Heidegger, moved phenomenology in a new direction, into an existential hermeneutics, a phenomenology of being (Dasein). This provided a critical distinction from Husserl's phenomenology. Husserl's transcendental phenomenology was

devoted to describing the things themselves. For Heidegger, phenomenology and philosophy were more fundamental than science. Things perceived in consciousness were not simply referent to the things themselves. For Heidegger, the objects of consciousness ultimately were referent to the being who perceived them. Heidegger eschews the possibility of an objective or transcendent perspective through which one can know the things in themselves. Heidegger favored an emphasis on the inescapable relationship between the individual and the world. Understanding, for Heidegger, is an event rather than an objective certainty or absolute truth.

Additional contributions to phenomenology have been made by Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Ricoeur among others. For the purposes of this dissertation and the development of an understanding of phenomenology as the research method being used, Amedeo and Barbro Giorgi's work, particularly *Qualitative Psychology* (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003) is used as the primary source. This is further elaborated upon in the section on research methodology.

In addition to the philosophy of phenomenology, my philosophical stance has its roots in the tradition of depth psychology. The two share common themes in that psychological inquiry is "not merely to answer questions at their surfaces but also the very nature of the questions themselves" (Coppin & Nelson, 2004, p.62). Further commonalities are in the respect and attention to complexity. Nothing is unduly quantified or labeled or forced to conform to a specific agenda as there is a nonattachment to outcome, in an effort to achieve unbiased information and a truer understanding of the phenomenon. As in phenomenology, psychological inquiry appreciates the impact that the researcher and the researcher's attentiveness in

questioning may have upon the subject. The ultimate goal is to allow space for the lived experience to reveal itself rather than forced to submit to inquiry, which may crush its very nature and thereby greater understanding of that nature.

Giorgi and Giorgi (2003) suggest that phenomenology's definition of consciousness encompasses what depth psychology would define as conscious, preconscious, and unconscious processes. Moreover, Heidegger's concept Dasein, bears some resemblance to the idea of the soul. These connections, however, are not explicit in phenomenological philosophy.

Phenomenology fits within the depth psychological tradition because it aims to reveal what is hidden in the appearances. The relationship between the latent and the manifest is evident in its methods. Likewise, it acknowledges transference and then suspends it via the practice of bracketing.

Research Methodology: Giorgi's Phenomenological Method

Interested in understanding the lived experience of encounters with ayahuasca, the most effective manner to conduct inquiry is to suspend judgment in a way that does not undermine empirically informed research. The guiding theme of phenomenology is to go "back to the things themselves" (Husserl, 1931, p. 252).

Not only is phenomenology philosophical, it is a research methodology that is intended to investigate the meaning beneath the questions. Ayahuasca does not lend itself to particularly quantifiable variables when trying to comprehend how it holds personal significance for an individual. For example, if I were to study brain waves of someone under the influence of ayahuasca or give them a before/after psychological test, these would be measurable quantities and would offer a certain kind of knowledge. However,

the nature of my questions has to do with the intimately felt impact and potentially transformative quality of the experience.

Phenomenology as a research method for the psychological sciences, aims to clarify situations lived through by persons in everyday life. It seeks the psychological meanings that constitute the phenomenon through investigating and analyzing lived examples of the phenomenon within the context of the research participants' lives. In terms of relating this to my dissertation, it is important to reflect on knowledge and validity in the method of phenomenology. The two principle questions are how do we come to know and how do we know that what we know is true.

Intentionality is a key concept in phenomenology related to knowledge. Intentionality is the essence of consciousness, which means for phenomenology that consciousness is always directed to objects that transcend the acts themselves. Phenomenology insists that it is the object that is grasped by consciousness and not a representation of it. Every person is present to the world or some aspect of it. Thus, through careful descriptions of lived experience, we can come to know the structures of these experiences. Experience is known by how it appears or becomes present to us. However, Husserl and Heidegger became aware that the subject/object distinction so carefully constituted in the more traditional natural sciences was not absolute. In phenomenology subject and object are intimately connected. Each constitutes the other. Heidegger would even say that Dasein is the world. The difficulty with detailed descriptions is that biases lurk everywhere. In order to overcome biases and preconceptions, Husserl requires that the researcher declare and bracket his or her

assumptions and biases in order that the phenomenon under investigation may reveal itself more fully.

Bracketing, then, is phenomenology's first principle with respect to knowledge and validity. We illuminate and set aside our biases and assumptions in order to be faithful to the phenomenon as it appears. Through the process of bracketing, layers of the phenomenon are revealed so that the phenomenon and processes that constitute are discovered. From the mode and means that the phenomenon takes in making itself, we then work toward understanding the structure of the experience itself. This is the second principle of phenomenology with respect to knowledge and validity. As Giorgi states, "structure is the reality that one responds to at the phenomenal level." (1986, p. 67). Once we have solicited detailed descriptions, the task of understanding the act of experience itself, its structure, comes from carefully analyzing the phenomenon as it revealed itself through the research participants' descriptions.

No claim is made by phenomenology that phenomenon are the way they present themselves to be. There is no objective claim to reality. Phenomenology only aims at understanding the things in themselves as they appear not as they actually are. One important check for validity the researcher employs in phenomenology is participant validation. Once the structures of experience are developed from the detailed descriptions of the research participants, the researcher presents the structure to the participant in order to ascertain if the structure accurately reflects the participant's experience. Additions and deletions can be made at this point. As Giorgi and Giorgi (2003) note, there is no foolproof method that assures that participants' descriptions are accurate or that the participants are not being intentionally deceptive and reporting false

experiences. For these problems, phenomenology relies on the judgment of the researcher. Likewise, with sufficient participants, a general structure appears that is consistent with each participant's report though not necessarily completely congruent as variation remains in how each participant experiences the phenomenon. Gross distortion by one participant could be detected at this phase of the analysis though it remains possible that the description is accurate to that participant's experience. The final judgment of participant distortion ultimately rests with the researcher.

Amedeo Giorgi's (1985) phenomenological research method incorporates aspects of Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology. For methods, it relies on Husserl, but for the aim of phenomenological psychological research, its influence is Heidegger. Phenomenology for the psychological sciences makes one modification to Husserl's concept of bracketing. It considers what is given from the perspective of consciousness but assumes that this consciousness is human consciousness engaged with the world.

Phenomenology is the chosen research method for this topic because it aims to clarify situations lived through by persons in everyday life. Although there are certain themes, which may appear across individuals' ayahuasca experiences, phenomenology allows for meaning to be derived and approached with an openness towards perceived understanding as it is appreciated in the psyche of an individual. Attention is more on the associations and resonances with the experience rather than a desire to label it specifically. The nature of ayahuasca seems to defy any claim to predictable outcome or prescribed experience, therefore phenomenology is specifically suited for approaching such a topic.

In phenomenological research, the researcher must investigate the phenomenon as it appears in everyday life or what phenomenologists call the life world. For this study, it is not possible to actually conduct an interview during an ayahuasca experience so research will be altered somewhat in that it will be retrospective. Interviews will be conducted to obtain detailed descriptions of how individuals experienced their particular encounter with ayahuasca. Primary, is that the descriptions of participants will be from actual life. Once the raw data is collected, the procedure for analyzing the data can be described in four steps.

The research design includes interviews that are taped, and then transcribed verbatim. The phenomenological method as honed by Amedeo Giorgi is particularly suited for analyzing the data. The four essential steps for analysis are as follows:

- 1) One reads the entire description in order to get a general sense of the whole statement.
- 2) Once the sense of the whole has been grasped, the researcher goes back to the beginning and reads through the whole text once more with the specific aim of discriminating „meaning units“ from within a psychological perspective and with a focus on the phenomenon being studied.
- 3) Once meaning units have been delineated, the researcher then goes through all the meaning units and expresses the psychological insight contained in them more directly. This is especially true of the meaning units most revelatory of the phenomenon under consideration.
- 4) Finally, the researcher synthesizes all of the transformed meaning units into a consistent statement regarding the subject“s experience. This is usually referred to as the structure of the subject“s experience and can be expressed at a number of levels (Giorgi, 1985, p.10).

The value in undertaking a study of this nature is that it is a practice of science within a context of not knowing, rather than in a context of verification. Although the role of verification is meaningful and has its purpose, in this inquiry the stance is aimed at improved knowledge of the activities occurring in the context of discovery. In this way, systematizing scientific activity within the context of discovery is being conducted

independently from the criteria of verification (Giorgi, 1985). A phenomenological approach will yield insight into the subtle movements of an ayahuasca experience. This may then result in an unfolding of information rather than a directed or quantifiable accounting of the experience.

The great strength of the phenomenological research is its focus on “Back to the things themselves” (Husserl, 1939, p.8). Phenomenology develops an understanding of phenomenon from the lived world rather than the laboratory. There is fidelity to the phenomenon and the experience itself. Experience is not divorced from understanding. Phenomenology moves deeply into the subjective world of the participant. In traditional investigations, the natural world is replaced by the laboratory. In phenomenology, the life world, which we experience, becomes the laboratory.

Giorgi and Giorgi (2003) suggested that one aim of phenomenology is to comprehend the subjective as subjective or what they would call an objective understanding of subjective experience. Through bracketing and the phenomenological reduction, the subject/object dichotomy is made explicit rather than implicit. While Husserl claimed that phenomenon could be known objectively, Heidegger was more cautious and ultimately resolved that subject and object constitutes each other. Dasein is being in the world and, also Dasein is the world. Phenomenological analysis is further substantiated as the method of choice because it is intersubjectively oriented rather than objectively oriented. As the researcher, I shall work at each step to acknowledge preconceptions, biases and assumptions in order that the phenomena are disclosed for what and how it is and comes to be. By affirming the presence of subjectivity, phenomenology also affirms its fundamental orientation towards knowledge and truth.

While it does not make claims on objective reality, it can enable us to understand ourselves.

Participants

This was a study focusing particularly on the treatment of those suffering from chronic or treatment resistant, or chronic and treatment resistant depression. Research participants were 2 women and 4 men, ranging in age from 25 to 46. All of the men and women were Caucasian. Of the women, one has a B.A. from an accredited university, the other a Master's in Social Work. Of the men, 3 had either a B.A. or a B.S., the 4th man is a Caucasian, who has his GED. All had suffered from past mild to moderate depression, which was screened with the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale. In the CES-D Scale, scores may range from 0-60, with higher scores indicating greater levels of depression. Participants used this self-screening tool by rewording it to reflect that it was a retrospective look at whether or not symptoms of depression were present prior to taking ayahuasca. All participants were interviewed after initial contact with ayahuasca. The cut off criteria for inclusion/exclusion for this study was a score of 27 on the CES-D Scale. All participants scored 30 or higher, the range being 32 -45.

Four participants suffered from chronic depression, (S, S2, S3, and S6). 3 participants tried medication, (S, S2, and S3). All participants sought psychotherapy, they reported that it had been minimally helpful. S4, S5, and S6 turned to alternative methods to treat their depression which was not effective. Based on this self-reported information, S, S2 and S3 suffered from chronic and treatment resistant depression, which was moderate. S4 and S5 suffered from treatment resistant depression, which was mild and S6 suffered from chronic depression, also mild.

Participants were to be excluded if it was clear that symptoms of depression were not sufficient for the purpose of this study. That would have been determined if a score of 27 or higher had not occurred using the CES-D scale. No one was excluded from the study who had applied. Once a determination was made that someone fulfilled the inclusion criteria for this study, further arrangements were made which were suitable for each of us to conduct a taped interview. The first interview was between 1 and 10 days following the participant's experience with ayahuasca. In order to avoid bias and to insure breadth of experiences a full spectrum of responses to ayahuasca was included. There was no preference in choosing participants who had, for example, only positive experiences.

Materials

The study used the CES-Depression Scale. The Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression Scale (CES-D) is a 20-item instrument that was developed by the National Institute of Mental Health to detect major or clinical depression in adolescents and adults. The questions are easy to answer and cover most of the areas included in the diagnostic criteria for depression. It has been used in urban and rural populations, and in cross-cultural studies of depression. Studies using the CES-D indicate that it has very good internal consistency, acceptable test-retest stability, and reliability. Actual psychometric data of original study is ; internal consistency: Coefficient alpha, general population = 0.85, and patient sample is .90. Participants were able to access this test online at <http://patienteducation.stanford.edu/research/cesd10.html> and take it themselves. Each participant reported the results back to me, either through a phone call or via email.

Research Procedures

The research process followed these general steps: (1) Formulated the research question; (2) Attended to my own assumptions, preconceptions, and biases about the topic so that they did not interfere with my interpretation of the data (through the use of bracketing, and scientific phenomenological reduction); (3) Obtained participants, got their informed consent and screened for past mild to moderate depression using the CES-D Scale; (4) Conducted data gathering and analysis; and (5) Communicated the findings.

Procedures for Gathering Data

Data was collected from those who learned of my research by word of mouth who were good matches for my study and others who contacted me through the website MAPS (Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies), a non-profit research and educational organization. Two participants were referred via word of mouth, the others through the website. Six people were interviewed regarding their experiences of depression and ayahuasca. The participants were selected from a pool of participants who began to contact me and were willing to subscribe to the screening process, intended to determine that depressive symptoms were present. Participants were selected to provide a cross section of people with regard to gender, age, race, and life experience. After gaining informed consent from the participants, they were interviewed individually. (A sample of the informed consent form is provided in Appendix A.) The participants were assigned a pseudonym to help ensure confidentiality. The interviews were audio taped and subsequently transcribed and analyzed. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured, conversational-style approach in an effort to obtain life world descriptions of the interviewees' experiences of the phenomenon and to interpret those descriptions

meaningfully. The initial research question asked of each participant was “What is your experience of depression?” Additional open-ended questions were used during the interviews to obtain more in-depth descriptions from the participants, to clarify the meaning of what was said, and to ascertain the role which images and metaphors could play in order to amplify the descriptions all the more.

Amedeo Giorgi’s aforementioned mode of analysis of transcribed interviews with intent toward meaning units was relied upon. The nature of the interviews was a nondirective approach, without predetermined expectations, every attempt made to withhold agendas, biases, or intrusions into the personal responses of the participants. Descriptions were confined to the experience itself and did not demand justification nor were attempts made to explore primary associations each participant may have assumed towards his or her history, although often participants were naturally inclined to bring those associations in. At those times, attempts were made to redirect the participant back to the lived experience.

Procedures for analyzing data

The database used in the analysis consisted of the retrospective descriptions provided by the participants. Data analysis followed the four steps outlined by Giorgi and Giorgi (2003): (1) After the interviews were transcribed, they were read thoroughly to get a perspective of the whole of each participant’s story; (2) the transcribed interviews were then divided into natural meaning units; (3) each meaning unit was transformed into text showing how I understood what was being said-this included generalizing the content, making explicit what was previously implicit, and describing what was occurring psychologically, and finally, (4) the transformed text was synthesized into a structure that

described the essence of the experience attending to the constituents revealed during the research process.

Once the findings were collected, participants were asked to validate them. Each participant was given a copy of the resulting structure and the list of constituents and asked to verify them against their own self-reported experiences of the phenomenon. It was only after a participant agreed that the structure captured the data fully and with accuracy that the analysis was considered complete.

Procedures for Addressing Ethical Concerns

Potential participants presented themselves to me, either because they had heard of my research topic by word of mouth and wanted to participate voluntarily or they had responded to a posting I placed with the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS). MAPS is a non-profit research and educational organization as prior mentioned. All participation was voluntary and withdrawal at any time was always an option as long as it was a time prior to the submittal of the final manuscript.

Potential participants who contacted me were then asked to make arrangements with me to send them the consent forms and the CES-depression Scale, (if it was not obtained online), which were filled out and returned by mail. To protect the identity of the participants, their contact information was purged from the computer before the mailing took place. Regarding the consent forms, the first was signed and mailed back to the researcher to acknowledge the participant was fully informed of their rights as a research subject. Once the consent form was mailed back, it was separated from the client's responses, severing the link between their answers and their identities on the consent forms. A second copy of the consent form was retained by the participant.

The participant could at any time contact the researcher and request their data be removed from the study. A self addressed stamped envelope without the participants' return address was provided for the return of the materials.

The returned informed consent forms were handled, in this manner; once the consent form was mailed back, it did not remain attached to the client's responses. As stated, the participant retained his/her own copy of the consent form, which allowed reference to rights and prevented misunderstanding of the nature of the study. The participant's copy had a number by which subsequent materials could be matched to it, so the participant could at any time anonymously contact the researcher, give the number, and request their data be removed from the study.

It was stated that there are possible physical and psychological risks. Although, I conducted interviews after the fact, ayahuasca is associated with a number of physical side effects, including nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. The main psychological risk is anxiety. Psychological risk would most likely be present while under the influence of ayahuasca, however re-telling the experience held the possibility of activating painful or uncomfortable memories. Each interview was carefully conducted but there was no guarantee that psychological stress would not occur. In the event that emotional distress became sufficient for a referral, referrals to psychologists and psychiatrists were arranged prior to the interviews. If the participant chose to continue pursuit of ayahuasca after the interviews, it was clearly outlined that I, as a researcher had no vested interest in whether or not they continued taking ayahuasca. Any subsequent experiences that a participant has will not be because I have in any way encouraged it. No one I had ever seen as a client was used as a research participant.

I was the sole caretaker, for recorded interview material. This insured privacy and prevented against misuse by others. Audiotapes and all research materials were kept locked in a filing cabinet and I was the only one with access to it. I will keep the data for five years in the event that it is summoned for review for reasons of corroborating my findings. At the point when this research has been completed, data collected, and the appropriate amount of time has passed, all materials will be destroyed.

Limitations and Delimitations

One limitation is that, subjects were not assigned to specific conditions, and there were no measures to establish controlled conditions. This is a post-test only case study design, sampling responses of ayahuasca drinkers after use has already occurred.

Although the overall design is weakened by the prevention of interviews prior to ayahuasca use, it is the most viable design available in this situation. Interviews were not able to be obtained prior to use because ayahuasca is considered illegal by U.S. standards. This is a sample of participants created from the necessity of abiding by legal and ethical constrictions and consisting of responses from persons having taken ayahuasca.

For this study the sample is, however, specifically suited for the study of ayahuasca drinkers in the U.S. This serves to enhance understanding how it affects this community in societal conditions, which are different from those who have traditionally participated in ayahuasca consumption in the Amazon region. As set forth previously, psychedelic use may be heavily influenced by set and setting and there may be clear distinctions between a person who is attuned to the use of ayahuasca because it is part of the general culture and climate and a person who may have not had the experience of normalizing the ingestion of ayahuasca.

Phenomenological research tends to be weak in the area of validity; some may suggest that interpretation is by nature subjective and difficult to validate, however validation was present in the form of participants review of the researcher's interpretation of data. Certain skills are needed by the researcher (such as those required for interviewing, bracketing, and analysis). The data analysis process is dependent on the researcher's subjectivity and "cannot be intersubjectively checked, only the outcome can" (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003, p.48). For example, I may have missed certain themes. The research is difficult to replicate, because of the variations in human experience. To alleviate these potential shortcomings, enough of the analysis process was documented that other researchers should be able to follow my process and verify that the findings are reasonable. In addition, the participants were asked to review and verify the structures as reflections of their lived experiences. The participants validated that the structure did indeed resonate with them and match their experiences.

Phenomenology is not focused on and does not have the research goal of providing measurements or solutions. Nevertheless, Giorgi and Giorgi (2003) noted that phenomenological research is a legitimate form of science and follows the general dictates of science. The research results are only pertinent to the population that was sampled.

Organization of the Study

The dissertation manuscript includes the review of the literature, a description of the research methodology, and a description of the research that was conducted. The research section includes some demographic information about the population that was selected, each person's narrative, and a detailed data analysis, the constituents that were

revealed through the analysis, the structure providing a synthesized version of the story of ayahuasca's impact on depression based on the analysis of the data, and a discussion of the findings.

Chapter 4: Findings

Participant Demographics

The group consisted of 6 participants who suffered from mild to moderate, chronic and/or treatment resistant depression prior to taking ayahuasca and who were interviewed 7 to 10 days following their ingestion of ayahuasca. The population reflected a community of people who pursued their own interest in the experience of ayahuasca and who sought this as a method for exploring its potential effect on symptoms associated with chronic and/or treatment resistant depression. There were 3 males, 2 females, and one transgendered individual. The age minimum was 18 years of age, with no maximum age.

The participants were all from the United States, since the research was designed to illuminate the possible effects of ayahuasca on symptoms of depression within the context of the United States. The traditional cultural context in which ayahuasca use originated is in the Amazon, however my decision to use only participants who live in the U.S. was influenced by my choice to determine how it may influence those with whom I and other professionals are likely to be treating.

Constituents

Appendix B contains the transcribed interviews, which have been divided into meaning units accompanied by the transformed text for each participant's story. The researcher synthesized the participants' stories and found 29 constituents, which are major themes of characteristics of the experience:

- Experience of depression-
1. Lacking self worth
 2. Blaming self

3. Nameless dread, the world is not safe
4. Depression took different forms in different phases of life
5. Abuse, trauma, mistreatment were factors
6. Sought therapy as a means of addressing depression, effective to a certain degree
7. Tried medication for depression, which was not effective
8. Became numb
9. Turned to alternative methods of healing depression
10. Had suicidal thoughts
11. Depression feels like a painful sensation in the chest, heart area
12. Depression was cyclical
13. Drinking, other forms of self medicating fueled depression

The ayahuasca experience-

14. Experienced depression just prior to taking ayahuasca
15. Ayahuasca gave clear messages on life issues
16. Realized new levels of self understanding in experience
17. Felt a wiser part of themselves was speaking to them
18. Emotionally difficult in anticipation and in actual experience
19. Felt experienced the numinous
20. During ayahuasca returned to originally traumatizing life experience

The outcome of the experience-

21. Take things less personally
22. Greater self awareness and personal responsibility
23. Greater awareness of own experience, self-efficacy, that difficulties can be managed
24. Feeling of greater self acceptance
25. Change in self-identity, experience of self has altered depressive symptoms
26. Change in how one relates to others, thus impacting mood
27. Depression has diminished, but feel cautious that it will last (after first interview)
28. Feel depression has lifted, either because enough time has passed, or according to second interview
29. Feel grateful towards ayahuasca

Table 1 summarizes these essential constituents for each participant. For comparison purposes, the original narrative that was formulated by the researcher after review has been analyzed for its constituents and included in the final column of the table. The table clearly shows the uniqueness of each person's experience as well as the common elements. Solid blocks in the columns indicate the most significant constituents

to the participants. Striped blocks indicate constituents that had more moderate significance. Relative significance was determined by the repetition of a theme. A blank indicates that the analysis revealed no mention of the constituent. An analysis of this table revealed that eight constituents were of primary importance to 4 or more of the participants. These constituents are:

1. Nameless dread, the world is not safe
2. Depression as painful sensation in chest, heart area
3. Realized new levels of self-understanding in experience
4. Emotionally difficult in anticipation and in actual experience
5. Felt experienced the numinous
6. Take things less personally
7. Depression has lifted
8. Feel grateful towards ayahuasca

Table 1

Essential constituents for participant

Constituents	S	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6
Experience of depression						
1. Lacking self-worth	■	▨		▨		
2. Blaming self	■			■		▨
3. Nameless dread, the world is not safe	■	■			■	■
4. Depression took different forms in different life phases	■	■	■			▨
5. Abuse, trauma, mistreatment were factors	▨	■				■
6. Sought therapy, effective to a degree	▨	■	▨	▨	■	■
7. Tried medication, which was not effective	■	■	▨			
8. Became numb		▨			▨	▨
9. Turned to alternative methods				■	▨	
10. Had suicidal thoughts		▨	▨	■		
11. Depression as painful sensation in chest, heart area		■			■	■
12. Depression was cyclical	▨		■			
13. Drinking, self-medicating fueled depression				■	■	■
Ayahuasca experience						
14. Experienced depression just prior to taking ayahuasca	▨			■	■	■
15. Ayahuasca gave clear messages on life issues	▨	■		■	■	
16. Realized new levels of self understanding in experience	■	■			■	■
17. Felt wiser part was speaking to them		▨		■		■
18. Emotionally difficult in anticipation and in experience	■					
19. Felt experienced the numinous	■	■				

20. Returned to originally traumatizing life experience						
Outcome of the experience						
21. Take things less personally						
22. Greater self awareness, personal responsibility						
23. Greater awareness of own experience, difficulties						
24. Greater self-acceptance						
25. Change in self-identity, depressive symptoms altered						
26. Change in how one relates to others impacting mood						
27. Depression diminished, cautious it will last						
28. Feel depression has lifted						
29. Feel grateful towards ayahuasca						

Supporting quotations from the participants for each constituent are provided in Table 2. The letter and number used to signify each participant and the meaning unit number of the quotation are in parentheses following the quote. Additional data analysis linking the participants’ stories to the constituents can be found in Appendix C.

Table 2

Participant Quotations Supporting the Constituents

Constituents	Quotations
1. Lacking self-worth	Pretty much all my life as far as I can tell, I felt like a feeling of lacking value, of being wrong, kind of morally wrong, kind of like I didn’t belong. You know I am really remembering as a kid a feeling of isolation (S, 2)
	Really, I look at that hatred and conflict and those same issues come up around value, I felt I had to prove my value (S, 11)
	Ummm yeah, so I was born slightly smaller and I have always wanted to be equal and it felt to me that he always wanted to be better, so we competed and so certainly that has to do with identity. (S, 14)
	I guess when I was nine my Dad left and that’s when all the chaos started, but before that even when I was 5, specifically my dad left me, because my brothers got interesting
	And it left me feeling confused, because before, I was there. It was all good, and I then I remember it made me isolate, made me be quiet, keep to myself, I tried to not be noticed. When I got older after my dad did leave I spent a

	lot of time in my room, I acted out a lot too, I did things I wasn't supposed to do. It made me, also in school one semester I would do well and then I wouldn't. (S2, 2-3)
	But you know what, it doesn't work and it is crushing. It feels like something internal is being crushed, like my lifeblood is toxic. (S4, 10)
	Well, like I said, I was, am adopted and I almost felt like I was doomed from the start, but really I guess I first became aware of it around 9. (S4, 15)
2. Blamed self	It felt like my own fault, my own feeling, it also kind of felt like the world was punishing me or torturing me. (S, 4)
	I mean I am adopted so I feel like I was just set up to be depressed. (laughs) (S4, 3)
	I will obsess over every wrong that has occurred, I will want to hurt people who have hurt me, I will take things out on others, like I know I can rip people apart with my words and I am a monster when I am deep in my depression. I am mean. (S4, 7)
	And I drink, and that lets me really be an asshole, I mean some of the things I have done when drinking are appalling (S4, 8)
	Then I just thought I should resign myself to it, maybe I'm just supposed to live my life depressed and it is some sort of horrible karma because I was an asshole in another life so I don't get to have serotonin in this life. (S4, 27)
	Actually I remember there was this one girl who was nice to me, but I actually found her weird, and so that was depressing that only the weirdoes were attracted to me, so it was my fault I felt bad (S6, 12)
3. Nameless dread, the world is not safe	I saw outside of myself people not caring for me, not being safe. (S, 3)
	never, this time I am thinking about, around 6 or 7 or 8, I guess around this point I didn't consider myself being sad, I just thought this was the way things were, a dark and dangerous world.
	At the same time I can remember a lot of wonder about the world. I wasn't being abused. I can't really point to real factors in the world that caused these experiences. Which is why I call it depression not bad luck, there was nothing to point to. (S, 5-6)
	wanted to be oh I am analyzing myself. I wanted to be held and safe and I didn't feel like I could be safe and it made me sad and I wanted to shut everything out. That was the only thing that was safe. It felt like a trap. I guess life felt like a trap. (S2, 10)

	But anyway I knew it became unsafe even when I shut my door. I would get really frustrated, that was what I would do, I would snap back and fight. It was oppressive. He told me once that he tried to adopt us because he didn't want any of my father around. Our dogs were put to sleep, these three trees he had planted were cut down.
	Mostly I just went inside, I had this whole little world inside. I developed psychic stuff, I went into occult stuff, witchcraft, stuff I was fascinated with, history and the past, why people would do the things they would do.
	So I took refuge in books, anything that would isolate me, keep me off the radar. (S2, 17-19)
	Then one day I remember the feeling was just complete and total dread. I was in the playground at my school and I remember I was in the asphalt where the big kids played and I felt peaceful and then all of a sudden it came from over there and it scared me and I felt terrified and I ran, landed and felt like I was going to die and I felt so afraid and I couldn't go anywhere and I was sweating and couldn't move, so I took off running but that wasn't helping much
	and then my flying dream would always start in the schoolyard, so the dread that came was what if I can't fly. (S2, 23-24)
	That depression was a lot different. That depression was. I would jump at noises, I would stay in my house, I would go to the grocery store, But I was in my house, with the curtains drawn and I had a pretty good size apartment, and I lived alone there but I didn't talk to people, I would make dates and cancel them, I would think about going out, I would make dates and leave, I couldn't function, Depression felt very out of control, like I couldn't even go to the store when I needed to . (S2, 41)
	sometimes it is utter dread, like impending doom, paranoia almost (S5, 5)
	I am thinking you know the nights were the worst, just lying there and not being able to sleep because my mind is just going and going around with the dread of being alive (S5, 7)
	one experience of it is uhhh, um, well just a general discomfort, insecurity, kind of being afraid of something, but now knowing what (S6, 5)
	I would have night terrors as a young child, a lot of apprehension that I would not do well in school, I mean it was now, I see, just total insecurity in the world (S6, 9)
	And so this has been something that just lies in wait for

	me, I feel. It's like it is always threatening to show up (S6, 22)
4. Depression took different forms in different phases of life	Well no at that point the feeling was gone, I did experience that depression again. About maybe 12 years ago I dated a woman who I really fell for quickly and that relationship lasted only 3 weeks or a month and that depression I had for about a month or two and I really felt broken from that for a couple of years. So that was again the experience of that deep hole.
	What it didn't have was that kind of cycle, it was one circumstance that dropped me into it that I came out of, but it was the same feeling.
	When I first had it there was more an out of control feeling, this was more the feeling of I was able to get traction and see what had happened. (S, 36-38)
	That depression was a lot different. That depression was. I would jump at noises, I would stay in my house, I would go to the grocery store, But I was in my house, with the curtains drawn and I had a pretty good size apartment, and I lived alone there but I didn't talk to people, I would make dates and cancel them, I would think about going out, I would make dates and leave, I couldn't function, Depression felt very out of control ,like I couldn't even go to the store when I needed to . (S2, 41)
	I feel like that was even more apparent in my teen years, in those times, I was very lonely. I was kind of an outsider in school. I was into art and sort of studying up on esoteric topics, and I just didn't find anyone like me in high school. (S6, 11)
5. Abuse, trauma, mistreatment	If I had never had, well my relationship with my twin brother was mutually abusive in our teen years. Abuse wasn't something I had had in those early years. When we got into our war, our war lasted from 3 rd grade to our early 30's really. (S, 10)
	He was just brutal, one day he threw me through a closed door, this was when mom was gone to bury her father. I was so drunk I had been throwing up in the bushes. I am thinking of this because I was in my room and he came into check on me and I was pretty fucked up and I woke up sore, and I just knew. I never told my mother, well I did really. That's the thing my family didn't want to talk. (S2, 14)
	I mean I am adopted so I feel like I was just set up to be depressed (S4, 3)
6. Sought therapist and talk therapy as means of	My parents sent me to a therapist when I was young. We had scattered bits of family therapy when I was in like 7 th

addressing depression, effective to a certain degree	to 9 th or tenth grade. I didn't find that very effective. I don't know what life would have been without that, but it didn't resolve my feelings. (S, 16)
	My memory of the family therapy is vague, but the fighting with my brother was intense. I and others feared for our physical safety. Therapy did not change that dynamic.
	The therapist had my twin brother put into a locked ward and a halfway house, which stopped the fighting of course, but it was a pretty extreme way of doing it. I was pleased with that outcome, but I think it was a failure, a lack of resolution.
	Detainment is not a sudden unraveling of our issues. And then we became distanced for the rest of our lives
	The therapy I had may have had some benefit but it did not impact depression or issues of identity. I think it's nice to have someone to talk to but I could have used some guidance and mentorship. I think the approach of just listening was not what I needed. (S, 22-25)
	No the dynamic with women stopped, but there was no ongoing therapy and I never got to the underlying cause. (S, 34)
	So to keep everything inside. I was really glad I got to see a therapist when I was 16. That really helped a lot (S2, 16)
	Well, I felt a connection then, but then depression was helped by the other therapist too that was when I was feeling really jumpy, didn't want to leave the house, feeling really violent, just lots of crazy shit. That was when I did pharmaceuticals which was really horrible for me, but her affect on me was huge because she let me be in it. You know, she let me talk about whatever it was that came up, a dream, a traffic incident, if I couldn't come she would let me talk on the phone and that was huge because sometimes I just couldn't leave my house. (S2, 39)
	The psychiatrist described me as schizoid. That was the term he used for me. (S3, 12)
	Well, with therapy, and I know you're a therapist, right? It was pretty boring honestly, all it did was put me back in touch with what I already knew, and I remember looking at my therapist's shoes one day thinking, huh I paid for those. (S4, 29)
	That was good, actually, it was helpful to some extent. I think it was just connecting another person, who just listened. I mean really listened
	How often does someone just get to be listened to
	So that was sort of all that I tried and it helped me some,

	but you know my depression felt still unresolved (S5, 15-17)
	Ummm, conventionally, I have seen therapists (S6, 31)
	Oh, well, not really, I thought therapy would be good, but it did not necessarily cure me it just kind of confirmed that yep, I am depressed
	I think I might have even bored my therapist with my constant talk about how depressed I was (S6, 38-39)
7. tried medication, which was not effective	Sure, but first I want to say that I also took Prozac in college when my depression got strong, which would you prefer to hear about first? (S, 18)
	So I went to a doctor in town, he gave me Prozac. I told my teachers who were supportive. I remember reading that 15 % of people who take Prozac have a negative reaction, mine was extremely dramatic, very violent fantasies, extremely violent, ultra violent. My eyes were dilated, I was jittery. (S, 30)
	3 months. After a couple of weeks those tripping effects stopped or got smaller and smaller. After a few weeks I started to feel better I got back on track and then I stopped taking it for a while. (S, 32)
	Oh, so those came from a worker's comp therapist who gave me lengthy psychological tests and showed me Rorschach cards and decide first it was xanax was going to help me sleep because I did not sleep, it would be like 2 hours and then be up for 4 hours and sleep for two and be up for ten hours, it went on for years, I was crazy. So xanax this will help you sleep and I felt it right away.
	So I took it for two days and then by the 3 rd day I wanted to kill somebody. And I really was going to I wanted to stab this guy on the bus and he didn't do anything to me but bump into me and I was going to stab him for that. I didn't but I was going to. (S2, 43-44)
	I do take testosterone, but I can control that dose and it actually makes me feel better, more balanced, more even.
	I took it for two weeks. And by the end of the second week I gave it away and I just said it was great, I mean it's also expensive shit, but that,,s another story, I didn't like the way it made my stomach feel, it just made me on edge. I have seen people who are just dull from it. Some people I have seen it help, but just a few. I don't want to try it again. (S2, 46-47)
	Prozac was new and another drug, but I don't remember the name. I don't remember any of those drugs having any effect on the recurring bouts of depression (S3, 11)
8. Became numb	it made me not feel which is scarier even than feeling. I

	wrote a lot (S2, 4)
	But then, oh wow, the days were a lot worse, at times. Kind of walking around numb, just not feeling like there was anything worth doing, just blah (S5, 8)
	Because she was probably just as miserable as I was, going to this school and being an outcast, but I just didn't want to be friends with her, I wanted to be numb, and was after awhile (S6, 14)
9. Turned to alternative methods of healing depression	What had some impact was yoga and meditating, actually, maybe because I was left with me, I didn't have anyone else to pick on, like with the therapist, I could call the therapist a dipshit, but when you're doing yoga you're like oh hi, I see what shit I need to work on
	The natural antidepressant, I don't know I don't think that worked. (S4, 30-31)
	I think I just needed to get to something more I mean I tried acupuncture for depression thinking that might help (S5, 18)
	I am pretty interested in alternative forms of treatment, so like I got acupuncture, I took tons of B vitamins (S6, 30)
10. Had suicidal thoughts	I mean as a kid you can't go, no matter who they are it felt really frustrating, like I had no power, until I figured out I had power, that was the light. I don't know what I would have done if I hadn't of figured that out, I would've killed myself because it felt just so hopeless, hopeless really. there was just no way out. (S2, 11)
	I lived with depression I'd say all my life since I was 14, it is not as bad as it used to be it's just something I have gotten used to. I did have thoughts of ending it though. (S3, 14)
	And there it was, that was the seed, it was like melancholy turned into a dark night of the soul that was going to last a long fuckin' time and the question became do I want this life, or not, maybe not (S4, 22)
11. Depression felt as a pain in the chest, heart area	oh yeah, what I felt, oh man, you should play this back for that other person I mentioned, oh fuck, what I felt what I felt, was like my heart was just fucking ripped out, and scared to like lift my head up and afraid not to and totally fucking confused that this monster came into my house, and felt like I couldn't move and (S2, 21)
	that isn't genuine because I am not that, but, that little kid felt that, truly it is a wonder I got out of it and it's not even as bad as what others have been through. It feels like all of this energy around my heart, it feels shaky, my throat is closing, I didn't breathe a lot (S2, 25)
	The severe bouts of depression were often accompanied

	by that sensation in the chest that I talked about. It was almost a morbid euphoria. Profound sense of uselessness, pointlessness. At times I would be withdrawn. In my teens I would get so depressed, I would cry. Not in public but alone (S3, 8)
	And there is no escape from it. I think it is actually hell, that is what hell is, it's not some place below, it's right here during those times, in my heart (S4, 11)
	Like a big anvil on my chest. Yeah, it feels like my heart is just being crushed and my shoulders will hurt, like a big anvil on top of me (S4, 13)
	I would feel it in my heart like a gripping cold sensation (S5, 3)
	So that I would describe as tightness in my chest, a paralyzing kind of coldness, my chest was just constricted, like it had spasmed and there was no way to unlock that (S6, 10)
	Oh sure, a tightly bound heart, I think (S6, 16)
	So, one other image is like these cold, bony skeleton fingers, squeezing my heart, so it is just crushing it and it is almost this detached inhuman kind of energy. Is that more helpful? (S6, 20)
12. Depression was cyclical	In college, the dynamic I got into, which was sexual addiction, it felt like a new and exciting world. I had a girlfriend for a few months, each girlfriend lasted, was shorter than the previous. I kind of consumed those relationships. I got to a point where I couldn't get it fast enough. (S, 27)
	I lived with depression I'd say all my life since I was 14, it is not as bad as it used to be it's just something I have gotten used to. (S3, 14)
	At some point within the last several years, I began to notice a pattern where I would be really depressed one day and then wake up okay. I knew there were peaks and valleys, and I got more used to that, knew more what to expect and then after awhile the peaks and valleys evened out. (S3, 16)
	I can have a respite for a little while but even that is uncomfortable because who knows how long that will last
	Then it's like when it is present again, I think oh well of course, never should have gotten comfortable in the first place, that was stupid
	It's like a drug addict or something who doesn't use for awhile and so they maybe get comfortable and think they can use and then they do and it's like oh yeah, that's who I am, the alcoholic, or drug addict. Well that's me and

	depression (S6, 23-25)
13. Drinking, self-medicating fueled depression	And I drink, and that lets me really be an asshole. I mean some of the things I have done when drinking are appalling
	Oh and then the shame and guilt that sets in, holy shit, that is something awful. I will try to think my way out of what I have done, I will try to justify it, like those guys are assholes they deserved what I did (S4, 8-9)
	I did. I first off self medicated, I think. I started drinking a lot in my 20's and that just exacerbated my depression
	I switched to sleeping pills when I couldn't sleep, I think that was some self medicating (S5, 12-13)
	Well, I would feel depressed, stuff myself and then puke and get sort of high off of it, or I wouldn't eat it and would feel kind of high from that (S6, 34)
	I also , ummm have tried exercise, which I still do, it's good to temporarily reduce the feelings of depression, but it wasn't a cure, it was just a nice break from it (S6, 36)
14. Experience of depression just prior to taking ayahuasca	but in many ways I was not in control, still had the psychological problems that I hadn't resolved. I was striving to support my identity as someone who could support powerful things I had delusionary self-images of who I could be and wanted to be and needed to be someone else other than what I was. (S, 44)
	Hmm, good question, it was kind of bad, actually.
	You can't drink 3 days before ayahuasca, so I didn't and actually I was getting freaked out about the whole thing. I was like why am I doing this (S4, 50-51)
	Oh sure, I mean just because I was a little more hopeful didn't help me out with just the underlying depression that just was there (S5, 34)
	I was really kind of adjusting to a break up I had just gone through and it was pretty disconcerting to know that I was really doing this by myself (S6, 57)
15. Ayahuasca gave clear messages on life issues	So for this dieta I drank small amounts of medicine and did what she recommended. I came to realize...so it was a sort of an inquiry of listening to an aspect of ourselves and then shifts happen. What I came to realize through this trip was that my experience of liking and loving are two different things. We think liking a lot is loving but really it is preferring and loving is really the wholesome and inclusive sense, it is more of wishing well. So I don't have to like the world for myself but I might as well open my heart and love it so the whole experience of opening up and learning to love indiscriminately is the only way one can come to love what one finds disturbing or torturing or

	evil or bad which is how I saw parts of myself. (S, 94)
	I mean fuck, it just gave me a whole different perspective on that and that was just kind of instantaneous. It didn't take forever to figure out. It just happened in a second, and then I got distracted by a shape on the wall. (S2, 61)
	So on this, I just feel like remember I said I was stuck so somehow this opened I wanted to see past being stuck. Like I thought it was some elaborate thing I had to do, but it's so simple. It's like writer's block, what do you do, you just start that's all. All these self-help people want to teach you something but you just more forward. (S2, 66)
	I wanted to get back to the cognitive behavioral stuff, right, so what I mean by that is often times there will be a voice that will just be blunt and direct and tell me exactly what I doing wrong.
	it isn't gentle, it's like this, it's like stop pretending to be nice and just be nice. Stop saying you are going to improve and just do it. Basically it is like shut up and do it.
	It doesn't feel good to be put in touch with that shadowy stuff, but I'd rather know who I am than not know who I am dealing with (S4, 46-48)
	So that was sort of all that I tried and it helped me some, but you know my depression felt still unresolved
	I think I just needed to get to something more
	I think I am the kind of person that just needs a lot to budge (S5, 17-19)
16. Realized new levels of self-understanding in experience	Once I had done it a fair number of times and thought I understood it, I thought I should go to the Amazon and see how it was done there. That began a process of completely turning around my understanding of myself and what I was doing. I came to realize I certainly shouldn't make medicine and do it myself I came to realize how infinitesimal what we know is and what can be known. (S, 45)
	Yes that's right and in working with the shaman, two shaman in Peru who work together, yeah I would say slow unfoldment of coming into what we know. I have been clinging to knowledge all my life. It is something that slowly unravels as we draw more into the present moment, so that is a progression that continues to unfold. (S, 49)
	The strongest experience I remember before Peru was like epiphanies, the universe was exploding. The experience in Peru, the strongest, well not the strongest the one worth recounting is a state I have seen many times, I call it ultimate suffering.

	It's a mental state where everything we experience becomes as bad as possible there is no goodness anywhere, the universe is a torture device constructed perfectly for me. (S, 53-54)
	In fact they all feel like personal experiences. There is a quality where some people believe ayahuasca has a spirit because it always heals us and I think it is because we will see the truth, and I will get to the experience. If it shows us the delusion then it exists. (S, 88)
	There's one thing, ayahuasca gives us experience where we kind of, in a sense it amplifies our essence and our personality distortions so we see both. The essence is wonderful and the distortion is horrible.
	The opportunity that provides is for us to share our awareness, then the awareness is drawn to the essence so we see how important and wonderful that is and we are drawn to it. That seems to me why it is healing. It amplifies everything we can be drawn to what is good and true and move away from what is not. (S, 96-97)
	I like it, I like how clear everything was and still is, I have achieved some kind of balance, an interesting detachment from being wrapped up in things that aren't real, you know the Maya, I felt like I have been stepping towards these other things for awhile. I mean I saw into other dimensions. (S2, 50)
	I am drawing this picture, and that's all I want to be doing besides this right now. There is so much more than just this structure. There is so much other to be in tune to and ayahuasca if you do it mindfully and don't abuse it (S2, 52)
	I went outside and I was seeing plants as vastly different beings, in nature, sort of their unity with the environment around them. At least the ones I was looking at were undefended. (S5. 38)
	Well, it was amazing, I almost feel like ayahuasca was very nice to me the first time, it knew I was scared so it took me to beautiful places, I had blissful experiences, I saw a past life as a very wise woman and I realized I had lost some of that knowledge somehow and it made sense to me, I felt so appreciative (S6, 59)
17. Felt a wiser part of themselves was speaking to them	But the voice in my head, it didn't sound like my voice but it told me what I needed to do. Was that my own voice I don't know? Probably, a wise me. (S2, 71)
	I wanted to get back to the cognitive behavioral stuff, right, so what I mean by that is often times there will be a voice, mine that will just be blunt and direct and tell me

	exactly what I doing wrong.
	it isn't gentle, it's like this, it's like stop pretending to be nice and just be nice. Stop saying you are going to improve and just do it. Basically it is like shut up and do it. (S4, 46-47)
	And what I saw was myself just carrying all this baggage around and it was like this cognitive behavioral therapist or something showed up and said to me I am going to ask you some questions
	So this voice asked me why I was upset about not being with someone I had nothing in common with, who didn't feel connected to me, who my time with had run out
	And it was just so logical, so simplistic and I wonder if it was just a higher part of, a wiser part of my own personality
	I felt it was familiar and so maybe it was a super conscious part of me that knew better and needed to tell my little self that I needed to move on because that had become stagnant (S6, 67-70)
18. Emotionally difficult in anticipation and in actual experience	So that was something that on my first trip to Peru I experienced a number of times, more and more complete and full, and I wasn't good at handling it. I would be in a state of well I can't do anything and anything I could do I wouldn't do I would have to go into a completely tortured place. The first five ceremonies in Peru I got to really see what I was dealing with. (S, 55)
	When the ultimate suffering would come I would rail against it. The community was able to contain that, they would say everyone gets their turn to lose their shit and I was getting my turn quite a bit. So there is this one ceremony and I lose awareness of where I am and who I am the more and more I turned to the medicine. (S, 65)
	What I was finding is my mind would go directly to the last thing I wanted to think about. I was completely not present and I wasn't aware that I was verbalizing my experience, and I realized I was verbalizing my experience in a sacred circle. I was verbalizing a secret I had sworn to keep
	and it was as if the world was kind of shattered this moment when a lot of what I am and who I am and what I think is good and right burst apart and I felt like I couldn't forgive myself by what I thought was harming the world by violating a promise, I felt incredible self-hatred, no excuse
	so following this ceremony I couldn't think of this experience without cursing or having self-hatred or

	playing on the flute without cursing the flute.(S, 67-69)
	Ayahuasca is a unique medicine. It causes physical discomfort, emotional discomfort, it creates for us our own perfect nightmare in addition to indescribable pleasures, indescribable pains. In both cases there is a lesson. (S, 85)
	I'll use a powerful example from my first experience. My mood stopped swinging, there were lots of personality distortion issues, it hadn't resolved my issues of loving myself, it hadn't really addressed that and the quality of ceremony, became more difficult, there was more ultimate suffering. I, in fact continued to get worse in my ability to trip well, there was another ceremony, the next one came pretty soon after that I really my mind was bouncing among the worst things possible. I was verbalizing it, not so high now to be obliterated. I was more conscious and able to resist the experience,
	I did create a big disturbance in the circle and it went on for a while, it brought out a rebelliousness in me it reminded me on my teen years. (S, 89-90)
	Ayahuasca takes you down, I think I need a good ass kicking, because I am just so stubborn, I do not listen, being obstinate is second nature to me. (S4, 39)
	Oh well it is a doozy, I mean this last time was unreal, I felt like I was going through a meat grinder, honestly.
	At some point I saw a DMT elf and I thought to myself, oh no, you gotta be kidding me, if I am seeing you then I am seriously in the shit
	And you know he was really busy with this huge belt sander or something, and I was like what are you doing? And he seemed super unconcerned with me and said, don't worry, I am sanding you down, I am taking out your rough edges. (S4, 42-44)
	But I felt drawn, like I just had to, and maybe it is because I was just feeling so scared that I was like I obviously have to do this thing (S4, 52)
	(Umm, ok dread, it was like this, like Frankenstein or Dracula was just waiting for me, waiting to drain me of life and just keep me captivated in this place of fear. (S4, 54)
	but suddenly I came to and I was in this kind of vortex that was taking me and taking me up to where some sort of sacrifice is going on where the universe is created, and I was on my way to be sacrificed and I it, it what I didn't like about it was
	I mean I am not saying it was them doing it to me, but it

	was like I was not aware. I did not know it was happening to me and then I came to, so it was like I was being led to the slaughter and I was halfway there before I realized what was going on and my mind was like whoa wait what is going on here,
	and I got scared and I aborted the mission.
	So that was a full on hallucination and that was more of what I was looking for but the way that I kind of woke up and didn't realize what was happening to me. (S5, 52-55)
	Anyway, blah blah blah, I went down there and was scared out of my mind (S6, 47)
	But that does not mean it wasn't the scariest feeling the hours before I was to take it, I didn't now what to expect
	I thought I am embarking on something that is just me and God
	I had fasted and meditated, quit coffee, I mean I prepared in ways I could
	But emotionally I was stricken with real dread and fear and yet could not, not do it (S6, 50-53)
	Although I will say there were some nights down there in Peru before the first ceremony when I was just waiting to get to the camp and I was alone, and it was lonely, I was depressed, actually (S6, 56)
	There was a point in which my mind turned to my ex and I thought oh no don't think about him, just stick to the beauty we have here (S6, 64)
19. Felt experienced the numinous	Another thing of ayahuasca is showing pleasures that people can't imagine. (S, 139)
	I was really fascinated by the shapes, by how clear everything was, just the thread that goes through everything, I was it, I felt it, I continue to be it, I felt so big and at peace, that was the thing, I could see the past we were walking along, I finally got this guy to be quiet (S2, 57)
	So we went to the park and everything speaks I mean it does anyway but I was really in touch with it. A lot of psychic information came to me and still does, I felt really on (S2, 62)
	That's accurate, the calm feeling I had in approaching it made me calm and respectful. I wasn't looking to gain that experience. It was not an experience I was looking for. I was hoping for more effects. I woke up several hours later in the night to some gorgeous images and this childlike wonder. It lasted only seconds and then it was gone. (S3, 26)
	At some point I saw a DMT elf and I thought to myself,

	oh no, you gotta be kidding me, if I am seeing you then I am seriously in the shit
	And you know he was really busy with this huge belt sander or something, and I was like what are you doing? And he seemed super unconcerned with me and said, don't worry, I am sanding you down, I am taking out your rough edges. (S4, 42-44)
	And in fact stop punishing yourself because it is an insult to God
	Stop insulting God (S4, 60-61)
	As soon as she walked in, the whole place exploded with energy. She was just kind of sitting there, kind of looking around, but you could just feel her attention, she looked at me once and it was it was unbelievable
	Like totally transparent, she could look right through me, she was in both ceremonies I did, so that was a highlight (S5, 48-49)
	Well, it was amazing, I almost feel like ayahuasca was very nice to me the first time, it knew I was scared so it took me to beautiful places, I had blissful experiences, I saw a past life as a very wise woman and I realized I had lost some of that knowledge somehow and it made sense to me, I felt so appreciative (S6, 59)
	I mean it was beautiful at times and scary at other times
	I met this sort of queen bug, which was kind of cartoony and then I just saw all these bugs crawling all over the place working away, kind of not caring about me so much
	When I asked the shaman what that was about, he told me that bugs recycle and clean up things, that was what was going on in my soul, he said. It made sense to me actually (S6, 74-76)
20. During ayahuasca returned to originally traumatizing life experience	So I have seen all of my worst stuff come out ,we travel back in time. I have uncovered the first month of my life, I was born premature and left in the hospital and my mother never visited and that has had a huge impact on my life and I can be with that wound. I can see it. (S, 106)
	Prenatal I had a starving of nutrition that caused me to be smaller than my brother and on a physical level I can experience that wound so I can see there are no skeletons in the closet there is nothing else to surprise me. I can feel stepped on by the world but that is not really the case I can be with that. (S, 108)
	My observation, I think I might have mentioned this last time. The tendency to work backwards with the medicine, to see your life in reverse, kind of that experience of where you are in life and travel back in time, shamanically

	speaking it is re-meeting the spirits that inhabited you in chronological order and you can work back to your birth. Work through all the states, and I have seen that
	so when it comes to depression it is very relevant, where did that depression come about, and moving back through those states, of course it is going to have a big impact.
	Sacred space and community all have an effect, but the biggest is really getting back to the point in life that really bent you in that way.
	And even that is not simple or prescriptive but I notice that when you can touch on things that are much deeper than what you are apparently working on. So when there is this movement into the past I noticed a year and half after I started when I had the one ceremony that hurt so badly that I chose to meditate on it, the resolution of that painful ceremony reduced the fluctuation of my mood and when I look at that instance and say what part of my life was I really working on it was when I was approaching my teen years, which was a surprise because I think I felt inadequacy right at birth.
	But the meditation that I chose to deal with that was questioning what is the actual sensation of this suffering and who is feeling it and that was really jumping to that point in life when we're experiencing that suffering and wondering what do I really do about this, what extent do I deny it. The extent to which we deny it is the part that creates the depression. My meditation in a sense was to allow my merging with that suffering. (S, 133-137)
	so I sat with that for awhile and it was true I went into the past and what is changing it (S2, 59)
	But it did bring me into my childhood a little. Do you know the enneagram at all, my mom is a number 9
	and so my father dies when I was 12 and she didn't handle it very well
	So I think I had to be the adult in the situation so I saw what was going on with her and I see we had support from family friends, but it was just me and her in the house. So my dynamic with her how I related to her how my family dynamic was formed
	So I had that insight (S5, 56-59)
21. Take things less personally	I noticed my mood had stopped swinging, my mood now depended on circumstances of life and I could see that there was a cycle that would cease and that cycle referred to the feedback of others and what others thought of me, wanting the appreciation of others basically. (S, 73)
	I still have plenty of personality distortion. Certain things

	trigger things from the past but at this point it largely intrigues me. None of it is personal, those things are not who I am so when I feel a certain experience that is negative in the same way that I took the worst of experience I try to get right in the middle of those experiences and the ones I see resisting transform.
	So it is kind of an experience, if it is good one sees how one is clinging to it. We see how it is not really ours it is not ultimately negative, It's just a circumstance, so we can see how following it to what is real and essential. So depression has been cured for a long time, but now it is impossible, It is a complete defense or by not defending it in a sense. (S, 102-103)
	A lot of stuff came up. I see myself looking more objectively, I see myself more as a witness than I ever was, which is really good I think, you know look at your stuff and forgive what you need to forgive and accept what you need to accept and move on. (S2, 101)
	But it is accepting of my humanness, it's like telling me to do some work, but it's also telling me you are not that scary or awful that you need to keep punishing yourself
	And in fact, stop punishing yourself because it is an insult to God (S4, 59-60)
	I think I am a little more just relaxed about things, like I don't feel like I take things as personally or really care as much about other people's opinions (S6, 82)
22. Greater self awareness and personal responsibility	that's interesting, because my adventure with ayahausca came at a time when I didn't know what to do next. I was stuck for a long time, and I walked out of my therapy appointment upset, not good and this guy called me and I just figured what the hell. So that's where the responsibility part comes in .I was like okay well here's a tool I can take and see if it really works, and be responsible and see if it is all that. People healing the planet and healing yourself, and moving through something, so that I used consciously, that's how I was responsible for my decision. So maybe years later, Mr. Dole actually came through and taught me something. (S2, 99)
	It's like I confronted Dracula and he was a big pussy, actually. I am more like wow, what was I so afraid of? I'm afraid of me. I'm afraid I will actually know all of my flaws, and I do, and you know they are not that bad. I am not awful, actually. (S4, 56)
	Oh, I'm not perfect and that's what it let me know too, I am definitely not perfect (S4, 58)

	Stop insulting God
	it made me appreciate my life, you know my legs work, I can see, I have arms that work, that is huge
	For so long I have had issues with my body, and it was like time to let that go, stop beating your body up and how about thanking it for every thing it does. I mean really, it's a miracle.
	That helped me with depression, actually. It is hard to be depressed when you are thanking your life for the small miracles. (S4, 61-64)
	It's actually like agreeing to do it the first time means you are making some kind of pact with God to live better and once you make that statement it becomes a challenge, a commitment (S6, 102)
	It's like finding out how naïve you were and feeling a personal responsibility to correct that somehow (S6, 106)
23. Greater awareness of own capabilities, self-efficacy, that difficulties can be managed	That is correct in my perception. I don't think I can actually address that without going into my beliefs, which may not be relevant. (S, 82)
	Certainly certainly, like for instance death is something I have not resolved, so I can have a swollen lymph node and think it is fatal. I am not a hypochondriac I can think death is the worst thing I want but now I can think oh that's interesting what is this experience and have faith that I can get right into that experience and that will transform. It is really a grand adventure when seen without this personal investment.
	So I have seen all of my worst stuff come out, we travel back in time. I have uncovered the first month of my life, I was born premature and left in the hospital and my mother never visited and that has had a huge impact on my life and I can be with that wound. I can see it. (S, 105-106)
	Having experienced it, it has now become something internalized, so I definitely own it. (S3, 49)
	It's like I confronted Dracula and he was a big pussy, actually. I am more like wow, what was I so afraid of? I'm afraid of me. I'm afraid I will actually know all of my flaws, and I do, and you know they are not that bad. I am not awful, actually. (S4, 56)
	I think that actually could be something to get depressed about
	But actually it gives me meaning, some kind of purpose, some kind of hope or connection (S6, 107-108)
24. Feeling of greater self-acceptance	but another way to look at that is that you're just not as broken, you don't need the medicine so much and then

	another way is that you see that nothing has changed, I mean I still love this path and the people who are on this path (S, 121)
	Pharmaceuticals seem to suppress people and for me these other tools, these hallucinogenic tools help me look inside and open up it's totally the opposite. I can take this mindfully with the intention of discovering something about myself to make myself a better person and to not hide from myself. (S2, 73)
	So it was a struggle but now I had this connection with my feelings and I didn't have to suppress my struggle. It was more like oh there's the struggle and now I see the struggle and maybe I can deal with it now and if I can't deal with it now then maybe it can just come along with me and just be part of me it doesn't have to consume me or be hidden by me because there's just no more room. There's just all this light in me and it flows out of me, it doesn't have to be hidden by me. There's just no room. (S2, 85)
	A lot of stuff came up. I see myself looking more objectively, I see myself more as a witness than I ever was, which is really good I think, you know look at your stuff and forgive what you need to forgive and accept what you need to accept and move on. (S2, 101)
	Oh, I'm not perfect, and that's what it let me know too, I am definitely not perfect
	But it is accepting of my humanness, it's like telling me to do some work, but it's also telling me that you are not that scary or awful that you need to keep punishing yourself (S4, 58-59)
	It made me appreciate my life, you know my legs work, I can see, I have arms that work, that is huge
	For so long I have had issues with my body, and it was like time to let that go, stop beating your body up and how about thanking it for everything it does. I mean really, it's a miracle (S4, 62-63)
	But actually it gives me meaning, some kind of purpose, some kind of hope or connection, I like myself (S6, 108)
25. Change in self-identity, experience of self has altered depressive symptoms	So for this dieta I drank small amounts of medicine and did what she recommended. I came to realize...so it was a sort of an inquiry of listening to an aspect of ourselves and then shifts happen. What I came to realize through this trip was that my experience of liking and loving are two different things. We think liking a lot is loving but really it is preferring and loving is really the wholesome and inclusive sense, it is more of wishing well. So I don't have

	to like the world for myself but I might as well open my heart and love it so the whole experience of opening up and learning to love indiscriminately is the only way one can come to love what one finds disturbing or torturing or evil or bad which is how I saw parts of myself. (S, 94)
	And to summarize the experience from last time, it felt largely like really evaluating my relationship with the plant and also with my personal development. (S, 117)
	it made me appreciate my life, you know my legs work, I can see, I have arms that work, that is huge
	For so long I have had issues with my body, and it was like time to let that go, stop beating your body up and how about thanking it for every thing it does. I mean really, it's a miracle
	Having experienced it, it has now become something internalized, so I definitely own it. (S3, 49)
	That helped me with depression, actually. It is hard to be depressed when you are thanking your life for the small miracles. (S4, 62-64)
	I mean just that I am even thinking about depression differently means I have a different perspective on it
	you know it's almost like I am just tired of it, it's so self indulgent and boring
	So that feels powerful and cool and I am grateful
	I am grateful is huge to say, because I used to just whine and moan about my poor life (S5, 79-82)
26. Change in how one relates to others, thus impacting mood	When I came back from India in 1999 I noticed so much how people isolate and live in their little houses and cars they just don't consider the other, I realize everyone has their own path and I feel like with this part I have lasting clarity afterwards of my responsibility that I put on myself to be the absolute best I can be and just because.
	Not that I didn't want to do it before but just like this urge to connect with people and love them, just because we are all human beings and somehow those interactions have always fed me but just to be that feeds me. I don't know how to explain it. (S2, 91-92)
	My relationships with others has changed too. Remember I said I am mean, I am mean when I drink, well I might still be mean if I drink, but I will be conscious, I will feel wrong about it. It's like I have to answer to my own morality more. (S4, 69)
	Sometimes if I am around someone super negative I am like ahhh, I have to get out of here
	It is like my skin sort of prickles, but I also feel like I could be a better example to people for like how to be

	nicer to one another (S6, 83-84)
27. Depression has diminished but feel cautious that it will last after first interview	but today how do I deal with depression, I don't know, the time I feel, the time I feel that I've been doing this art this whole mushroom hallucinogen extravaganza, So I still isolate but I am home doing art. Sometimes I sleep but that's because I am doing edibles not smoking pot.
	I mean I am functioning, I am still, the ayahuasca is relatively new and before I did it I was supposed to do this school thing and my back went out and I didn't go basically, so that was really hard, and then I did the ayahuasca so nothing since, so nothing really has been a trigger has come up for me so I can't speak to how I would act on my triggers but I feel clearer about myself out and I
	I mean I am functioning, I am still, the ayahuasca is relatively new and before I did it I was supposed to do this school thing and my back went out and
	I do feel more in touch with my feelings. My last therapy appointment, I actually spoke about how I was feeling and I chuckled at it and my therapist looked at me and said what (S2, 77-80)
	That's the main thing I wanted to tell you this time around. I am not depressed now but like I said depression is kind of like getting a cold, like there are symptoms and with depression I can see it when it is coming. (S3, 43)
	I haven't been depressed since I took ayahuasca. I have been looking forward to school. (S3, 45)
	But I don't know I mean for right now I feel pretty good, I have to wait and see I guess (S5, 66)
	Or unless I grew up and there's something about this time in my life that is making me do ayahuasca and grow up and it is all interrelated (S5, 77)
	Ummm, none at the moment, really, I hope it lasts. (S6, 90)
28. Feel depression has lifted, either because enough time has passed or according to second interview	um, Noooo depression, uhh in general I am really excited by life really amazed by life, (S, 101)
	One way I see it is I kind of imagine I am a success story with ayahuasca. I have seen my life kind of change in positive ways and that is a story, that comes across as a story. (S, 128)
	so when it comes to depression it is very relevant, where did that depression come about, and moving back through those states, of course it is going to have a big impact.

	Sacred space and community all have an effect, but the biggest is really getting back to the point in life that really bent you in that way.
	And even that is not simple or prescriptive but I notice that when you can touch on things that are much deeper than what you are apparently working on. So when there is this movement into the past I noticed a year and half after I started when I had the one ceremony that hurt so badly that I chose to meditate on it, the resolution of that painful ceremony reduced the fluctuation of my mood and when I look at that instance and say what part of my life was I really working on it was when I was approaching my teen years, which was a surprise because I think I felt inadequacy right at birth.
	But the meditation that I chose to deal with that was questioning what is the actual sensation of this suffering and who is feeling it and that was really jumping to that point in life when we're experiencing that suffering and wondering what do I really do about this, what extent do I deny it. The extent to which we deny it is the part that creates the depression. My meditation in a sense was to allow my merging with that suffering. (S, 134-137)
	I don't see ayahuasca as separate from our experience, I don't see it as disembodied. It is who we really are that is all of the work. (S2, 80)
	Oh sure, I mean it has faded, but the feeling, the sense of being I think connection is the vital piece for me in this work connected to something else is still with me. (S4, 68)
	And then what has lasted is that I am still amazed by my life, I also started yoga again, and that feels amazing. That keeps me centered and grounded and it's like I want to be kind to my body and love it.
	After every yoga practice I bend down in reverence and I thank my body.
	And I still won't talk about other people, (S4, 79-81)
	Yeah, I think you kind of asked me last time if my depression was back or I don't know something like about whether or not I felt depressed
	I have thought about that, and it's funny. I am sort of detached from it
	I think the best way to describe it is that I am kind of an observer
	It's like I see it happening, I see that normally it might be what follows, but that I have a choice
	Like maybe I choose, no, ummmm I don't have to follow that depressive strain I can turn my attention to something

	else (S5, 69-73)
	you know it's almost like I am just tired of it, it's so self indulgent and boring (S5, 80)
	Hmmm, yeah, I will say that I am more mindful, I am actually meditating and appreciating people. (S6, 93)
29. Feel grateful towards ayahuasca	Oh well really I am grateful the tradition exists I can go on and on about that I like. That this time in the world offers this experience to people like me. It has worked well for me. I had necessary support. I found that in times I needed it. (S, 110)
	I think, really it, mostly I feel grateful. (S, 112)
	One way I see it is I kind of imagine I am a success story with ayahuasca.I have seen my life kind of change in positive ways and that is a story, that comes across as a story. (S, 128)
	Ayahuasca is a unique medicine. It causes physical discomfort, emotional discomfort, it creates for us our own perfect nightmare in addition to indescribable pleasures, indescribable pains. In both cases there is a lesson. (S2, 85)
	I would add that were it not for sitting quiet for an entire day I would not have come to this place. So if it weren't for the ayahuasca then I wouldn't have come to this place. So I just didn't get the experience I was looking for, but I got something else. (S3, 52)
	I would add that were it not for sitting quiet for an entire day I would not have come to this place. So if it weren't for the ayahuasca then I wouldn't have come to this place. So I just didn't get the experience I was looking for, but I got something else. (S3, 52)
	Sure, I'd like to say this worked for me, this definitely worked for me (S4, 88)
	I don't reject ayahuasca's advice. I listen I don't argue, I am just pinned down and told here is your shit. This is your shit, you created it, you get to face it. I am grateful. (S4, 92)
	I think it must be the ayahuasca, I mean it's like nothing else brought that about really. (S5, 76)
	you know it's almost like I am just tired of it, it's so self indulgent and boring
	So that feels powerful and cool and I am grateful (S5, 81-82)
	Hmmm, yeah, I will say that I am more mindful, I am actually meditating and appreciating people. Thank goodness for it. (S6, 93)

Review of Themes that Emerged

An examination of the constituents is provided as a means of illuminating the common themes that were expressed, but also to demonstrate individual experiences arriving at a similar conclusion in a variety of manner. Following are more in depth examinations of the information that emerged and postulations on further associations of relevancy as they relate to the study.

Lacking Self-worth

Three cases revealed that depression was generated by an inherent lack of self worth. External sources may have contributed to this, such as one participant indicating that it was his father's loss of interest, but an underlying dimension to each story was the sense that there was an internalized feeling of being less than others. Two participants mentioned circumstances existing immediately at birth, which seemed to predispose them to depression. Feelings of self worth dampened at early ages caused identification with these feelings for many years. Psychic structures of worthlessness were thereby ingrained.

Blamed Self

The idea that the participants themselves were to blame for feelings of depression emerged in three narratives. A deeply felt sense of being responsible and yet incapable of altering the situation was expressed as an aspect of the experience of depression. In one case karmic punishment was mentioned. Another concluded that based on the people she attracted to herself who did want to be friends there was something wrong with her, because she thought there was something wrong with them. She stated that if only weirdoes were attracted to her then there must be something wrong with her.

Nameless Dread, the World is not Safe

A sense of vague anxiety was expressed as a contributing factor in depression by four of the interviewees. They described a sense of an existential kind of angst or a seemingly unanswerable sense of ontological anxiety. The significance of these descriptions of depression was in the powerlessness evoked by it. A sense of futility further complicated feelings of depression as if the only way one can face the bleakness the future holds is to give up trying. The disempowerment once begun also seemed to perpetuate itself. There was the experience of beginning to feel that there was nothing that could provide a sense of security.

Depression took Different Forms in Different Phases of Life

Depression cannot be encapsulated in any one experience and it does not exist in the same manner even as it appears in the life of one individual. It is an important reminder that the experience of depression is not subject to a quantifiable, measurable structure. Diagnostic tools as the Beck Depression Inventory for instance are valuable for determining the presence of depression, but they cannot describe the actual experience nor can it distinguish between the lived encounter or subjective quality of one experience from another. Also important to note is that throughout the life cycle depression manifests differently. As a result, a tried and true method of addressing depression may work in one episode, but may not guarantee success at a different time.

Abuse, Trauma, Mistreatment

Three of the participants acknowledged past trauma or abuse. As the subject of abuse came up as a result of inquiry into depressive symptoms, participants indicated their own feelings that abuse and depression were somehow connected. They felt that the

trauma, abuse, and maltreatment impaired their ability to connect with others and to feel connected to their own bodies. The result was that this seemed to lessen their capacity for attachment and connection to others. The original traumatic event produced profound, long-lasting changes in emotional and physiological responses. The disconnectedness that resulted from the original trauma affected the ability to trust in future relationships, thus perpetuating the pattern of isolation.

Sought Therapist and Talk Therapy as Means of Addressing Depression, Effective to Some Degree

All six participants had turned to psychotherapy and found it at least somewhat helpful. Even in the case of the first participant who indicated that therapy might have led to some trauma within his relationship with his brother, he conceded that he could not be certain if it was detrimental or beneficial. Psychotherapy is an immensely complicated topic. Reasons for its effectiveness or ineffectiveness range considerably, but it is generally accepted that the therapeutic alliance is an essential ingredient in optimizing a positive outcome (Safran & Muran, 2003) Relational encounters may prove to be corrective in nature. They may benefit others because of a placebo effect or because of expectancy that improvement will take place.

In terms of this particular study, therapists and talk therapy as a shared theme is significant because every participant turned to it and yet symptoms of depression were not significantly reduced, causing further searching for a remediation of symptoms. In each of the six participants chronic, treatment resistant depression was clearly an issue. It was not clear which models of psychotherapy were employed in each circumstance. It is

also not known if the depression experienced in each case was not resolved because there was not an effective match between approach and the client's experience.

Tried Medication, which was Not Effective

Three participants had tried antidepressant medication for treating their depression. In all cases it was not effective and in fact was reported to have had a detrimental outcome by S2, who expressed becoming more agitated and angry. This provides data that half the participants had attempted another method of intervention commonly relied on to treat depressive symptoms.

Became Numb

Depression may also have been used as a defensive reaction, which promoted self-preservation, but in the long run hindered a life fully lived. Three of the participants described that becoming numb took over after depression had set in. Rather than making attempts to engage in life, apathy became more present. One participant (S2) stated that not feeling was scarier than feeling, and another (S5) stated the days were worse, because they were spent walking around numb. One participant however, (S6) seemed to experience it as a relief to not feel.

Turned to Alternative Methods of Healing Depression

This group of participants attempted numerous manners in which to treat depression, including complementary and alternative medicine. Alternative means can take different forms and 3 participants had their own personal encounters with various techniques attempted. S4 turned to yoga, meditation and also self-prescribing a natural antidepressant (later revealed to be SAM-E). S5 and S6 tried acupuncture. S6 also stated that she tried taking B vitamins to contain her depression. In these circumstances

depression was reduced to varying degrees for some. By and large, however symptoms proved ultimately resistant to change. This is another example illustrating the participants' desires to alleviate their symptoms through a number of different means, all of which were determined to be ultimately unsatisfactory. This particular constituent demonstrates the extent to which depression had ingrained itself into the lives of these participants and also the desperation it incurs.

Had Suicidal Thoughts

In a few of the cases suicide was considered as an alternative to enduring the pain of depression. It is the attempt at transformation that is intriguing as an alternative to depression and perhaps there is something germane to the need for personal transformation as a way out of boundaried constricted thinking. From the perspective of the participants, suicide appeared to represent a way out of the bodily-contained experience of depression. The 3 participants who mentioned suicide in their narratives saw it as a release from suffering. Death and its uncertainty were considered an alternative to the depression that seemed a certain reality. For these participants who mentioned suicide in their narratives, the depression at that point in their lives had reached a level that they felt only suicide could penetrate and remove. Although none were actively suicidal during my interview with them, ideation had occurred within a year's time prior.

Depression Felt as Pain in the Chest, Heart Area

Common images and sensations that emerged among the participants were a pain in the chest area, coldness, or a squeezing of the heart. These images articulated the physical aspect of the suffering involved in the experience of depression. The truly

painful quality becomes more clearly enlivened by the images. The actual lived experience was understood differently when described as bony fingers squeezing a heart. It is more poignantly understood that depression is a truly debilitating condition, which impairs all aspects of life. Such descriptions aid in understanding the physical occurrence as well as the emotional quality of depression.

Depression as Cyclical

Three participants described the cyclical nature of depression, thereby demonstrating that depression incurred additional stress. It is possible for one to expect that remittance of symptoms is only temporary, if one has the experience of it as recurring. One participant, (S6) actually stated that when he relapsed, there was a sense that he should never have gotten comfortable with not feeling depression. He seemed to find resignation a more acceptable response than maintaining the hope in a life free of depression.

Drinking, Self-Medicating Exacerbated Depression

An escape from depression was turning to anaesthetizing substances such as drinking alcohol, binge eating, or sedatives. Three of the participants reported this as a means of temporary release from painful feelings. One participant stated she used alcohol to justify acting out. In every case, it magnified feelings of depression, as shame and guilt seemed to inevitably result.

This particular theme may indicate recognition of confusion between physical and spiritual thirst. Jung wrote to Bill Wilson, co founder of Alcoholics Anonymous that “The craving for alcohol is the equivalent on a low level of the spiritual thirst of our being for wholeness; expressed in medieval language: the union with God” (1951-1961,

p. 623). It may have some relational aspect that addictive substances or the need for altered states related to the drive towards ayahuasca as an alternate answer. Jung also wrote in the same letter to Bill Wilson, “You see, alcohol in Latin is *spiritus* and you use the same word for the highest religious experience as well as for the most depraving poison. The helpful formula therefore is: *spiritus contra spiritum* (1951-1961, p. 624). The use of self-medicating techniques failed in these cases. In these accounts ayahuasca was sought for as a way to uncover, not mask causes of depression.

Experience of Depression just Prior to Taking Ayahuasca

Four participants reported that depression was an issue in the days prior to taking ayahuasca. The pertinence of this theme is that depression was still present and relevant, therefore before and after effects of ayahuasca on these symptoms of depression could be addressed. Participants were clear that the study was focusing on the impact of ayahuasca on depressive symptoms after ingestion. They were asked to carefully recall the days just prior to taking it.

Ayahuasca Gave Clear Messages on Life Issues

Out of the six participants, four stated that messages, which were direct and even blunt, were provided by ayahuasca. Instead of a confusing cryptic message, which could be a stereotypical response to a drug induced state; participants were clear on messages being lucid. Revelations were instantaneous as reported by S2.

S4 compared the messages to therapy provided by a cognitive behavioral therapist. Cognitive behavioral therapy addresses depression by helping clients change how they think about things (Ellis, 2001). Ellis considered strong emotions to result from an interaction between events in the environment and beliefs and expectations, which we

have. Some of these beliefs are too strong or rigid (such as the belief "Everyone should like me."). The patient or client learns to modify the belief so that it is less extreme and less likely to get in the way (such as "I like for people to like me, but I realize that not everyone is going to."). Cognitive therapy has patients listen to their internal dialogue to change maladaptive thinking patterns. Beck developed specific procedures to help challenge a depressive client's assumptions and beliefs (Beck, 1970).

The blunt direct messages transmitted through ayahuasca, seem similar to CBT in providing directive initiatives to change thinking patterns. In these cases, S described that his thinking became less rigid around his idea of what liking and loving are. In perceiving an expanded view of these two things, he was able to learn to love parts of himself he thought of as bad. S4 stated the direct message was "stop saying you are going to improve and just do it".

Realized New Levels of Self-Understanding in Experience

Four participants described a break through in self-understanding. This was further clarified to mean a different appreciation of essence of self. S made the most statements verifying this theme and was also the one who had the most experience of ayahuasca. A larger number of participants would be required to validate this, but it is possible that repeated use of ayahuasca encourages a stronger sense of one's self.

S2 reported a detachment of ego-centered concerns for the sake of becoming more aware of other dimensions of experience. Experiences outside of the realm of what is considered normal or typical experience was perceived to be a way of incorporating new possibilities of one's own capacities. S5 and S6 had new-found awarenesses of interconnectivity of plants and of past lives, respectively these were perceived as

promoting unity and not inviting disintegration of one's self.

Felt a Wiser Part of Themselves was Speaking to Them

S2 and S6 referred to the feeling that there was a more knowing voice, which was identified as perhaps a wiser, internal voice that was part of one's self. S6 also mentioned that it was like a cognitive behavioral therapist had shown up. Each participant indicated that the voice they heard was a familiar one, each wondered if it were an aspect of their own self, which was communicating a direct message. All 3 participants referred to it as a wise or wiser aspect of themselves.

Emotionally Difficult in Anticipation and in Actual Experience

Four participants reported that it was emotionally difficult to anticipate the experience of ayahuasca and also the experience itself was challenging. Going through life's painful challenges may require a descent into the unknown. In his book offering guidance through life's ordeals, Moore (2004) referred to these times as dark nights of the soul. The darkness separates us from the way of life to which we have grown accustomed. In each portrayal of the emotionally difficult times, the subjects described a situation, which was entirely out of the realm of predictability.

The information emerged that the decision to embark on a ayahuasca journey is riddled with the threat of discomfort and unease. A journey through suffering may be an integral part of the journey. Painful experiences in this investigation were described as harrowing. S spoke of one's perfect nightmare presenting itself, of the visitation of incredible self-hatred. He also spoke of the physical discomfort involved. In his words he was made aware of what he came to know as ultimate suffering and understood it as a lesson. S4 seemed to channel the fear and emotional discomfort into the attitude that this

was a necessary challenge to undergo. S5 spoke of the feeling of being sacrificed and became so scared that he, in his words “aborted the mission,” S6 seemed to dread the experience because he did not know what it would be like. The anticipation was a discomforting cause as was the turning towards painful thoughts of separation during the ceremony itself. Within this theme there seemed to emerge the paradox that choosing suffering was a way to address and dismantle it.

Experienced the Numinous

All 6 participants felt they had met the noumenal realm. The noumenal was beheld as just as real as anything manifested within the phenomenal world. One participant who did report this sensation, (S5) had this experience in relation to a shaman who was officiating. He stated he did not “trip,” but felt the shaman could see into his soul. The participants revealed their experiences as the recognition that humans have the capacity to be connected to more than just nature and their environment. Humans have the capacity to know wholly and be connected and conscious of oneness and all aspects that persist beyond this physical life, and these physical limits.

S2 described it as a thread that runs through everything and understood that everything speaks. S3 revealed that gorgeous images he had never seen before came to him and he had a childlike wonder at them. S4 described an elf that was sanding down rough edges and felt that this was the experience that later generated a shift in consciousness. It was experienced as numinous because the transformation that occurred was connected to the understanding that the world that is seen and felt as real is actually subject to factors that are not easily visible and these factors may in fact be responsible for what is experienced as phenomenal.

Returned to Originally Traumatizing Life Experience

Three participants returned to an original experience felt to be a source of trauma. S said that he was able to travel back in time and actually be with that wound. His wound was of a premature birth and separation from his mother. He was able to determine for himself that it afforded him the chance to work through his life, to return to a time when something occurred, which as he said, “bent you in a certain way.” It was his ability to merge with the suffering, which helped him to develop compassion for his own pain and the transformation of it. S2 and S5 also claimed revisiting past experiences, which made them aware of the way a family dynamic shaped them. Insights were developments that resulted in both cases.

Take Things Less Personally

The significance of this theme is related to the reported theme of becoming numb as a response to depression. An aspect of not taking things personally implies an ability to interact with others less defensively. It is an indication that vulnerability is not feared as it is in the response of turning numb. It suggests the ability to accept an external response without being harmed by it. Four of the six participants reported that this was a new perspective. Taking things less personally allows for an increase in personal contact, which is one important aspect in reducing isolation and thereby also reducing the risk of depression.

Greater Self-Awareness and Personal Responsibility

Three participants expressed increased self-awareness and a new awakening to personal responsibility. They perceived that challenges were opportunities to correct misguided notions of powerlessness. S2 stated an early memory of a teacher who taught

taking responsibility and this became an important new source of understanding. S4 had greater appreciation for life and the natural miracles within it, such as a body that works. S6 described the resolve to actually live better and the personal responsibility of doing so. *Greater Awareness of Own Capabilities, Self-Efficacy, that Difficulties Can Be Managed*

Four co-researchers felt more aware of their own ability to handle difficulties or painful past life events. S said he could be with the wound of his premature birth. S3 felt that self-efficacious feelings had been internalized and were now a natural part of his understanding now. Following the ayahuasca experience, S4 spoke of confronting a monster, following the ayahuasca ceremony, in the form of Dracula, which lost its power in the face of the acceptance S4 felt for himself. S6 used an example of something that could be a justification for depression, but now found meaning in it and used it as a way to find hope and connection.

Feeling of Greater Self-Acceptance

Four of the six felt greater self-acceptance. S said he was not “as broken.” S2 who reported sexual and physical abuse in childhood said that ayahuasca was a tool, which allowed him to mindfully discover more of himself and not hide from it. He also revealed he could forgive and accept himself. S4 who had suffered from shame around her body was able to state that she was thankful for it, that she could actually thank her own body, and that this was a miracle. S6 simply stated that he likes himself more as a result of his experience with ayahuasca.

Change in Self-Identity that has Altered Depressive Symptoms

This theme is very significant within this study as three participants stated specifically that the change in self-identity and experience of self altered depressive

symptoms. S stated in a few different themes that he does not suffer depression and considers the, “medicine,” which is his word for ayahuasca the reason for this resolution of his symptoms. He said he was a “success story” previously, in relation to depression and has continued to maintain a spiritual practice with ayahuasca. S4 said depression was mitigated by his ability to thank his life for the small miracles. The ability to express gratitude resulted from an ayahuasca experience and was instrumental in altering depressive symptoms because, as she stated, it is hard to be depressed when you are thanking your life for small miracles. S5 took the perspective that depression was seen as boring and self-indulgent and she was therefore able to let it go.

Change in How One Relates to Others, Thus Impacting Mood

Three participants reported that relationships changed which also created changes in mood. S2 was able to express feelings of connection to others and realized that we are all human beings. S4 focused more on the poor way she had treated others when drinking alcohol and felt more conscious of the need to improve her relationships. Following ayahuasca, she described a certain morality being apparent now in her psyche that she felt had not been there before. S6 reported that she feels she has become sensitized to people perceived as negative and this has been a motivator to demonstrate ways to be nicer to others.

Depression Diminished but Cautious that this Will Not Last After First Interview

Following the first interview, 4 participants cautiously expressed that depression had diminished but they wanted to reserve making conclusions about ayahuasca having cured the depression permanently. It was important for these participants to integrate the

changes over time. Also it seemed important to them to have these changes actually tested by life's triggering events.

Depression Has Not Returned Based on the Second Interview

Five participants stated that depression had lifted by the second interview. This group included three of the participants who wanted to reserve stating whether or not depression had permanently lifted based on the first interview. S3 was the one participant from the previous theme, who did not feel able to state whether or not depression was absent after the second interview. In contrast, S believed himself to be "cured of depression." S2 stated that ayahuasca was felt strongly as a positive presence. S4 stated clearly that it has had a lasting impact. He also stated that yoga practice has taken on a heightened feeling of reverence and thankfulness. S5 has taken an attitude of detachment from depressive symptoms; he now feels more like an observer of these symptoms and not dominated by them as much. S6 has included meditation in his life and reported appreciating people more.

Grateful Feelings Towards Ayahuasca

All participants stated that they felt grateful towards ayahuasca. This indicated that although there was emotional difficulty in anticipation and also during some of the ayahuasca experiences, themselves, ultimately the majority of the participants sensed it was a beneficial pursuit.

S, who followed the practice of taking ayahuasca most seriously out of all the participants, felt especially grateful that ayahuasca exists and is available to him. S3 did not feel effected by ayahuasca in that he did not have a psychedelic experience but felt the benefit of sitting quietly in preparation. S4 voiced that taking ayahuasca clearly

worked and created the kind of learning that could penetrate even his “obstinate mind”. S5 was grateful to ayahuasca feeling that there had been nothing else that reduced his depressive symptoms. S6 was grateful for beginning to meditate, being more mindful, and appreciating others.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Summary of Findings

My findings in each case demonstrated that one to 10 days following ayahuasca ceremonies, there was a clear improvement in reported symptoms of depression for all six of the participants. With the clear and significant improvement in depression there were commonalities and differences that I observed throughout the various cases. The primary commonality was that each of these cases had a shift in the view they took towards the depression they experienced. Regardless of the manifestation of symptoms, the common report was that each person came to view that their depression was more illusory when compared with their perception of it prior to ingesting ayahuasca.

The differences between the experiences of relief from symptoms of participants were the action and internal dynamics of how they came to view depression. For instance in one case it was not the actual experience of being under the influence of ayahuasca that appeared to have caused a shift in thinking, it was the preparation for the event. The preparation cultivated a mindfulness, a slowing down of faculties, and patience, providing a life lesson the participant viewed as meaningful. In other cases, participants were given very clear instruction by what was referred to as different voices that arose during the ayahuasca experience on how to actually choose to live differently, and in other cases, reports of being able to undergo a kind of life review of specific events that offered insight towards healing depressive symptoms. Four out of the six participants had not had any previous experience with ayahuasca. The one participant who did have ample experience with ayahuasca, stated he had taken it over one hundred times, and described himself as a “success story” for using ayahuasca to relieve his depression. Each person

had engaged in other interventions prior to using ayahuasca, such as psychotherapy, acupuncture, yoga, and antidepressant medications. To different degrees, these other methods were said to have some effect, but ayahuasca was still sought as an additional form of treatment due to depressive symptoms that were still present for each participant.

In the field of psychedelic research the question of set and setting arises. No report of setting was alike in the participants interviewed. Settings included a context of the religious and community, a shamanic circle or in the Santo Daime church, as well as more isolated settings, a self made bonfire and an apartment in San Francisco. In the former, a more experienced guide was present and in the latter, participants were primarily alone in their encounters. There were commonalities in set in that there was an expectation that ayahuasca might be of benefit, there was some anxiety prior to taking ayahuasca, and each went through some form of inner preparation.

Significance of Results

One very significant result which emerged was that ayahuasca is a substance, which has the potential to take participants into deep aspects of experience, offering access to unconscious material, which is not otherwise easily available. In so doing, participants reported increased insight into factors/conditions that seemed to have formed depressive experiences. They also reported insights leading to the resolution of depressive symptoms.

Altogether, this group stated benefiting from the experience of participation with ayahuasca. It is important to emphasize that participants were chosen based on their ability to relay their own story of depression and ayahuasca, not because of a successful outcome. That all subjects suffered from chronic and/or treatment resistant depression

that had lasted at a minimum of 6 months and five of them reported that, after the second interview, they still felt free of depressive symptoms, suggests further in depth study of ayahuasca as a treatment modality for depression.

From this study there did not seem to emerge long-term harmful results due to ingesting ayahuasca, although the experiences did provoke anxiety and fear in four of the participants. Indeed, the anxiety and fear that was reported was revealed to be transiently stressful and emotionally problematic, but the drinking of ayahuasca did not seem to permanently leave participants in distress. It is possible that structured, religious practices provide more follow-ups for participants to process ayahuasca experiences, but even those who did not report affiliation with a religious community did not report sustained emotional difficulty.

Additional Considerations

Client Characteristics

An important factor, not yet discussed, is whether the characteristics of the participants were elements in the beneficial effects of ayahuasca on their depressive symptoms. An approach examining client characteristics stresses that within any treatment there may be wide-ranging results. Tailoring interventions towards client characteristics has been found to optimize the outcome for psychotherapy. Prior research (Groth-Marnat, Roberts & Beutler, 2001) has demonstrated that for example, clients with a high level of functional impairment require their therapists to make basic choices requiring case management, i.e. hospitalization, use of medication, frequency of sessions, and determining emphasis placed on goals. Research (Beutler, Clarkin, Bongar, 2000) demonstrated optimizing treatment depends on the decisions made in relation to client

personality. It has been found that a client who presents with a high level of subjective stress will likely benefit from strategies targeting his distress, such as support, hypnosis, and/or meditation. Contrast that with clients who experience minimal stress and would likely benefit from strategies that increase their level of arousal, enhancing their motivation for change (i.e. confrontation, peer evaluation, and increased expressiveness). The participants in this project seemed to fall in either category. Some with high levels of distress, as described by S2 and S4 experienced benefit as did S, S3, and S4, who appeared to describe symptoms that were experienced as less acutely stressful. For this variable, ayahuasca appeared effective in both forms of distress.

Additional research of client characteristics has suggested that pharmacotherapy is relegated to the treatment of "those patients with high functional impairment and high complexity/chronicity" (Beutler, Clarkin, & Bongar, 2000, p.183). Ayahuasca and its pharmacological effect has already been mentioned, but it is also true that some of the participants expressed that antidepressants were not able to alleviate the depressive symptoms they experienced. Since the participants were each chronically depressed, it may be the circumstance that ayahuasca provided intervention on several levels and that those with high/low functional impairment can benefit equally.

Connecting that research again to this study, future researchers may begin to identify certain characteristics of clients suffering chronic and/or treatment resistant depression and determine if ayahuasca would be a helpful course of action. Presently, there is no research which has identified client characteristics that determine who would be most likely or least likely to benefit from interventions using ayahuasca. However, perhaps with continued attention to this possibility a clinician may attend to basic

concerns of depressive patients (i.e. suicidality, co-morbidity of other mental disorders, or social factors which are supporting depressive symptoms) and proceed to closely examine if other personality factors are present which would affect whether or not ayahuasca would be efficacious. We might speculate that those who expect possible positive impact of ayahuasca may experience it or perceive it as beneficial but there might be additional factors as well.

Change Following Mystical Experiences

A common experience reported by the participants of this study was contact with the noumenal. As a result of this encounter there were some common outcomes. Participants referred to comprehending the interconnectedness of all things, the dissolving of ego, and the sense that what is occurring in the natural world originates from a different source. Within these reports, experiencing the numinous appeared to be the greatest contributing factor to change. “Ayahuasca often leads its drinkers to realms that transcend ordinary human existence” (Shanon, 2002, p. 154). With these experiences, the participants appreciated more of a sense and reason to everything. S2 in reference to interconnectivity said that “everything speaks” and there is “a thread that runs through everything.” With this newfound understanding, S2 stated he could forgive his stepfather because their relationship unfolded exactly as it was meant to. He was able to then acknowledge the trauma but not remain attached to it as a defining characteristic of his life. He said he was able to forgive. In his phenomenological investigation, Shanon has written that a person at times, under the influence of ayahuasca feels that he or she has actually become another person or an animal. This identity shift allows for one to assume the perspective of someone or something other than self and appreciate the

insights of that other's psychology. In the current study, one member was able to see more clearly how her abuse of alcohol had affected others.

In this discussion of ego dissolution, the ego refers to the self-conscious person taken as a whole. Dissolving the ego alters the perceptual and cognitive structures that limit, select, organize and interpret stimuli. In many instances, it nullifies the habitual patterns of behavior (Shanon, 2002). The therapeutic value of an ego dissolving experience is that exposure to the immensity of the elements and forces of nature helps in losing self-centeredness and self-importance (Holm, 1982). This leads to acceptance of the triviality and insignificance of one's individual existence. When an individual is not frustrated with himself, his restlessness may cease, leading to increased tranquility and peace (Rindfleish, 2007). Mystic experience typically results in increasing integration, although for some it may result in disintegration.

Ego death/ dissolution may result from spiritual practices (i.e. Tantra, Zen Buddhism), near death experiences, and during the use of other entheogens, such as mushrooms, San Pedro cactus, or *salvia divinorum* Epl. Et Jativa- M. (Labitae). In these other examples, the experience of ego death appeared to encourage the release of constricting and self-defeating perceptions. For instance, most investigators agree that people who have had near-death experiences have undergone significant changes in their attitudes and behaviors (Holm, 1982). These changes have been both short term and long term. Most involved the resolution of existential crises and problems associated with a neurotic fear of death. More specific changes included a strengthened belief in an afterlife, greater self acceptance, decreased interest in material possessions, greater concern for others, increased present centeredness, increased openness to psychic

phenomena, and a spiritual awakening often not tied to formal religious beliefs (Groth-Marnat, 1998), (Schumaker, Warren, & Groth-Marnat (1991).

Some reports by participants in this study of ayahuasca mirror those mentioned in the research on near-death experiences and other forms of mystical experience. For instance, some of the constituents which were extracted from the interviews were that after ayahuasca 4 of the 6 participants took things less personally, 3 felt greater self-awareness, 4 experienced greater self-acceptance, and 4 experienced a change in how they related to others. These mirror the changes just described of near death experiences including greater self-acceptance, greater concern for others and increased present-centeredness.

Reichel-Dolmatoff (1971) pointed out that for Amerindians to take yage was to die. Harner (1980) recounted an experience of self-death with ayahuasca and Shanon included the story of a European who took ayahuasca in Peru by saying that “at several points in this process I was certain that this was the end and that I was dying” (Shanon, 2002, p. 218). It was after his feeling on the brink of death that he receives important lessons regarding human life and felt was reborn (Shanon, 2002). The participants in this current study shared feelings of suffering and surrendering or letting go of a part of themselves, which is a way of describing a loss. The participant identified as S expressed clearly that it was encountering his ego attachments during ayahuasca sessions that led to meditations away from the ayahuasca experience which were ultimately very meaningful to him. He stated, “the meditation that I chose to deal with that was questioning what is the actual sensation of this suffering and who is feeling it and that was really jumping to that point in life when we’re experiencing that suffering and wondering what do I really

do about this, what extent do I deny it. The extent to which we deny it is the part that creates the depression.” S5 had an experience of being led to his death, “I was in this kind of vortex that was taking me and taking me up to where some sort of sacrifice is going on where the universe is created, and I was on my way to be sacrificed.” His response was that he had later regret because as he put it “I got scared and aborted the mission.” In the transcribed interview he revealed that he wondered what he could have gained had he let himself go fully.

The other aspect of connecting to the numinous was the sense that there is a Divine source out of which human life originates. Participant S said it showed him pleasures people cannot imagine, S4 met a DMT elf and also realized that putting down one’s self is an actual insult to God. S6 experienced a past life in which she had been spiritually devoted and realized she had lost her former connection to the Divine, which was contributing to her depression. Although an appreciation for the Divine can easily exist ineffably, it does seem that in respect to concrete, pragmatic effects, there was an altering of personal beliefs, redefining of personal ethical behaviors, and changes in world views which had a therapeutic impact on all volunteers.

Additional Studies of the Psychedelics for Therapeutic Use

This project researched the effects of ayahuasca on depression in 6 people without having a comparative substance by which to measure the effects against. Griffiths (2006) however researched the use of psilocybin and spiritual experiences using Ritalin as an active placebo control to contrast affects. His team recruited 36 healthy volunteers who were informed they would receive a hallucinogen in one of two or three sessions, either

30 milligrams of psilocybin or a similar active dose of Ritalin. Twenty-two of the 36 had a „complete” mystical experience after taking psilocybin.

Similar to the Griffiths’ (2006) study, the current research found that ayahuasca was impactful in a short period of time and was not a substance reported to be addictive. It was in fact credited by one participant as an aid to helping her clarify her dependence on alcohol. Other studies, particularly of ibogaine (Mash, Kovera, Buck, Norenberg, Shapshak, Hearn, et al. 1998). have shown that other non-addictive substances which have demonstrated effectiveness in treating mental health issues. Ibogaine has been found effective in treating heroin addiction and withdrawal symptoms. LSD has also been studied for its capacity to enhance psychotherapeutic effects without becoming addictive (Unger, Kurland, Shaffer, Savage, Wolf, Leihy, et al. 1968).

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) in 2007 studied people with treatment resistant depression using ketamine. In as little as two hours they experienced symptom relief with a single intravenous dose of ketamine. Some participants, who had tried an average of 6 medications without relief continued to show benefits over the next 7 days (NIMH, 2007). Ketamine blocks N-methyl-D-aspartic acid (NMDA) receptor. NMDA receptors receive signals of glutamate, which enhance electrical flow among brain cells. Related to this is that dysregulation in glutamate could be a cause in depression. The rapidity with which both ketamine and ayahuasca reduce depressive symptoms is noteworthy. Whereas ketamine is an NMDA antagonist, ayahuasca is a serotonin agonist. Despite these differences there are relationships between these two receptors. NMDA receptors inhibit 5HTA2a receptors, so when ketamine blocks NMDA

5HT2a receptors are disinhibited eliciting the psychedelic response (Gonzalez-Maseo & Sealon, 2009).

It may be that ayahuasca and ketamine specifically target areas that affect depression and this may result in research that could greatly advance the understanding in treatment. Also that each seems to produce lasting effects is significant. In contrast current antidepressant medication takes 7-21 days or longer. Study of medications that are fast acting may eliminate the weeks and sometimes months clients have to wait until the effects of antidepressants are felt. In this study participants were interviewed relatively close to the day of ingesting ayahuasca, typically within a week's time. Improvement reported by all participants in such a short period contrasts greatly with prescription medications. This may suggest that that the NMDA/glutamate mechanisms are a key in impacting depression.

Ayahuasca as Augmentation to Other Forms of Therapy

An additional consideration emerging from this study, is whether or not ayahuasca could serve to augment other forms of therapy. For example, hypnosis has been used in addition to cognitive therapy to quit smoking, to lose weight, to reduce anxiety, to reduce stress in childbirth. (Yapko, 2006). Pill placebos have augmented psychotherapy for depression (Snyder, Michael, & Cheavens, 1999). EMDR with psychotherapy has sped recovery for trauma patients. In similar fashion, ayahuasca may augment psychotherapy. In circumstances where psychotherapy has not been effective, ayahuasca may somehow enhance and aid its effectiveness.

In this study, three of the participants resorted to methods they described as alternative and all had tried psychotherapy. Ayahuasca was only perceived as

advantageous for these participants, assuring that any benefits from the other prior methods were only augmented. In the manner that other aforementioned techniques have achieved recognition for their efficacy in conjunction with therapy, it is conceivable that ayahuasca too, can work conjointly with psychotherapy. However one restriction is that ayahuasca cannot be used with most traditional antidepressants due to negative drug interactions.

Implications for Clinical Psychology

This research focused on symptoms of chronic and/or treatment resistant depression. One current strategy for treating chronic depression is interpersonal psychotherapy (IPT) a time-limited, manualized, life-event- based treatment of demonstrated efficacy for acute major depression (Markowitz, 2003). Another is cognitive therapy that addresses hopelessness, helplessness, and perfectionism, addressing early life-adverse experiences, and modifying maladaptive schemas. All of which may be enhanced by focusing on patients' poor social skills, ineffective reasoning skills, and their depressive identity (Riso & Newman, 2003). In all the cases presented in this project, some form of talk therapy had been attempted as a possible aid to alleviating chronic depression. In three cases, medication was prescribed. Psychotherapy was deemed at least partially helpful and it was reported by the participants that it was the quality of the relationship that determined how effective the therapy was perceived to have been.

At times, participants described their experiences as if there was a wiser part of one's own self speaking to a less integrated aspect of their own self. In these cases, the voice appeared to have an indisputable, implacably truthful quality. This seemed to

eliminate complications of opposing views, which can arise in a psychotherapy relationship involving the inter-subjective field of therapist and client. The participants appeared openly accepting of the messages, which were described as blunt and direct.

The issue does arise as to whether or not the perspective offered from such a voice in an ayahuasca setting and ceremony remains as potent afterwards and, if it does, how long does it remain and does one need to repeatedly revisit an ayahuasca experience in order to maintain improvement. The experience of meeting with another for therapy offers consistency and, if roots of depression may be optimally healed through relationship with another, then ayahuasca may not be a substitute. Consideration may be paid, however to the possibility that improved self-awareness as may be understood by the “ayahuasca voice” offers direction, which may benefit symptoms of depression.

One suggestion is that if a client does choose ayahuasca as a means of addressing depression, then he or she might process and integrate that experience with a therapist. Psychotherapy is a container for personal growth and development. The illumination of the phenomenon of depression is of great interest to practitioners who want to serve their clients and participate in those personal journeys of self-discovery. If ayahuasca aids in generating meaningful information on the phenomenon, then psychotherapists may potentially play a role in validating the usefulness of personal insights derived from the ayahuasca experience.

In some of the narratives, early childhood trauma was thought by the study’s participants to precipitate the onset of depression. It is perhaps the reduction of defensive strategies as provided by the use of ayahuasca that provided access to these earlier experiences. If it was necessary to generate a healing of depression by revisiting these

original events, then ayahuasca seemed to be a tool that made this possible. If such events were accessed but contained information that was difficult to integrate or incorporate into waking life, then a psychotherapist may offer a safe and contained space for processing the experience.

Psychological pain and struggle are frequently described as being a necessary part of change (Finlay, 2008). Psychotherapists are asked to hold space for that struggle. The results of this study indicate that ayahuasca similarly seems to make its participants aware of emotionally difficult encounters. Additional mechanisms of change are encounters with the numinous, ayahuasca as presenting teaching messages, and also possible neurochemical factors. It should be noted that all participants described feelings of discomfort either in anticipation of or during ayahuasca encounters. However, these were transitory and the participants seemed to work through the difficulties that were encountered. They did not report any lasting effects from this discomfort. However, psychotherapists may wish to encourage their clients' reflection and allow sufficient time for clients to consider their encounters with material accessed.

Strengths and Weaknesses of this Study

An asset of the study was that participants were interviewed for a full two sessions. This allowed participants to reflect on their own experience and then expand, substantiate, and elaborate on their experience in the second interview. Based on the interview format, the participants were able to articulate their lived experience, providing data that was intimately understood. The view they provided was an inside, experiential view.

A further strength, was that the population was a very difficult one to treat and yet positive results were reported. In each case, talk therapy had been used, and in three cases medication was involved. Alternative methods including yoga, acupuncture, and natural medications had also been attempted. In each of these attempts, minimal relief was reported. In contrast, ayahuasca was noted as being beneficial in every case even though participants were not selected for being successes.

Perceived mechanisms of change were encountering an experience of the collective greater than one's self and receiving direct messages transmitted through ayahuasca. Another possible mediator of change may be neurochemical changes. Whatever the mechanisms of change, the outcomes resulted in a changed perception in self, greater self awareness, and sense of responsibility, greater self-efficacy, faith that difficulties can be managed, greater self acceptance, and a change in how one related to others, which had an impact on mood. Participants reported that it was the information received either in preparation for taking ayahuasca or in the experience of it which encouraged insights, which ultimately encouraged different behaviors outside of the experience in daily life. For instance S2 felt more connected to the environment resulting in less isolating behaviors. S3 learned the value of patience due to the preparatory stance he had taken towards the initial experience. S4 was more aware of the harm drinking had caused towards relationship with others and resolved to stop.

Importantly, this study encourages more research. Research may include surveys and randomized control trials. It may also include pharmacological studies of ayahuasca on volunteers as well as a study of how ayahuasca may affect different age groups. For instance, depression experienced in adolescence may be studied for the impact of

ayahuasca on it in addition to an adult age group and then also a group of those who are advanced in age. Also a study of the long- term effects of ayahuasca merits research. In general, engaging with an area of new development for an illness that debilitates many is an important endeavor and particularly so when a preliminary investigation has yielded encouraging results.

Unfortunately, the current situation regarding ayahuasca's legality does create restrictions in research. In particular, this research would have benefited by the ability to interview participants prior to their first ayahuasca experience. This study also would have been strengthened had there been more determination in regard to setting. Similarity in setting may have abetted more meaningful comparisons between the before and after effect of ayahuasca on symptoms of depression.

Since I was not involved in monitoring the preparation of ayahuasca as used by the participants, there was also no way to determine that all participants had a similar form and dose of ayahuasca. With different combinations of components in an ayahuasca recipe, deciding on a standard ayahuasca compound for research would be needed. Although a common recipe of ayahuasca involves the ayahuasca vine and chacruna leaves, recipes may vary with the addition of other plants which may affect the ability to adequately compare experiences.

The above problem is rarely addressed in studies on ayahuasca. Even in the highly ritualized settings of churches such as the UDV, the plants themselves have seasonal and genetic differences that make no ayahuasca dose exactly like another. In settings where traditional shamans brewed the tea before EEG readings were done (Echenhofer & Stuckey, 2004), (Frecka, White & Luna, 2004), little mention is made of the fact that

each shaman or ayahuasqueros used their own formula for the proportions of the plants used. Thus the contents of the ayahuasca may in the end have considerably different ratios of the betacarbolines to DMT than previous research attempts. Larger research questions thus, are whether there is a dose-response relationship and would different mixtures have different effects on the outcome for different depressive symptoms.

The sample pool which was available to me were participants who were mainly from Northern California. There was one participant from Michigan and another from Oregon, but for further research a larger, more representative sample would be important to include. The sample size was small, making it difficult to generalize the results. Also, those that might have had neutral or ongoing negative experiences may not have been willing to volunteer. Another bias could have been leading questions on the part of the interviewer. Other factors, such as the environment in which the interview takes place or the mood that the participant was in on that given day may have all been unknowingly influential.

Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Research

Based on this research of case studies there is evidence that ayahuasca successfully treated chronic, treatment resistant depression. At the very least these beneficial effects were temporary. It remains for future research to determine the extent to which beneficial effects were maintained over an extended period of time. Given these findings, it is possible that ayahuasca can have a measurable effect on symptoms of depression for others suffering from the same symptoms. Support for this finding would require continued research that used an expanded participant pool using testimonial and phenomenological interviewing, surveys or RCTs. But as an initial surfacing of

information, these six participants have provided striking examples of ayahuasca as a possible tool for treating depression.

Future research could focus on achieving greater similarity between each participant's experiences of ayahuasca, as in standardizing doses and environmental factors. It would for instance, be possible and within legal constructs for one of the centers where ayahuasca is currently used in ritual settings, either indigenous centers, U.S. and European UDV chapters, or Santo Daime churches in Oregon or where rehabilitation research is being done, to set up before and after conditions for ayahuasca subjects. For example, one of the ayahuasca churches could request volunteers who are entering their rituals for the first time be interviewed and screened for chronic depressive symptoms. Following their first experience, such participants could undergo an interview in regard to the impact on depressive symptoms following a ceremony. Given that the participant may not want to join the church, thereby receiving the right of legal consumption of ayahuasca, then all data regarding that participant could be purged under an agreement of confidentiality. Another possible study would be to use the themes derived from this study and convert them into a survey, which could be used on a larger sample. Additionally, a study which compares the efficacy of ayahuasca with standard antidepressant treatments could be conducted.

There are already rehabilitation centers, such as Wasiwaska which are using ayahuasca to treat dually diagnosed clients (Mabit, 2002). Subjects entering rehabilitation could be screened for depression with the understanding that they are dually diagnosed and a study would be conducted with this knowledge in mind. In such a setting, where ayahuasca is used ritually, such as at Wasisaka, interviews could be conducted at the start

of the program and then at regular intervals throughout so as to create a study which could track participants' experiences for an extended length of time.

Another potential area of research is to examine if the setting in which ayahuasca is consumed affects outcome. Studying set and expectation may help to understand outcome. For instance, if there is a context in which a community is taking ayahuasca and the expectation is a positive result from the experience then does this enhance the chances of a beneficial result. It may be possible to detect differences in effect between traditional context use versus more casual, recreational use of ayahuasca.

Another potential area to pursue regards the effects of ayahuasca on a population of volunteers who have been pre-screened with psychological tests and interviews, generally educated and informed about ayahuasca through a standardized program, then given ayahuasca in a supervised but symbolically neutral environment, several times. Support services would be maintained for the study group, and a post-test could be conducted. This might show not only what effects on personality ayahuasca had in a neutral setting, but if the person's own beliefs and expectations were changed or enhanced by the experience.

Another line of inquiry is using a randomized controlled trial (RCT) design in which an active placebo such as valium would be compared to the effects of ayahuasca. In the research previously mentioned on ketamine, Ritalin was used as a comparative substance (Griffiths, Richards, McCann, Jesse, 2006). A similar agent of comparison could be introduced in an ayahuasca experiment.

In summary, the current study offered evidence that ayahuasca is an effective substance for chronic and/or treatment resistant depression among 6 volunteers. In

addition, it offered insight into the lived experience of their form of depression and the lived experience of ayahuasca as a treatment for it. This study offers preliminary evidence that not supports the efficacy of ayahuasca, but also invites future studies.

Assuredly, in the cases of these individuals ayahuasca demonstrated significant success in alleviating chronic depressive symptoms.

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Appendix A
Informed Consent Form

Title of the study: VINE OF SOUL: A Phenomenological Study of Ayahuasca and its Effect on Depression

1. I agree to have Lisa Palladino ask me a series of questions about the effect of Ayahuasca on symptoms of depression.
2. These questions will be asked in a location agreed upon between myself and the investigator, Lisa Palladino. This may either be a private residence, a private office, or over the phone and will take one hour for the first interview and one half hour for the second, follow up interview.
3. The purpose of asking these questions is to conduct a phenomenological interview of my personal experience of ingesting Ayahuasca. I acknowledge that I have agreed to this because I suffer from symptoms of depression which are either chronic or have been treatment resistant as attested to by other methods attempted on my behalf. This study is designed to understand what effect, if any Ayahuasca had on these symptoms.
4. I understand some of these questions might be embarrassing or annoying to me. The researcher has explained that my name will not be recorded on the questionnaire and that my answers will be used by the investigator in the analysis of data.
5. I understand that this research may result in possible therapeutic benefits of Ayahuasca, which may or may not be beneficial to me personally.
6. Lisa Palladino has given information about this study and the place of my interview to me. I can reach her any time I have questions by calling (415) 260-6108.
7. I understand that I can refuse to answer any question and can withdraw from this study at any time without jeopardizing my anonymity.
8. I am not receiving any compensation for participating in this study.

Date _____ Signature _____

Appendix B
Transcribed Interviews

Table B1

Meaning Units and Transcribed Text for S

	Meaning Units	Transformed Text
1.	I: To start off, can you please describe your experience of depression	Interviewer begins by asking for description of experience of depression
2.	S: Pretty much all my life as far as I can tell, I felt like a feeling of lacking value of being wrong, kind of morally wrong, kind of like I didn't belong. You know I am really remembering as a kid a feeling of isolation	States pretty much all his life as felt like a feeling of lacking value of being wrong, kind of morally wrong, kind of like he didn't belong. States really remembering as a kid a feeling of isolation
3.	S:I saw outside of myself people not caring for me, not being safe.	States seeing outside of himself people were not caring for him, he did not feel safe.
4.	S: It felt like my own fault, my own feeling, it also kind of felt like the world was punishing me or torturing me.	States it felt like it was his fault, it felt like the world was punishing or torturing him.
5.	S:I never, this time I am thinking about, around 6 or 7 or 8, I guess around this point I didn't consider myself being sad, I just thought this was the way things were, a dark and dangerous world.	States about, around 6 or 7 or 8, didn't consider himself being sad, just thought this was the way things were, a dark and dangerous world.
6.	S: At the same time I can remember a lot of wonder about the world. I wasn't being abused. I can't really point to real factors in the world that caused these experiences. Which is why I call it depression not bad luck, there was	States at the same time can remember a lot of wonder about the world. He couldn't point to real factors in the world that caused these experiences. Which is why he calls it depression not bad luck, there was nothing to

	nothing to point to.	point to.
7.	I: You said you recall these feelings at 6 or 7, did it manifest differently throughout your life?	Interviewer asks if although feelings started at 6 or 7 did they manifest differently throughout life.
8.	S: Maybe it's the way I experience it or remember it, it was kind of an abstract quality of life, when I look at it now I think as life progressed there are more and more reasons my mind applies to why I felt this way.	States it's the way he experiences it or remembers it, it was kind of an abstract quality of life, when look at it now think as life progressed there are more and more reasons his mind applies to why I felt this way.
9.	S: As I think of my teen years, I think there are more and more ways that caused me to feel this way. Different circumstances that contributed to that and to some extent I think that is true	States thinks of teen years, thinks there are more and more ways that caused him to feel this way. Different circumstances that contributed to that
10.	S: If I had never had, well my relationship with my twin brother was mutually abusive in our teen years. Abuse wasn't something I had had in those early years. When we got into our war, our war lasted from 3 rd grade to our early 30's really.	States relationship with twin brother was mutually abusive in teen years. Abuse wasn't something in those early years. States their war lasted from 3 rd grade to early 30's really.
11.	S: really. I look at that hatred and conflict and those same issues come up around value, I felt I had to prove my value.	States that hatred and conflict and those same issues come up around value, felt had to prove his worth.
12.	S: But even looking at this period despite that, I was very fortunate with my circumstances all the way through my childhood through early adulthood, so maybe similar.	States looking at this period despite that, he was very fortunate with circumstances all the way from childhood through early adulthood
13.	I: You mentioned your twin brother and the war you were in. Did your war have to do with issues of identity?	Interviewer asks about twin brother and war as issues of identity
14.	S: Ummm yeah, so I was born slightly smaller and I have always wanted to be equal and it felt to me that he always wanted to be better, so we competed and so certainly that has to do with identity.	States was born slightly smaller and have always wanted to be equal and it felt to that his brother always wanted to be better, so they competed and this does impact issues of identity.
15.	I: Did you try various methods to treat your depression?	Interviewer asks if various methods were tried to treat depression
16.	S: My parents sent me to a therapist when I was young. We had scattered	States sent to a therapist when young. States there were intermittent sessions

	bits of family therapy when I was in like 7 th to 9 th or tenth grade. I didn't find that very effective. I don't know what life would have been without that, but it didn't resolve my feelings.	of family therapy in 7 th to 9 th or tenth grade. States didn't find that very effective, but doesn't know what life would have been without that, but it didn't resolve his feelings.
17.	I: Do you mind sharing more about that?	Interviewer asks if he will share more.
18.	S: Sure, but first I want to say that I also took Prozac in college when my depression got strong, which would you prefer to hear about first?	States he wants to say that he took Prozac in college when depression got strong, and asks which would you prefer to hear about first?
19.	I: Which would you prefer?	Interviewer asks his preference
20.	S: Well I guess I will go chronologically, I'll address the therapy. So what was your first question about that?	States will go chronologically, will address the therapy. Asks what was your first question about that?
21.	I: Well you had mentioned you had found therapy ineffective, I was wondering if you could say more about that. I know it might be a lot to recall, but to the best of your ability, can you take us into that experience?	Interviewer asks for more of the experience of ineffective therapy mentioned
22.	S: My memory of the family therapy is vague, but the fighting with my brother was intense. I and others feared for our physical safety. Therapy did not change that dynamic.	States memory of the family therapy is vague, but the fighting with brother was intense. States he and others feared for physical safety. Therapy did not change that dynamic.
23.	S: The therapist had my twin brother put into a locked ward and a halfway house, which stopped the fighting of course, but it was a pretty extreme way of doing it. I was pleased with that outcome, but I think it was a failure, a lack of resolution.	States the therapist had twin brother put into a locked ward and a halfway house, which stopped the fighting, but it was a pretty extreme way of doing it. He was pleased with that outcome, but it was a failure, a lack of resolution.
24.	S: Detainment is not a sudden unraveling of our issues. And then we became distanced for the rest of our lives	States detainment is not a solution. And then they became distanced for the rest of their lives
25.	S: The therapy I had may have had some benefit but it did not impact depression or issues of identity. I think it's nice to have someone to talk to but I could have used some guidance and mentorship. I think the approach of just listening was not what I needed.	States the therapy may have had some benefit but it did not impact depression or issues of identity. States it's nice to have someone to talk to but he could have used some guidance and mentorship.
26.	I: Do you want to speak about your	Interviewer asks if he would like to

	experience of Prozac?	share his experience of Prozac
27.	S: In college, the dynamic I got into, which was sexual addiction, it felt like a new and exciting world. I had a girlfriend for a few months, each girlfriend lasted, was shorter than the previous. I kind of consumed those relationships. I got to a point where I couldn't get it fast enough.	States in college got into sexual addiction, it felt like a new and exciting world. He had a girlfriend for a few months, but began to have shorter and shorter relationships. States kind of consumed those relationships.
28.	S: Then the dynamic kind of fell apart. I came back for my senior year and a lot of my friends had graduated. I didn't have the momentum or something, so it all kind of changed, so I stopped enjoying my experience. I wasn't fun to be around, no one wanted to date me at that point.	States the dynamic kind of fell apart. His friends graduated and he didn't have the same momentum. He stopped enjoying the experience.
29.	S: The experience became consuming, The feeling was I got more depressed then I had done before. I couldn't read, I couldn't study, I was pretty debilitated.	States he became consumed by the experience and became more depressed than previously. Was debilitated.
30.	S: So I went to a doctor in town, he gave me Prozac. I told my teachers who were supportive. I remember reading that 15 % of people who take Prozac have a negative reaction, mine was extremely dramatic, very violent fantasies, extremely violent, ultra violent. My eyes were dilated, I was jittery.	States went to a doctor who gave him Prozac. He had a bad reaction to it.
31.	I: How long did you take it?	Interviewer asks how long he took it.
32.	S: 3 months. After a couple of weeks those tripping effects stopped or got smaller and smaller. After a few weeks I started to feel better I got back on track and then I stopped taking it for a while.	States 3 months. After a few weeks began to feel better.
33.	I: So you used it for a period of time and then you didn't need it anymore? Did you feel you had gained insight into underlying issues?	Interviewer asks if he needed it after that period of time and if he gained insight into where the depression came from
34.	S: No the dynamic with women stopped, but there was no ongoing therapy and I never got to the underlying cause.	States he did not and there was no ongoing therapy

35.	I: Then when you stopped taking it did you have any other experiences with depression?	Interviewer asks if depression came back after he stopped taking it
36.	S: Well no at that point the feeling was gone, I did experience that depression again. About maybe 12 years ago I dated a woman who I really fell for quickly and that relationship lasted only 3 weeks or a month and that depression I had for about a month or two and I really felt broken from that for a couple of years. So that was again the experience of that deep hole.	States at that point the depression was gone, although he felt it 12 years later over a relationship.
37.	S: What it didn't have was that kind of cycle, it was one circumstance that dropped me into it that I came out of, but it was the same feeling.	States this depression did not have that kind of cycle, it was one circumstance
38.	S: When I first had it there was more an out of control feeling, this was more the feeling of I was able to get traction and see what had happened.	States that when first had it, it felt more out of control, could get traction on it this time
39.	I: And so then what led you towards ayahuasca?	Interviewer asks what led to ayahuasca
40.	S: Well it wasn't depression and in fact 7 years ago I kind of thought uh, I was doing well in life, making money, plenty of money, felt creative, was creative, so it was kind of in that position of being high on the world causing me to experience that kind of glee, going to burning man.	States it wasn't depression, it was more of a feeling of being high on the world.
41.	S: I was experimenting with recreational drugs in a pretty controlled way.	States was experimenting with drugs in a controlled way
42.	S: I don't know what I mean by that, that's not true	States doesn't know what he means by that
43.	S: So I had heard about ayahuasca in an anthropology class, I learned you could buy the ingredients. So I had ridiculously high esteem for my sanity and togetherness so I explored making it and trying it in a pretty controlled way. I was a responsible person, worked for companies, had a good mind to study things, felt I had control,	States had heard about ayahuasca and made it in a controlled way because felt like a responsible person who could do that.
44.	S: but in many ways I was not in	States he was not really in control, still

	control, still had the psychological problems that I hadn't resolved. I was striving to support my identity as someone who could support powerful things I had delusionary self-images of who I could be and wanted to be and needed to be someone else other than what I was.	had the psychological problems that had not been resolved from earlier. States had delusional images of who he could be and wanted to be someone other than who he was.
45.	S: Once I had done it a fair number of times and thought I understood it, I thought I should go to the Amazon and see how it was done there. That began a process of completely turning around my understanding of myself and what I was doing. I came to realize I certainly shouldn't make medicine and do it myself I came to realize how infinitesimal what we know is and what can be known.	States after doing it a fair number of times thought he should go to the Amazon to do it there.
46.	I: So to be clear I just want to gain an accurate understanding, I feel I skipped ahead, so you did not seek ayahuasca to seek a relief from depression, it came more from a sense of security when you came to it.	Interviewer wants to backtrack to gain clarity and asks again about why he broached ayahuasca.
47.	S: At that point I was feeling pretty high on life, so that's correct.	States it is correct that he took ayahuasca because he felt he was in a place of feeling high on life.
48.	I: And then it sounds like there was something humbling where you realized you knew less than you had thought.	Interviewer states, and then you came in touch with humility from the experience.
49.	S: Yes that's right and in working with the shaman, two shaman in Peru who work together, yeah I would say slow unfoldment of coming into what we know. I have been clinging to knowledge all my life. It is something that slowly unravels as we draw more into the present moment, so that is a progression that continues to unfold.	Agrees and says it was working with shaman that helped him to realize his own ignorance, and the progression towards more self-insight.
50.	S: And also pretty soon after working with a shaman actually pretty immediately, the work I had done, well it wasn't work it was more like play it wasn't so much like medicines as like	Realizes that experiences prior to working with shaman was less serious.

	toys. I realized that was all light and joy, magical and seductive	
51.	S: That was completely different, their medicine was a whole different ballgame, much more physically difficult, much much darker, caused me to feel well just different, entirely.	Describes the experience as more intense with the shaman.
52.	I: Could you amplify the meaning in that statement?	Interviewer asks for further elucidation.
53.	S: The strongest experience I remember before Peru was like epiphanies, the universe was exploding. The experience in Peru, the strongest, well not the strongest the one worth recounting is a state I have seen many times, I call it ultimate suffering.	States that in early experience prior to working with shaman recalls something like epiphanies, in an experience in Peru, came in touch with what he names ultimate suffering.
54.	S: It's a mental state where everything we experience becomes as bad as possible there is no goodness anywhere, the universe is a torture device constructed perfectly for me.	Describes this as a mental state wherein one perceives everything as bad and punishing.
55.	S: So that was something that on my first trip to Peru I experienced a number of times, more and more complete and full, and I wasn't good at handling it. I would be in a state of well I can't do anything and anything I could do I wouldn't do I would have to go into a completely tortured place. The first five ceremonies in Peru I got to really see what I was dealing with.	States that was what he came in touch with in Peru, began to understand what he was capable of experiencing during an ayahausca ceremony.
56.	I: What caused you to continue doing it?	Interviewer asks what compelled him to continue
57.	S: I think it's complex and the ideas that come to as to why I do it, my ego my stubbornness all of my worst qualities came through to support me doing the work. I am grateful for that, it was the idea that I should get on top of it, it was ego driven it would have been easier to stop.	States that it is complex, attributes it to an egoistic response. Says it was his worst qualities that actually he has gratitude for because it caused him to continue going back to participate.
58.	I: How many times have you done it?	Interviewer asks how many times participant has taken ayahausca
59.	S: I have done it something in the ballpark of 100 times, 120 times over 7 years	States he has done it approximately 120 times over 7 years.

60.	I: And the most recent time was when?	Interviewer asks when last experience occurred.
61.	S: Nine days ago, I am still on the fast.	States nine days ago, still on the fast.
62.	S: Quite relevant would be, well there was one ceremony following my first dieta, which I credit with curing my depression. So you'd like to hear that.	S has a thought on what is relevant to mention to study and tells interviewer she would probably want to hear about a ceremony he credits with curing depression.
63.	S: Yes please	Interviewer agrees.
64.	S: What I saw on that diet... and it was getting more and more difficult, so there was one ceremony, well uhh, well I didn't trip well and what I mean by that is that I wasn't able to sit quietly and have my experience. And that was very much true.	Describes the experience of taking ayahuasca as getting progressively more difficult, during one ceremony was unable to be in own internal experience.
65.	S: When the ultimate suffering would come I would rail against it. The community was able to contain that, they would say everyone gets their turn to lose their shit and I was getting my turn quite a bit. So there is this one ceremony and I lose awareness of where I am and who I am the more and more I turned to the medicine.	States that when the ultimate suffering came he resisted it, the community was able to contain him. He could not orient himself to where or who he was the more he turned to ayahuasca
66.	S: When we trip recreationally, which I don't do anymore we learn to not think about negative things to keep from having a bad trip	States that when doing hallucinogens recreationally the tendency is to focus on the positive.
67.	S: What I was finding is my mind would go directly to the last thing I wanted to think about. I was completely not present and I wasn't aware that I was verbalizing my experience, and I realized I was verbalizing my experience in a sacred circle. I was verbalizing a secret I had sworn to keep	Found in this experience that exactly what he wanted to avoid thinking of is where his mind would return. Uncontrollably he verbalized a secret he had been sworn to keep
68.	S: and it was as if the world was kind of shattered this moment when a lot of what I am and who I am and what I think is good and right burst apart and I felt like I couldn't forgive myself by what I thought was harming the world by violating a promise, I felt incredible self-hatred, no excuse	States that the world shattered in that moment and his ideas about himself were obliterated. States he could not forgive himself for something he considered so harmful, could not defend himself from the shame.

69.	S: so following this ceremony I couldn't think of this experience without cursing or having self-hatred or playing on the flute without cursing the flute.	States could not think of this experience without being self-critical.
70.	S: So I already had come to realize a pattern that the worse a ceremony is the most healing and beneficial,	States that he was already aware that his pattern with ceremonies is that the worse they feel, the most healing they incur.
71.	S: what I couldn't see was how that could possibly be the case in this situation so what I did was to start meditating on the moment the world broke and trying to feel amidst that it was like trying to get close to that which the mind does not want to think about.	States he could not see this in operation, however in this circumstance
72.	S: Over the course of a couple months I could get right into it easily and it got less and less powerful and after awhile I could rest right in that thought without any resistance. That was a couple months later.	States could eventually begin to approach it more easily.
73.	S: I noticed my mood had stopped swinging, my mood now depended on circumstances of life and I could see that there was a cycle that would cease and that cycle referred to the feedback of others and what others thought of me, wanting the appreciation of others basically.	Describes beginning to notice his mind stopped swinging, realized that he was being influenced in his moods by others reactions to him.
74.	S: If I am depressed then people would try to cheer me up and they would cheer me up then I would be high on myself and then they would knock me down. So that was the experience.	Describes others as trying to cheer him up and that was a temporary solution to feeling better, but he was just as easily hurt when others had negative reactions to him.
75.	S: As I was doing the meditation a lot I would ask myself who is really suffering who is feeling this?	States during meditation began to ask who is really suffering this.
76.	S: I didn't resolve that question, I didn't figure it out, in a sense instead of looking outwards it was as if my spirit felt heard by me and that is what really changed the dynamic.	States he did not resolve that question, but began to feel as if his spirit heard him and that caused a change in the dynamic.
77.	I: The transformation was the result of ayahuasca? Or were there a myriad of	Interviewer asks if the cause was ayahuasca or other

	other factors?	
78.	S: It was the medicine that cured the depression, but it was the ayahuasca that pointed to it. It was the worst ceremonies that teach the most but these lessons don't come before the ceremony is closed,	Attributes the cure for his depression on the ayahuasca pointing to it, but it was the work he did following the ceremony as well.
79.	S: but these lessons don't come before the ceremony is closed, this was the case of having homework. It was very much the cause of having an experience you can't ignore., it was being given an experience so painful if you follow it, it will bring you to your core,	Describes that the lessons come from the homework one has to do after a ceremony has closed.
80.	S:I don't see ayahuasca as separate from our experience, I don't see it as disembodied. It is who we really are that is all of the work.	Describes ayahuasca as being an inherent part of a person, it points us to who we really are
81.	I: It sounds like you are saying it is a very internal process, it helps you gain access to your own potential; it sounds like you are saying it is actualizing latent gifts of your own.	Interviewer states that it sounds as if he is describing a process wherein one is put in touch with their own internal monitor
82.	S: That is correct in my perception. I don't think I can actually address that without going into my beliefs, which may not be relevant.	States that this is accurate interpretation, but can't say more without going into his personal beliefs which may not be relevant
83.	I: I appreciate you sticking with your lived experience, so to shed more light on that so is there anything more you would like to say about that. I almost got the impression it was like using questions and homework to understand beliefs you hold which may or may not be working anymore. Is this what you mean?	Interviewer expresses appreciation for sticking to lived experience, ask for more clarity regarding the homework aspect of what participant has mentioned.
84.	S: Ok yeah, that is right, there is a general picture of how this fits into bigger work, how this is etched into the same instances.	States there is a general picture of how this fits into a bigger work, how this is etched into the same instances.
85.	S: Ayahuasca is a unique medicine. It causes physical discomfort, emotional discomfort, it creates for us our own perfect nightmare in addition to indescribable pleasures, indescribable	States that ayahuasca is a unique medicine in that it is physically and emotionally uncomfortable, which provide learning opportunities

	pains. In both cases there is a lesson.	
86.	S: The reason difficult ceremonies are beneficial is because we have been denying those truths. When we stick with that it takes us to the truth.	States that difficult ceremonies are of benefit because they indicate what we have denied
87.	I: Are there personal experiences you have?	Interviewer asks for personal experiences
88.	S: In fact they all feel like personal experiences. There is a quality where some people believe ayahuasca has a spirit because it always heals us and I think it is because we will see the truth, and I will get to the experience. If it shows us the delusion then it exists.	States they are all personal. Describes that others perceive of ayahuasca as a healing spirit, he thinks it heals because it points to truth
89.	S: I'll use a powerful example from my first experience. My mood stopped swinging, there were lots of personality distortion issues, it hadn't resolved my issues of loving myself, it hadn't really addressed that and the quality of ceremony, became more difficult, there was more ultimate suffering. I, in fact continued to get worse in my ability to trip well there was another ceremony, the next one came pretty soon after that I really my mind was bouncing among the worst things possible. I was verbalizing it, not so high now to be obliterated. I was more conscious and able to resist the experience,	Describes personal example of his moods not swinging although there were still personality distortions. Still had issues of not loving himself, and in fact continued to have very difficult experiences during ceremonies
90.	S: I did create a big disturbance in the circle and it went on for a while, it brought out a rebelliousness in me it reminded me on my teen years.	States he did create a big disturbance which made him realize his own rebelliousness, bringing him back in touch with his teen years
91.	S:I want to stay close to the thread of how do we follow our experience into the truth. I want to stay on track. Can you rephrase the question?	States he wants to stay close to the experience and asks to be directed back to the question
92.	I: I was curious how the internal change was experienced by you.	Interviewer says she was interested in how the internal change occurred
93.	S: In a sense I had a great set of circumstances in which to do psychodynamic work. I went down to Peru and talked to an old wise woman who I knew from a prior trip and I told her how difficult my last experience	States he had the conducive circumstances to do psychodynamic work. Describes encounter with a wise woman in Peru who told him everyone has a divine inner child and we don't need it to grow up but it does need to

	<p>had been. She told me to ride in the car with her the next day, She said we all have an inner child and this inner child is wonderful. It is actually divine. It is our creativity, our humor, our connection to the divine and we don't need this child to grow up but we do need it to behave and if the child won't behave then the reason is because we aren't listening to it. We aren't respecting it. We aren't loving it. I recommend you begin an open dialogue with this child and listen, And I know this can work I have experienced it.</p>	<p>behave and if it doesn't, then it is because it is not being heard, respected, loved. She recommended that he open himself up to a dialogue with this child.</p>
<p>94. S: So for this dieta I drank small amounts of medicine and did what she recommended. I came to realize...so it was a sort of an inquiry of listening to an aspect of ourselves and then shifts happen. What I came to realize through this trip was that my experience of liking and loving are two different things. We think liking a lot is loving but really it is preferring and loving is really the wholesome and inclusive sense, it is more of wishing well. So I don't have to like the world for myself but I might as well open my heart and love it so the whole experience of opening up and learning to love indiscriminately is the only way one can come to love what one finds disturbing or torturing or evil or bad which is how I saw parts of myself.</p>	<p>Describes dieting and beginning to realize that there is a qualitative difference between liking and loving, and he does not necessarily need to like the world, but he does need to open his heart and love it, so that in turn it will open itself to him. In so doing this one is further in touch with parts that are split off from oneself.</p>	
<p>95. I: We have covered a lot is there more you might want to share? Specifically this is a study on impact or lack of it on symptoms of depression are there any thoughts to share on your own understanding?</p>	<p>Interviewer asks if there is anything the participant wants to share on how this has come to impact symptoms of depression.</p>	
<p>96. S: There's one thing, ayahuasca gives us experience where we kind of; in a sense it amplifies our essence and our personality distortions so we see both. The essence is wonderful and the</p>	<p>States that ayahuasca gives experience of amplifying our essence and our personality distortions. States the essence is wonderful and the distortion is horrible.</p>	

	distortion is horrible.	
97.	S: The opportunity that it provides is for us to share our awareness, then the awareness is drawn to the essence so we see how important and wonderful that is and we are drawn to it. That seems to me why it is healing. It amplifies everything we can be drawn to what is good and true and move away from what is not.	States that the opportunity that offers is awareness of essence, which is why it is healing
98.	S: Something more evident, obvious and important is we don't really need medicine to do that. We can train ourselves to find what is true.	States that this is something one can learn to master on one's own.
99.	S: In my own case I am more and more fascinated by a plant initially but now what the plant shows us and who we really are. So one thing I have noticed is that at this point the medicine is not necessary. I clearly see what is of interest and it's not a plant	States that for him the plant is what drew him in, and it helped him to see himself, but it is not the plant that is of interest, it is who we really are.
100.	I: And so what is your current relationship with depression?	Interviewer asks about current relationship with depression
101.	S: um, Noooo depression, uhh in general I am really excited by life really amazed by life,	States he has no depression currently
102.	S:I still have plenty of personality distortion. Certain things trigger things from the past but at this point it largely intrigues me. None of it is personal, those things are not who I am so when I feel a certain experience that is negative in the same way that I took the worst of experience I try to get right in the middle of those experiences and the ones I see resisting transform.	States he still has personality distortion, however and can still be drawn back into the past, but it is more of an intriguing feeling, than it is personal.
103.	S: So it is kind of an experience, if it is good one sees how one is clinging to it. We see how it is not really ours it is not ultimately negative, It's just a circumstance, so we can see how following it to what is real and essential. So depression has been cured for a long time, but now it is impossible, It is a complete defense or by not defending it in a sense.	States that he is aware of how one clings to the experience, but this more of an illusion. States depression has been cured for a long time, and feels that it is not possible now.

104.	I: It sounds like you are saying you have punctured the illusion of depression.	Interviewer states that it sounds as if he has come to see depression as an illusion
105.	S: Certainly certainly, like for instance death is something I have not resolved, so I can have a swollen lymph node and think it is fatal. I am not a hypochondriac I can think death is the worst thing I want but now I can think oh that's interesting what is this experience and have faith that I can get right into that experience and that will transform. It is really a grand adventure when seen without this personal investment.	Agrees, gives example of a current fear of death, but rather than being overwhelmed has faith that he can delve into the experience of it and that it will transform.
106.	S: So I have seen all of my worst stuff come out ,we travel back in time. I have uncovered the first month of my life, I was born premature and left in the hospital and my mother never visited and that has had a huge impact on my life and I can be with that wound. I can see it.	States he has seen the worst stuff come out, has traveled back in time and uncovered trauma of birth and its impact on his life.
107.	S: Nothing can surprise me anymore.	States he is not surprised anymore
108.	S: Prenatal I had a starving of nutrition that caused me to be smaller than my brother and on a physical level I can experience that wound so I can see there are no skeletons in the closet there is nothing else to surprise me. I can feel stepped on by the world but that is not really the case I can be with that.	States that prenatally he had a starving of nutrition affecting his size relative to his twin. States that he can experience that wound now, he can be with it and other wounding experiences brought on by being in the world.
109.	I: As we near the end of the interview I want to leave it open for you to share any other feelings or thoughts you may have.	Interviewer asks if participant wants to share more
110.	S: Oh well really I am grateful the tradition exists I can go on and on about that I like. That this time in the world offers this experience to people like me. It has worked well for me. I had necessary support. I found that in times I needed it.	States he is grateful for the tradition that exists with ayahuasca and the experience it offers
111.	S: One thing I am aware of is how powerfully effective it can be but also	States how aware he is of its power and the way in which it could be

	<p>how dangerous. Some people get things they can't accept, you must have faith that there is a lesson in there. For a lot of people that's not possible. For instance someone with borderline conditions. It is really risky, there is no licensing, in fact you have to go to a foreign culture, into an exotic place and work with a strange man with rattles and flutes in order to get that.</p>	<p>dangerous for some people with personality disorders</p>
112.	<p>S:I think really it, mostly I feel grateful.</p>	<p>States, that is really it, mostly he feels grateful</p>
113.	<p>2nd interview</p>	
114.	<p>I: So I wanted to give you an opportunity, we had an interview about a week ago. I thought I would you a chance to talk about any associations, which may have come up in the meantime.</p>	<p>Interviewer wants to follow up on anything that may have come up for participant in week following initial interview</p>
115.	<p>S: Awesome, very little comes to mind, a couple of things come to mind and perhaps more will come to mind but I guess, umm, as far as what was said last time, that was all good.</p>	<p>States very little comes to mind</p>
116.	<p>S: I am generally really interested in talking about it so there was more interest but I felt like what was said was pretty on topic. I got to see how more of what I learned had settled down a little bit and it is kind of different every time so I was noticing more of whether the dynamics of this experience were like.</p>	<p>States interested in talking about it generally, but feels complete about what was said on topic previously. States he got to see more of how he has integrated what he has learned</p>
117.	<p>S: And to summarize the experience from last time, it felt largely like really evaluating my relationship with the plant and also with my personal development.</p>	<p>Summarizes experience as allowing him to evaluate his relationship with ayahuasca</p>
118.	<p>S: Sometimes it really feels like you get homework from a session, but this time it really felt like as soon as it was done like I got the message and it was kind of like I have some time off, like there wasn't much work to be done.</p>	<p>States that it feels like ayahuasca gives homework, but he felt like he got a meaningful message and can take some time off</p>
119.	<p>S:I do kind of see the continual shifting of beliefs that occur after the more</p>	<p>States he perceives the continual shifting of beliefs</p>

	fundamental shift happen.	
120.	S: And to substantiate that, I felt like I relied on ayahuasca, I felt like I was kind of broken or unlovable, or without value things like this, it's less and less the deeper I have gone on the spiritual path, and this one this shift it appears like this medicine doesn't have the most to offer me,	Describes his reliance on ayahuasca as coming from a place of being broken or unlovable and this has lessened the deeper he has gone on his spiritual path
121.	S:but another way to look at that is that you're just not as broken, you don't need the medicine so much and then another way is that you see that nothing has changed, I mean I still love this path and the people who are on this path	States another way to view it is that once one is not as broken ayahuasca is not as necessary
122.	I: Now are you feeling connected to the medicine or the people?	Interviewer asks if it is ayahuasca or the community that connects him to it now
123.	S: Not so much, there is some truth to that, but the medicine is really life altering and the community is like other communities that I enjoy, but they are on different scales of operation. Nothing that I felt was like this will hurt you, but it's like you can't put unrealistic hopes on the medicine.	States that it is ayahuasca more
124.	S: You know how to connect to your purpose, you don't need altered states necessarily. So it is interesting.	States that ayahuasca helps connect with purpose although altered states are not necessary to accomplish this
125.	S:The fundamental thing is my relationship to this plant but I see it shifting as my beliefs and understandings and ideas are shifting.	States that he is connected to ayahuasca but he sees this shifting currently
126.	S: For not having a lot to say I have a lot to say. A couple of other things might be notable.	States that for not having a lot to say he has a lot to say
127.	S: One more thing that has something to do with the interview from last time but more about my processing and understanding is that I was trying to stay away from beliefs and story, I was noticing a little how story goes in to how we see things. I was sort of seeing the sequence as related.	States one more thing coming out of previous interview was his noticing that although trying to stay away from beliefs and story, he still noticed how narrative relates to how we see things
128.	S: One way I see it is I kind of imagine	States he image himself as a success

	I am a success story with ayahuasca. I have seen my life kind of change in positive ways and that is a story that comes across as a story.	story with ayahuasca, he has witnessed his life change in positive ways, which makes up his story
129.	S: It feels almost extraneous, that kind of relates to my first point where my drive and attachment to the medicine has softened. I don't feel like I need to argue one way or another or even present it like that. And my viewing my own path I can think I cleaned this up and I have eyes for all the positive changes. And I kind of found myself seeking out the positive because I am more aware of that.	States it feels extraneous, attachment to ayahuasca has decreased as he has eyes for all the positive changes, this is his lens now and he is aware of that
130.	I: Do you feel like you are ignoring the negative side	Interviewer asks if this means there is a shadow side that is being ignored
131.	S: No I think I am kind of fascinated by the negative, but I am well, I mentioned I have neuroses but I kind of say that as a disclaimer. We don't see the ways we are full of ego. Not having that kind of viewpoint is perfectly fine I mean there is always plenty of stuff to work on. That feels good	Does not agree, because still fascinated by the negative, but this could be an ego defense, although that also feels fine.
132.	S: Well, maybe I can think about it, I mean now I think oh I didn't mention that or I could talk about that. I think I would like to narrow down the topic and how it concerns depression	States would like to return to topic of depression at this point
133.	S: My observation, I think I might have mentioned this last time. The tendency to work backwards with the medicine, to see your life in reverse, kind of that experience of where you are in life and travel back in time, shamanically speaking it is re-meeting the spirits that inhabited you in chronological order and you can work back to your birth. Work through all the states, and I have seen that ,	Recalls mentioning returning to earlier phases of his life and reiterates that
134.	S: so when it comes to depression it is very relevant, where did that depression come about, and moving back through those states, of course it is going to have a big impact.	States when it comes to depression, it is relevant to move back through those states, because this will have a big impact

135.	S: Sacred space and community all have an effect, but the biggest is really getting back to the point in life that really bent you in that way.	States that sacred space and community are important but the most important realization is determining the point in life that shaped you in the way that caused depression
136.	S: And even that is not simple or prescriptive but I notice that when you can touch on things that are much deeper than what you are apparently working on. So when there is this movement into the past I noticed a year and half after I started when I had the one ceremony that hurt so badly that I chose to meditate on it, the resolution of that painful ceremony reduced the fluctuation of my mood and when I look at that instance and say what part of my life was I really working on it was when I was approaching my teen years, which was a surprise because I think I felt inadequacy right at birth.	States that this is not simple of prescriptive, but notices that in touching something deeper than what was expected. Noticed that in one ceremony which was painful he had really been transported back to wounding experienced in teens, when he had been expecting to work more on his feelings of inadequacy at birth
137.	S: But the meditation that I chose to deal with that was questioning what is the actual sensation of this suffering and who is feeling it and that was really jumping to that point in life when we're experiencing that suffering and wondering what do I really do about this, what extent do I deny it. The extent to which we deny it is the part that creates the depression. My meditation in a sense was to allow my merging with that suffering.	States that he meditate specifically to understand the actual sensation of his suffering and who is feeling it and recognized that there is a way to jump to that point in life when the suffering began and understand how in denying it, it has continued. Meditation was to allow his own merging with that suffering in order to heal it.
138.	S: So there is an observation that contradicts itself that we need to move back or jump around to different parts of our life without understanding the point of it.	States this is a contradiction, that we need to move back or return to an earlier phase in order to understand the meaning within it
139.	S: Another thing of ayahuasca is showing pleasures that people can't imagine.	States ayahuasca also reveals unimaginable pleasures
140.	S:I had suffering and then could see beautiful parts and that was I think cause and effect that happens in the context of the ceremony.	States had suffering and then could see the beautiful aspects of it
141.	S: The difficulty on a physical level	States the difficulty on a physical level

	brings out difficulties on other levels and then that gets digested and impacts the other levels.	also brings out difficulties on other levels which is then integrated and has an impact
142.	S:I often had the experience of oh no this is why I swore never to do this again and then generally in that same ceremony, I would have the sensation and Oh yeah this is why I need to remember never to fall for that.	States he often has the experience of swearing never to do it again, but then in same ceremony has sensation that something happens to cause him to remember why it is beneficial and not to fall for the side that says not to do it
143.	S: During those two experiences one of them is truer and you are open and expansive and seeing both, and the other is locked into not seeing options.	States the experience of being open and expansive allows one into seeing both sides
144.	S:So I set a mental note, do continue because it has a positive result. So the positive reminds how beautifully unbounded the world really is the depressive mindset sets the delusion of not seeing possibility or profundity or not making it worthwhile.	States he sets a mental note to continue because the result is ultimately positive. States the positive reminds how beautifully unbounded the world is and the depressive sets the delusion of limitation.
145.	I think that's it.	States that is it
146.	I: Okay, thank you for sharing your experience	Interviewer thanks participant
147.	S: Sure.	States, sure

Table B2

Meaning Units and Transcribed Text for S2

	Meaning Units	Transformed Text
1.	I: Can you describe how you lived the experience of depression?	Interviewer asks how participant lived the experience of depression
2.	S2: I guess when I was nine my Dad left and that's when all the chaos started, but before that even when I was 5, specifically my dad left me, because my brothers got interesting.	States that when nine, his dad left and things became chaotic. However, felt abandoned by dad even earlier, at age 5.
3.	S2: And it left me feeling confused, because before, I was there. It was all good, and I then I remember it made me isolate, made me be quiet, keep to myself, I tried to not be noticed. When I got older after my dad did leave I spent a lot of time in my room, I acted out a lot too, I did things I wasn't supposed to do. It made me, also in school one semester I would do well and then I wouldn't.	States he was left confused. Began to isolate, withdraw. When dad did leave, he spent time in his room and also acted out. States became inconsistent in school, doing well one semester and then not doing well.
4.	S2: t made me not feel which is scarier even than feeling. I wrote alot	States began to not feel, which is even scarier than feeling. Wrote as a coping tool.
5.	S2: When I was 16 my parents went through my stuff and when I came home it was piled on my bed. And I laughed, I mean the shit hit the fan for sure. So now my stepfather has been there, he was violent and racist, but a really nice guy, taught me how to shoot guns and pluck birds, kill animals.	States at 16, parents went through his things, the shit hit the fan. Stepfather was there now and he was violent and racist, but feels conflicted because also taught him things.
6.	S2:I am sorry I am getting distracted, all this stuff is coming up.	States is getting distracted, a lot of stuff is coming up.
7.	S2:I started fighting back finally. When I was 14 I tried to slash my	States at 14, tried to slash wrists, began to use drugs, wandered in

	wrists, started smoking pot, got into speed, I didn't stay home much, I left as often as I could, like I would be gone wandering the streets. I lived in a respectable kind of neighborhood, it was pretty there wasn't anything really bad.	order to leave the home, although this wasn't dangerous to do in that neighborhood.
8.	I: I'm wondering if you could describe the felt experience of depression.	Interviewer asks if he could describe the felt experience of depression.
9.	S2: I can't really explain what I am going though, what I feel what I feel (claps) oh I wish my therapist were here right now, she would laugh her ass off. Depressions felt like empty, alone, I couldn't function but somehow I had to and that felt real overwhelming it felt like I couldn't even possibly begin to know what to do	States having a hard time explaining, therapist would appreciate this. Describes depression as empty, a feeling of being alone, hard to function but still needing to. This caused overwhelm at how to even begin to do that.
10.	S2: wanted to be oh I am analyzing myself. I wanted to be held and safe and I didn't feel like I could be safe and it made me sad and I wanted to shut everything out. That was the only thing that was safe. It felt like a trap. I guess life felt like a trap.	States is analyzing self, wanted to be held and safe and didn't feel like could be safe, which caused sadness. Defense was to shut things out, because that was safe but also a trap.
11.	S2: I mean as a kid you can't go, no matter who they are it felt really frustrating, like I had no power, until I figured out I had power, that was the light. I don't know what I would have done if I hadn't of figured that out, I would've killed myself because it felt just so hopeless, hopeless really, there was just no way out.	Feels a kid has no power, but she did learn she had power, which saved him from killing himself out of hopelessness.
12.	I: What were some methods you tried	Interviewer asks about methods tried
13.	S2: looking back, I used sex, I used drugs, I used reading, leaving the house, playing guitar, that was really important to me. I had complete control over that, art I mostly just got really rebellious and combative.	To cope used sex, drugs, used reading, leaving the house, playing guitar, which was really important because had complete control over that, used art also. States became rebellious and combative. Did crazy shit, baited

	I would do crazy shit. I would bait my stepfather.	stepfather.
14.	S2: He was just brutal, one day he threw me through a closed door, this was when mom was gone to bury her father. I was so drunk I had been throwing up in the bushes. I am thinking of this because I was in my room and he came into check on me and I was pretty fucked up and I woke up sore, and I just knew. I never told my mother, well I did really. That's the thing my family didn't want to talk.	States stepfather was brutal, abusive, implies there was sexual abuse, which he never reported to mother, because family environment was not conducive to talking about things.
15.	S2: So to keep everything inside. I was really glad I got to see a therapist when I was 16. That really helped a lot	States was really glad to see a therapist when 16. That really helped a lot.
16.	S2: So my first lover had been murdered. She was driving down the street, got shot in the head pyew, dead. That was when I knew I had power. Cuz my mom knew she wanted me to stay away from her and I said Wendy's dead and I'm going to her funeral and wow, she was like okay and she let me, so I knew I had some power.	States first lover had been murdered. This was when he knew had power. Told his mom he was going to her funeral and she agreed and she let him, so he knew had some power.
17.	S2: But anyway I knew it became unsafe even when I shut my door. I would get really frustrated, that was what I would do, I would snap back and fight. It was oppressive. He told me once that he tried to adopt us because he didn't want any of my father around. Our dogs were put to sleep, these three trees he had planted were cut down.	States knew it became unsafe even when door was shut. He would get really frustrated, would snap back and fight. It was oppressive. Stepfather tried to erase evidence of his father.
18.	S2: Mostly I just went inside, I had this whole little world inside. I developed psychic stuff, I went into occult stuff, witchcrafts, stuff I was fascinated with, history and the past, why people would do the things they would do.	States just went inside, had this whole little world inside. Developed interest in esoteric topics and history in order to understand the motives of people.
19.	S2: So I took refuge in books,	States took refuge in books,

	anything that would isolate me, keep me off the radar.	anything that would isolate him, keep off the radar.
20.	I: I would like as much as possible for you to describe what you felt	Interviewer asks as much as possible for a description of what was felt.
21.	S2: oh yeah, what I felt, oh man, you should play this back for that other person I mentioned, oh fuck, what I felt what I felt, was like my heart was just fucking ripped out, and scared to like lift my head up and afraid not to and totally fucking confused that this monster came into my house, and felt like I couldn't move and	States wants interviewer to play this back for his therapist. States oh fuck, what I felt what I felt. Says was like heart was just ripped out, and he was scared to lift his head up and afraid not to and totally fucking confused that this monster came into his house, and felt like he couldn't move.
22.	S2: and on the one hand I felt safe because there was food and shelter and I would have these crazy recurring dreams. For a few years I was terrified to go to sleep. And they still are but they aren't so brutal and not so like I had no control. For awhile I had dreams that made me feel amazing, I had this feeling I could fly, and I was light and nothing could make it any worse. I mean it could only get better and I felt like I had all this power.	States on the one hand felt safe because there was food and shelter but also would have these crazy recurring dreams. For a few years he was terrified to go to sleep. States still has them yet not so brutal and not much the feeling of no control. For a while he had dreams that felt amazing, he had this feeling could fly, was light and nothing could make it any worse. Felt hopeful.
23.	S2: Then one day I remember the feeling was just complete and total dread. I was in the playground at my school and I remember I was in the asphalt where the big kids played and I felt peaceful and then all of a sudden it came from over there and it scared me and I felt terrified and I ran, landed and felt like I was going to die and I felt so afraid and I couldn't go anywhere and I was sweating and couldn't move, so I took off running but that wasn't helping much	States one day remembers the feeling of complete and total dread. running. Began to feel unsafe even when away from the home at school.
24.	S2: and then my flying dream would always start in the schoolyard, so the dread that came	States that after that his flying dream would always start in the schoolyard, and began to dread

	was what if I can't fly.	that feeling of being stuck.
25.	S2: that isn't genuine because I am not that, but, that little kid felt that, truly it is a wonder I got out of it and it's not even as bad as what others have been through. It feels all of this energy around my heart, it feels shaky, my throat is closing, I didn't breathe a lot.	States knows it isn't genuine because is not actually true, but it seemed true. States feels all of this energy around his heart, it feels shaky, my throat is closing, remembers didn't breathe a lot.
26.	S2: Outside of the house I was amazing, I got to play softball, I grew up with boys, there were some girls but they played with dolls. So I guess that is what at least kept me alive, I was good at that stuff, I knew how to run, I knew how to hit the ball, it allowed me to navigate through the other stuff, or at least suppress my feelings. It's so hard to talk about now. What would have happened if I had let myself feel that then I wouldn't survive.	States outside of the house he was amazing, got to play softball, grew up with boys, uninterested in playing with girls. Found talented at sports. Finds it hard to talk about now, because needed to not feel back then in order to survive.
27.	I: You mentioned a therapist.	Interviewer states she heard the mention of a therapist.
28.	S2: Oh yes so I'm, 16, I'm stoned, I walk in my room and everything I own that's incriminating, it's all there, all on my bed, so I laugh. because to me it's like the cat's out of the bag, we're going to have a confrontation,. So I get called outside my	States when 16, was stoned, walked in room and everything that was incriminating to his parents had been gone through. He laughed, because it was like the cat's out of the bag, and they are going to have a confrontation, He is scared as hell
29.	S2: when I was 13 my stepfather thought I saw him naked, he was in this service area changing, when I saw him there I turned around, I didn't even see him I think I saw him unbuttoning his pants and so he thought I saw him naked so he started chasing me through the house, chasing me because I ran, so I run . room and he ripped off my bikini so I'm naked and I'm trying to	Describes situation of stepfather feeling embarrassed at being seen naked and reacting Abusively Describes that he, in turn felt homicidal towards his stepfather for violating him.

	hide and he's touching my back and my ass and saying don't tell my mom. So he's been there since I was 9 when I was 9 I got my first rifle, 22 browning, when he left, I loaded it, it was under my bed, that's where it lived, and my bullets were in the closet, cuz you never keep these things together, and scared as hell,	
30.	S2: come on now people be real, if you've got kids keep them in a locked box put that in your interview please	States wants to put it in interview that if you have kids keep guns in a locked box
31.	S2: So I loaded it and I was going to shoot him, I was going to shoot him outside, because I didn't want to make a mess inside. He never went outside though, so I didn't kill him.	States loaded the gun and was going to shoot him, but didn't want to make a mess. He never went outside, so didn't kill him.
32.	S2: So fast forward here we are. They know I'm a mess, that I smoke pot, that I do speed, so the first thing my mom says is that she's going to tell my dad, now my dad left when I was 9 and I said do you want a dime, phone calls were only a dime, and that shut her up and as far as I was concerned he left when I was 5.	States they know I'm a mess, that I smoke pot, that I do speed, threatens to tell his father, which has no impact on him.
33.	I: Were you identifying these as problems?	Interviewer asks is he was identifying these as problems
34.	S2: Exactly, no, so my mom said I was going to a therapist. And I said great I am picking the therapist. She conceded to that,	States that he was not and also was allowed to pick the therapist
35.	S2: the thing is that my friend's older brother had a therapist and she had this crazy red hair and wore these crazy clothes and it was like okay in the 70's and she was cool and I liked her, so I would wait for him so I chose her. So we go in and my mom says I want to know what goes on in here and she said no. If you want to wait in the waiting	States that friend's older brother had a therapist he wanted to see and states the reasons why, which had to do with her look and that she seemed cool. States also that therapist set a limit with her mother. He felt good to have someone on his side. States reasons why, which were that therapist told his mom she could

	<p>room that's fine or you can be in here, but that's the only way you'll know what happens in here. So I was like wow, I have someone on my side. So she asked me why I was there and I said my parents found out I was gay and she asked if I had a problem with that and I said no and so she said great what else do you want to talk about, cause that was their problem basically and she took me on guided meditations, when I didn't want to talk she showed me stuff she bought that day. I saw until I was 18, then I saw her again briefly after I had been raped and had an abortion. Then I saw S and she did guided meditations and we talked about my dreams.</p>	<p>wait in the waiting area. And asked him what he wanted to talk about. Also took him on guided meditations and shared things with him. States saw her until 18, and then again briefly after a rape and abortion. Then saw another therapist.</p>
36.	<p>I: It sounds like you were feeling an authentic connection with an adult.</p>	<p>Interviewer states it sounds like he felt an authentic connection.</p>
37.	<p>S2: Yes, that was very significant and good.</p>	<p>States it was significant and good.</p>
38.	<p>I: How did that impact depression?</p>	<p>Interviewer asks how that impacted depression.</p>
39.	<p>S2: Well, I felt a connection then, but then depression was helped by the other therapist, too that was when I was feeling really jumpy, didn't want to leave the house, feeling really violent, just lots of crazy shit. That was when I did pharmaceuticals which was really horrible for me, but her affect on me was huge because she let me be in it. You know, she let me talk about whatever it was that came up, a dream, a traffic incident, if I couldn't come she would let me talk on the phone and that was huge because sometimes I just couldn't leave my house.</p>	<p>States that it was the connection. States that other therapist also helped with depression, because didn't want to leave house, felt violent ,tried pharmaceuticals, which were horrible but therapist had huge effect because she let him be in it. She let him talk about whatever it was that came up and lists examples as a dream, a traffic incident, letting him talk over the phone when couldn't leave house.</p>
40.	<p>I: So that depression sounds different than the other description</p>	<p>Interviewer states this depression sounds differently described.</p>

	you provided	
41.	S2 That depression was a lot different. That depression was. I would jump at noises, I would stay in my house, I would go to the grocery store, But I was in my house, with the curtains drawn and I had a pretty good size apartment, and I lived alone there but I didn't talk to people, I would make dates and cancel them, I would think about going out, I would make dates and leave, I couldn't function, Depression felt very out of control ,like I couldn't even go to the store when I needed to .	States that depression was a lot different. That depression was. During this time, would jump at noises, stay in house, would go to the grocery store, But in house, had curtains drawn and had a pretty good size apartment, and lived alone there but didn't talk to people, he would make dates and cancel them, would think about going out, would make dates and leave, couldn't function, Depression felt very out of control, couldn't even go to the store when I needed to .
42.	I: And you brought up pharmaceuticals?	Interviewer asks about mention of pharmaceuticals.
43.	S2: Oh, so those came from a worker's comp therapist who gave me lengthy psychological tests and showed me Rorschach cards and decide first it was xanax was going to help me sleep because I did not sleep, it would be like 2 hours and then be up for 4 hours and sleep for two and be up for ten hours, it went on for years, I was crazy. So xanax this will help you sleep and I felt it right away.	States those came from a worker's comp therapist who gave psychological tests and decided xanax would help with sleep, because he did not sleep.
44.	S2: So I took it for two days and then by the 3 rd day I wanted to kill somebody. And I really was going to I wanted to stab this guy on the bus and he didn't do anything to me but bump into me and I was going to stab him for that. I didn't but I was going to.	States took it for 3 days and wanted to kill somebody. States was going to stab this guy who didn't do anything but bump into him.
45.	S2: So I told the guy I said look this is making me crazy and he was saying oh you can't be feeling it yet, but then he gave me Prozac so that made me crazy, I threw things, I threw things at walls so I stopped taking that and to this day I refuse pharmaceuticals.	States told therapist xanax was making him crazy, therapist switched him to Prozac, which also made him crazy. States threw things and so stopped taking that and now refuses pharmaceuticals.

46.	S2: I do take testosterone, but I can control that dose and it actually makes me feel better, more balanced, more even.	States that he does take testosterone now, which he has control over.
47.	S2: I took it for two weeks. And by the end of the second week I gave it away and I just said it was great, I mean it's also expensive shit, but that's another story, I didn't like the way it made my stomach feel, it just made me on edge. I have seen people who are just dull from it. Some people I have seen it help, but just a few. I don't want to try it again.	States took it for two weeks and then gave it away, because it was expensive and didn't like it much. States has seen it make people dull, but has also seen it help others, but does not want to try it again.
48.	S2: I prefer things like ayahausca to get into it, you know get into what you need to get into.	States prefers things like ayahausca, because one knows what getting into.
49.	I: Well, then that leads us to what you want to describe about that experience.	Interviewer asks for description of that.
50.	S2: I like it, I like how clear everything was and still is, I have achieved some kind of balance, an interesting detachment from being wrapped up in things that aren't real, you know the Maya, I felt like I have been stepping towards these other things for awhile. I mean I saw into other dimensions.	States likes how clear everything was and still is. States has achieved some kind of balance, an interesting detachment from Being wrapped up in things. States feels as if has been stepping towards these things for a while.
51.	S2: I have been doing healing work for a long time, I have been a channel for healing work for a long time and I just want to provide and let people heal themselves. So I feel closer to that whatever that is.	States has been doing healing work for a while.
52.	S2: I am drawing this picture, and that's all I want to be doing besides this right now. There is so much more than just this structure. There is so much other to be in tune to and ayahausca if you do it mindfully and don't abuse it	States drawing this picture, which is all he wants to do. States there is more than just this structure, much more to be in tune to and ayahausca helps you do it mindfully.
53.	S2: although I don't even know how you could, if it is something you take disrespectfully it wouldn't	States doesn't even know if you could abuse ayahausca, if it something you take

	work for you, it's holy.	disrespectfully, it would not work, because it is holy.
54.	I: So in the same way I asked you to describe how you felt and lived depression can you bring us into your experience of ayahausca	Interviewer asks for description of lived experience of ayahausca
55.	S2: oh yeah bring you back into that. It was a beautiful little space off the street so back windows to the east all these buildings and this apartment had all these icons of the Virgin Mary, I am not kidding everywhere all over the place, hundreds, statues, paintings, it was amazing, it continues to be amazing. Some of them light up some of them glow in the dark it was fascinating and so it was nice,	States the space was a beautiful little space filled with icons of the Virgin Mary.
56.	S2: I was doing art for awhile, I had sex with this guy, we left the apartment,	States did art for awhile, had sex with this guy, they left apartment
57.	S2: I was really fascinated by shapes, by how clear everything was, just the thread that goes through everything, I was it, I felt it, I continue to be it, I felt so big and at peace, that was the thing, I could see the past, we were walking along, I finally got this guy to be quiet,	States was really fascinated by shapes, by how clear everything was, just the thread that goes through everything, was it, felt it, continues to be it, felt so big and at peace, that was the thing, could see the past, they were walking along, he finally got this guy to be quiet,
58.	S2: he finally said we can't change anything until we change it and that's when I was like okay that's it stop talking. He wants to be this shaman guy and he's a nice guy but I like to be inside my head but he follows direction so he shut up	States he finally said we can't change anything until we change it and that's when he was like okay that's it stop talking. States his friend wants to be this shaman guy and he's a nice guy but participant like to be inside his head.
59.	S2: so I sat with that for awhile and it was true I went into the past and what is changing it	States sat with that for a while and went into the past.
60.	S2: it all shapes me and is responsible for who sits before you today and that's a beautiful thing and so I could forgive all of that. I	States it all shapes him and is responsible for who sits before you today and that's a beautiful thing and could forgive all of that and sit

	mean I could sit with it, I mean what is hate, I don't hate my stepfather, I mean what an intense thing to do what a kind of amazing karma that made that happen.	with it. States rhetorically, what is hate, does not hate stepfather, sees it as amazing karma.
61.	S2: I mean fuck, it just gave me a whole different perspective on that and that was just kind of instantaneous. It didn't take forever to figure out. It just happened in a second, and then I got distracted by a shape on the wall.	States it gave a whole different perspective, which was instantaneous.
62.	S2: So we went to the park and everything speaks I mean it does anyway but I was really in touch with it. A lot of psychic information came to me, and still does, I felt really on.	States went to park and realized everything speaks and he was really in touch with it. States psychic information came then and still does.
63.	S2: And then I sent him on his way and then I did art. I finally started coloring it and that was in just this big house where I live and my artwork is and I felt safe, I wasn't out in the world. And I didn't interact with people. I am sure I could, but they would probably think I was high as fuck because I was probably like hey you are beautiful.	States sent her friend on his way and then did art. States was not out in the world and didn't interact with people although feels certain he could, although they might think he was very high.
64.	S2: I have never done ecstasy but it's what I imagine that's like. So I don't know if it was like that. I am sure I could have had a reasonable conversation, and everything continues to be amazing.	States has never done ecstasy but thinks it might be similar. States could have had a reasonable conversation.
65.	S2: Like I am sitting here looking at that house across the street and remembering I went to a memorial in that house, this was years ago. And all the deaths, the deaths he died along time ago.	States currently sitting here looking at house across the street and remembers a memorial there.
66.	S2: So on this, I just feel like remember I said I was stuck so somehow this opened I wanted to see past being stuck. Like I thought it was some elaborate thing I had to	States was stuck and somehow this opened past being stuck. States thought it would be more elaborate, but it's simple to do. States it's like writer's block, what

	do, but it's so simple. It's like writer's block, what do you do, you just start that's all. All these self-help people want to teach you something but you just more forward.	do you do, you just start that's all. All these self-help people want to teach you something but you just more forward.
67.	S2: One day when I was astral traveling I used to think you had to go from point A to point B and then one day it just occurred to me that I could just be there, and it was so much more simple you don't have to go through all these steps I got that, I got that.	States that one day when astral traveling it occurred that one could just be somewhere and that it is simple.
68.	I: where did the insights come from?	Interviewer asks where the insights come from
69.	S2: ahh, I don't know where that comes from, I get info. I don't know where that comes from. I got but once right a 10 foot long Burmese python, a feeding error and it got me I mean it wrapped around my arm it's head was level with my arm and the person who owns the snake is trying to get it off of me and I am just like fuck fuck and it's really intense and then this message, this voice comes in, my friend is like I'm gonna get a knife, cuz my arm is blue and then the voice in my head says relax, just relax, and I was like oh right so I take a deep breath and I let it all out and the snake's body fell away from my arm	States doesn't know where it comes from. States story of being bitten by a snake and during experience heard a voice telling him to relax, at same time snake let go.
70.	S2: and I said to the girl hey it let go, so she grabs the snake's head, fucking brave right, grabbed the rat, turned to me and the double row of teeth with blood pouring out.	States told the girl it let go and she grabbed the snake and a rat. States the girl turned to her and saw the double row of teeth and blood pouring out.
71.	S2; But the voice in my head, it didn't sound like my voice but it told me what I needed to do. Was that my own voice I don't know? Probably, a wise me.	States the voice in his head didn't sound like his voice but told him what he needed to do.

72.	S2 I feel clear, I feel clearer, I hope to do it gain, I don't know if its once a season kind of thing, I know of groups that go to other countries. I don't know if I want to do that. I have found other sorts of peace. It helps me look inside myself, not suppressing. I guess that's what it was for me a lot of the time.	States feels clear, clearer. States does not know if it is a once a season kind of thing. States has also found other sorts of peace. States it helps him look inside, is not suppressing, which is how it was for a lot of the time.
73.	S2: Pharmaceuticals seem to suppress people and for me these other tools, these hallucinogenic tools help me look inside and open up it's totally the opposite. I can take this mindfully with the intention of discovering something about myself to make myself a better person and to not hide from myself.	States pharmaceuticals seem to suppress people but for him these other tools, which are hallucinogenic help him look inside and open up which is the opposite. States he can take it mindfully with the intention of discovering something about himself to be a better person and not to hide from self.
74.	S2: I don't know, I mean I have smoked pot for years and I guess I use it sometimes I use it to hide from myself because I see that truly I was afraid of who I became and this doesn't make me afraid this says look be this, be who you are, you wanna heal the world do it. You wanna sit under a tree, do it, you wanna and like heal people, be it, you don't need the tree, it's cool that's what I want to say.	States has smoked pot for many years and has used it to hide from self. States this does not make him afraid to be who he is.
75.	I: What's your current relationship with depression?	Interviewer asks current relationship with depression
76.	S2: well I've been through a lot, well define a lot I am technically homeless, I am on GA, I don't have a job I have a hard time, well I have lived in places that I have let affect me recently some would say. Oh recently, I tried to get a job in the tenderloin as a cashier and he told me he couldn't hire me because I'd scare his customers away so I was like fuck it, so I just stopped looking for a job. That I just decided.	States has been through a lot, is technically homeless, is on general assistance, doesn't have a job, tried to get a job as a cashier, but couldn't get it because was told he might scare customers.

77.	S2: but today how do I deal with depression, I don't know, the time I feel, the time I feel that I've been doing this art this whole mushroom hallucinogen extravaganza, So I still isolate but I am home doing art. Sometimes I sleep but that's because I am doing edibles not smoking pot.	States that today deals with depression by doing art, does still isolate, sometimes sleeps, but that may be due to ingesting pot in edible form.
78.	S2: I mean I am functioning, I am still, the ayahuasca is relatively new and before I did it I was supposed to do this school thing and my back went out and I didn't go basically, so that was really hard, and then I did the ayahuasca so nothing since, so nothing really has been a trigger has come up for me so I can't speak to how I would act on my triggers but I feel clearer about myself.	States ayahuasca is relatively new and before did it, was supposed to do this school thing and back went out and didn't go basically, so that was really hard, and then did the ayahuasca so nothing since, so nothing really has been a trigger has come up so can't speak to how it would act on triggers but I feels clearer
79.	S2: I mean I am functioning, I am still, the ayahuasca is relatively new and before I did it I was supposed to do this school thing and my back went out and	States is functioning, the ayahuasca is relatively new and before did it was supposed to do this school thing but back went out.
80.	S2: I do feel more in touch with my feelings. My last therapy appointment, I actually spoke about how I was feeling and I chuckled at it and my therapist looked at me and said what	States feels more in touch with feelings. In last therapy appointment spoke about how he was feeling.
81.	S2: and what I was actually thinking about was when I had had my abortion I was 18 and Roe vs. Wade had just passed so it was legal I could go by myself and I did I was 3 days before being 3 months pregnant, well maybe I shouldn't say this because people run away but I knew the moment this happened and so I was thinking about this experience and I was thinking how I experienced it awake and how I felt like I didn't think it was fair that I should not be awake for this life being ripped out	States thinking about abortion during therapy session and was able to think about what felt about that.

	<p>of me. I didn't want to sleep and I was thinking what I felt about that and I thought this is so good and this was so good.</p>	
82.	<p>S2: My therapist said are you in touch with that person now and I was feeling very torn and I could see that this person felt torn apart and alone and I was in that moment.</p>	<p>States therapist asked if she was in touch with that person now. States was feeling very torn apart and alone in that moment.</p>
83.	<p>S2: And when I walked away and I am always asking what time it is in my therapy because I don't want to get into this deep shit and then have to walk out the door, well it was like 20 minutes left and I managed to walk out the door fine and I noticed that before I would feel very wrapped up in it, still feeling it, I would have to try to be this outside person.</p>	<p>States when walked away is usually asking what time it is in therapy because doesn't want to get heavy and then walk out the door, but this time managed to walk out the door fine and was not wrapped up in it still.</p>
84.	<p>S2: And people look at me because I am this visual treat and I don't have the luxury of being in what I am feeling. I need to be inside to do that or in the park or people who let me have that. Not that I have a lot of problems with people but just because I like to be present with other people.</p>	<p>States people look at him because he looks differently and sometimes doesn't have the luxury of being in own feelings.</p>
85.	<p>S2: So it was a struggle but now I had this connection with my feelings and I didn't have to suppress my struggle. It was more like oh there's the struggle and now I see the struggle and maybe I can deal with it now and if I can't deal with it now then maybe it can just come along with me and just be part of me it doesn't have to consume me or be hidden by me because there's just no more room. There's just all this light in me and it flows out of me, it doesn't have to be hidden by me. There's just no room.</p>	<p>States that it was a struggle but now has connection with feelings. States can see the struggle and deal with it. States the struggle can just be part of him now, that there is all this light that flows out of him.</p>

86.	S2: That's it, that's what I am trying to say. I would be interested to see it has only been a few weeks	States that is what he is trying to say. Interested to see what happens
87.	S2:I would like to I spend daily looking at myself and little things that come up and what kind of things I feel	States would like spend daily looking at self at what comes up and what is felt.
88.	S2: So amazing and I feel like I have all these interaction with people you see all people talk to me it's great and I get to love people and I love people in so many ways. I feel the part of me has expanded and in this lifetime I seek enlightenment and tools like meditation and mantra repetition and I have been to ashrams and I chant holy texts and I listen to teaching of wise beings and educate myself as much as I can and to not be narrow like I was brought up.	States feels like has all these interactions with people and it is great. States feels part of him has expanded, seeks enlightenment and uses tools for that aim.
89.	S2: And bless them for their little narrow hearts and teaching me in the beginning that I don't have to listen to them They would not answer my questions, and they would not talk about things so I did not regard them as real because you have to look at everything	States that don't have to listen to them They would not answer my questions, and they would not talk about things so did not regard them as real because you have to look at everything
90.	S2: and this ayahuasca is a tool to look at everything that is the best in ourselves and that is us. We can change fundamentally as beings and become more attuned to humanity as a whole, there's way more than SF happening, way more than you and I in this room happening.	States ayahuasca is a tool to look at everything that is the best in ourselves and that is us. We can change fundamentally as beings and become more attuned to humanity as a whole, there's way more than SF happening, way more than you and I in this room happening.
91.	S2: When I came back from India in 1999 I noticed so much how people isolate and live in their little houses and cars they just don't consider the other, I realize everyone has their own path and I feel like with this part I have lasting clarity afterwards of my	States came back from India in 1999 I noticed so much how people isolate and live in their little houses and cars they just don't consider the other, realizes everyone has their own path and feels like with this part has Lasting clarity of responsibility.

	responsibility that I put on myself to be the absolute best I can be and just because.	
92.	S2: Not that I didn't want to do it before but just like this urge to connect with people and love them , just because we are all human beings and somehow those interactions have always fed me but just to be that feeds me. I don't know how to explain it.	States didn't want to do it before but just like this urge to connect with people and love them , just because we are all human beings and somehow those interactions have always fed him but just to be that feeds him. States does not know how to explain it.
93.	I: You gestured around your heart	Interviewer notes that he gestures around his heart
94.	S2: Yes there's probably more that will come up.	States there is probably more that will come up.
95.	Kai second interview	
96.	I: Welcome back, I want to give you a chance to talk about anything that may have come up since the first interview.	Interviewer welcomes participant back and offers chance to reflect on anything else that may have come up.
97.	S2: The first thing that came up was we were talking about ways that depression manifested itself in the past, and I didn't even mention, I didn't even mention the razor blades that I took to my wrist. I never, I don't know, I mean wow, I am remembering it right now. I remember holding the razor blade to my wrist and I didn't do anything, well I lifted it up at the last minute. I mean I gashed it, but I didn't do it deep enough to cause trouble, and then I just made gashes in my arm, so yeah that came up.	States the first thing that came up was we were talking about ways that depression manifested itself in the past, and didn't even mention, the razor blades that he took to wrist. States remembers holding the razor blade to my wrist and didn't do anything, lifted it up at the last minute. didn't do it deep enough to cause trouble, and then just made gashes in arm.
98.	S2: Then I remember the whole resolution to that , I was in junior high school, I was 13 or 14 and my friend saw me in the locker room and she showed my science teacher. Mr. Dole and he said, if Well if you really want to kill yourself do it this way." My parents never knew, it wasn't reported to anyone at the school, which is crazy to me, but in a way it was probably the perfect	States remembers the whole resolution to that , was in junior high school, was 13 or 14 and friend saw him in the locker room and he showed the science teacher. who was irreverent and said if you really want to kill yourself do it this way. States this was never reported to parents and I made him realize that he was in control. States this made him responsible.

	<p>thing to do because it made me realize that that was it, I was in control. He made me responsible. He made me think was I really wanting to kill myself</p>	
99.	<p>S2:that's interesting, because my adventure with ayahausca came at a time when I didn't know what to do next. I was stuck for a long time, and I walked out of my therapy appointment upset, not good and this guy called me and I just figured what the hell. So that's where the responsibility part comes in .I was like okay well here's a tool I can take and see if it really works, and be responsible and see if it is all that. People healing the planet and healing yourself, and moving through something, so that I used consciously, that's how I was responsible for my decision. So maybe years later, Mr. Dole actually came through and taught me something.</p>	<p>States this is interesting because ayahuasca came at a time when he was stuck and he realized it could be a tool to take and be responsible, used it consciously and was responsible for that decision.</p>
100.	<p>I: Anything else to share?</p>	<p>Interviewer asks if there is anything more he would like to share</p>
101.	<p>S2: A lot of stuff came up. I see myself looking more objectively, I see myself more as a witness than I ever was, which is really good I think, you know look at your stuff and forgive what you need to forgive and accept what you need to accept and move on.</p>	<p>States a lot of stuff came up, sees himself looking more objectively, sees self as a witness more. States you know look at your stuff and forgive what you need to forgive and accept what you need to accept and move on.</p>
102.	<p>I: In reflecting on your first interview it does not sound like the experience has diminished.</p>	<p>Interviewer states it sounds like the experience has not diminished</p>
103.	<p>S2 That is really accurate to say, I really haven't moved past the initial experience. I am still in it.</p>	<p>States this is accurate to say</p>
104.	<p>S2: And that's why for me in reflecting on pharmaceuticals I can really see how this is such a better tool for someone like me who can't</p>	<p>States this is why this is a better tool than pharmaceuticals, which take a long time to work and then don't necessarily. States this is a</p>

	take pharmaceuticals. Pharmaceuticals take a long time to work, you don't necessarily see results, there's so many ways one can detach, this is a tool, that changed me, I can move forward, I am not taking it all the time, I can control where I take it.	tool that changed him and he is not taking it all the time.
105.	S2: But then it does work for some people. I have a friend who just takes a little lithium and that works well for her. I think that's really it.	States pharmaceuticals work for some people. States that is really it.

Table B3

Meaning Units and Transcribed Text for S3

	Meaning Units	Transformed Text
1.	I: To begin, can you describe your actual experience of depression?	Interviewer begins by asking for description of experience of depression
2.	S3: I guess I became aware at age 14, back then it was accompanied with a, I don't want to say euphoria.	States becoming aware at age 14, of depression, it was accompanied by a euphoria although he doesn't want to say.
3.	S3: My parents described me as a sad sack,	States that parents described him as a sad sack.
4.	S3: I seemed to have alot of friends, but I just wasn't getting along with my parents, I guess at that time.	States his perception is of having friends, thinks he just wasn't getting along well with parents
5.	S3: At some point I began to ask questions about the meaning of life, I started to question Christianity, I began to wonder if supernatural beings like Jesus Christ existed so I rejected it as being false, so I became an atheist.	States that at some point began to ask questions concerning the meaning of life, rejected Christianity and its doctrine, doubted in existence of supernatural beings, which was a category he put Jesus Christ into. Became an atheist.
6.	So that further deepened my depression. Symptoms of my depression were that I was very suicidal, not in practice but just always walking around with thoughts. I tried once when I was 14, it didn't work, I didn't try very hard. Being depressed that just made me more depressed.	States that being an atheist further deepened his depression. States that his symptoms were suicidal ideation, unsuccessfully tried at 14. States becoming more depressed after failed suicide attempt.
7.	I: As best as you can could you describe the way you felt depression, does that make sense, perhaps what was the manifestation of it in terms of feelings?	Interviewer asks S3 to describe how depression was actually felt, asks if the question makes sense to the participant, further asks how depression manifested.
8.	S3: The severe bouts of depression were often accompanied by that sensation in the chest that I talked about. It was	States that the feeling of depression was a sensation in the chest that. It was almost a morbid euphoria. Profound

	almost a morbid euphoria. Profound sense of uselessness, pointlessness. At times I would be withdrawn. In my teens I would get so depressed, I would cry. Not in public but alone	sense of uselessness, pointlessness. States he was withdrawn. Also, in his teens he would cry, not in public but alone
9.	I: Were any efforts made to cope with this depression?	Interviewer asks if any efforts were
10.	S3: No, I don't know. I was in drug rehab for 6 weeks.	States that he was in drug rehab for 6 weeks.
11.	S3: Prozac was new and another drug, but I don't remember the name. I don't remember any of those drugs having any effect on the recurring bouts of depression	States that Prozac was new and there was another drug he does not recall, apparently he tried them but they had no effect on his recurring bouts of depression.
12.	S3: The psychiatrist described me as schizoid. That was the term he used for me.	States the psychiatrist described him as schizoid.
13.	I: I think I'll let you continue with where you want to go next	Interviewer tells the participant she is going to let him go where he wants to next with his recollection.
14.	S3: I lived with depression I'd say all my life since I was 14, it is not as bad as it used to be it's just something I have gotten used to. I did have thoughts of ending it though.	States he has lived with depression all of his life since age 14 and that it is not as bad as it used to be. It is something he has gotten used to.
15.	S3: In 1999 my best friend committed suicide and that had a bad effect on me. His death was just something I couldn't shake it was very unpleasant. I remember talking to his mother and marking the death it had on his family. I didn't want to do that to my family, very permanent, very devastating.	States in 1999, best friend committed suicide and it had a bad effect on him. States he could not shake it. States he recalls talking to his mother and marking the effect of his death, realized he did not want to do that to his family.
16.	S3: At some point within the last several years, I began to notice a pattern where I would be really depressed one day and then wake up okay. I knew there were peaks and valleys, and I got more used to that, knew more what to expect and then after awhile the peaks and valleys evened out.	States at some point in the last several years he has noticed a pattern of feeling depressed one day and then will wake up okay. States he got used to peaks and valleys, and in learning what to expect, the peaks and valleys evened out.
17.	I: Do you attribute that to anything?	Interviewer asks if he attributes this

		insight to anything.
18.	S3: A lot of soul searching, asking why, accepting, I don't know how to explain that. I am not an atheist anymore. I am not a Christian, but I believe in a power higher than myself. I can't explain it I don't think life ends with death. That's what I'd like to believe, who really knows anyway.	States that it was a lot of soul searching, questioning, accepting. States no longer an atheist, also not a Christian but believes in something higher than himself and can't explain it, but doesn't think life ends with death. States at least he would like to
19.	I: Since this is a study of ayahuasca and its impact or lack of impact on depression, I'd like to ask if you sought it out specifically for depression.	Interviewer asks if ayahuasca was sought out for help with depression
20.	S3: No, not specifically. I have used hallucinogens in the past, and they have always provided me with insight so I thought ayahuasca would offer me some insight.	States, not specifically. States he has used hallucinogens in the past and he was provided with insight, thought ayahuasca would offer insight.
21.	I: And what did you find?	Interviewer asks what he found
22.	S3: There were no effects from the drugs which I thought might happen, from the things that I have read I knew this was a possibility,	States no effects from the drugs which based on his research, thought might happen.
23.	S3:but during the preparation I was able to become more calm and centered. I was trying to approach the experience with respect and reverence for the entities I might encounter. I didn't want to just throw myself at them.	States during the preparation was able to become more calm and centered. He was trying to approach the experience with respect and reverence for the entities he might encounter. He didn't want to just throw himself at them.
24.	S3:I did that with salvia and it bit me on the ass and I felt that I intruded on something so I definitely did not want to do that with ayahuasca.	States did that with salvia and it was a negative experience as he felt that he intruded on something so wanted to be more mindful with ayahuasca
25.	I: It sounds as if the actual experience of ayahuasca paled in comparison to the experience of preparing it. Is that an accurate thing to say?	Interviewer asks if actual experience of ayahuasca paled in comparison to the preparation of it.
26.	S3 That's accurate, the calm feeling I had in approaching it made me calm and respectful. I wasn't looking to gain that experience. It was not an experience I was looking for. I was hoping for more effects. I woke up	States this is accurate, approaching it made him calm and respectful. States wasn't looking to gain that experience. was hoping for more effects. States woke up several hours later in the night to some gorgeous images and this

	several hours later in the night to some gorgeous images and this childlike wonder. It lasted only seconds and then it was gone.	childlike wonder. It lasted only seconds and then it was gone.
27.	I: What has been the lasting effect of that experience, has there been one?	Interviewer asks what the lasting effect has been if there is one.
28.	S3:I think learning to be patient and still	States that learning to be patient and still
29.	S3: I thought something else would happen	States had different expectation
30.	S3: you know I can't say the experience changed my life but I picked up these bits. I spent a dozen hours preparing	States can't say the experience changed life but picked up these bits. States spent a dozen hours preparing
31.	I: Could you describe the set and setting of your experience with ayahuasca?	Interviewer asks for description of set and setting
32.	S3: Well do you mean when I was preparing it because that was significant?	S3: asks for clarification on question, set and setting of preparation?
33.	I:Oh well, yes, actually you're right. Could you please describe the preparation and then afterwards, both, that's a helpful suggestion, thank you for pointing that out.	Interviewer realizes participant's question indicates the relevance of the preparation as that was a meaningful element of his experience and thanks him for pointing that out.
34.	S3: I'll start with where I prepared it. I unplugged every electronic device in the house. so I wouldn't be tempted, you know to jump on the computer or whatever if I got bored.. I spent the day in the kitchen tending the heating liquids to pass the time I am not good at meditating so I was reading Bram Stoker's Dracula, it was just what I happened to be reading at the time. It wasn't for any special reason	States that during preparation unplugged every electronic device in the house. so wouldn't be tempted, to jump on the computer if bored. States spent the day in the kitchen tending the heating liquids to pass the time, not good at meditating read Bram Stoker's Dracula, which happened to be what reading at the time. It wasn't for any special reason
35.	S3: My mindset was on patience and reverence and hope. I sort of felt like an idiot approaching this ancient and wise entity called ayahuasca.	States mindset was on patience and reverence and hope. States felt like an idiot approaching this ancient and wise entity called ayahuasca.
36.	S3:And the environment I took it in. I poured it into 2 cups and went out to my garden and had a bonfire, which	States poured it into 2 cups and went out to garden and had a bonfire ,which has served him well with LSD and

	has served me well with LSD and mescaline.	mescaline.
37.	S3: In tripping alone I think it's good to have something grounding	States he thinks in tripping alone it's good to have something grounding
38.	S3 I didn't know what to expect with ayahuasca. I understand it is typically taken in darkness but I felt safer with fire.	. He didn't know what to expect with ayahuasca, but understands it is typically taken in darkness, but he felt safer having a fire.
39.	S3: I was out there for 3 maybe 4 hours waiting patiently. At some point I understood that no trip was going to occur. I took a shower before I went to bed. I thought it was important to have a ritual cleansing. Wash off the day's grime and wash off you know any of the things that would be following me from the day.	States there, 3 maybe 4 hours waiting patiently. At some point understood that no trip was going to occur. He took a shower before went to bed.
2 nd interview		
40.	I: I want to give you the opportunity to add any reflections you may have had in the past week about your experience	Interviewer wants to give participant opportunity to reflect more on his experience as he may have perceived it in the past week.
41.	S3: long after the interview was over I thought of all kinds of witty things to say	States that he thought of witty things to say after first interview
42.	S3: if you recall I got more out of preparing it than the trip itself. The first time around I found it extremely hard to catch up on everything I wanted to do that day I was forced to give up all of the tasks I wanted to do that weekend because I wanted this experience, things I wanted to do that I wasn't able to do and that is something that is unusual.	States preparation was what he got more from. States was forced to give up all the tasks he wanted to do for this experience
43.	S3: That's the main thing I wanted to tell you this time around. I am not depressed now but like I said depression is kind of like getting a cold, like there are symptoms and with depression I can see it when it is coming.	States that is the main thing, but also wanted to say he is not depressed now, but thinks depression is like getting a cold with symptoms and now he can see it coming.
44.	I: As I recall that was a process you were already familiar with.	Interviewer says he seemed to be already familiar with this process

45.	S3: I haven't been depressed since I took ayahausca. I have been looking forward to school.	States he has not been depressed since taking ayahausca, looking forward to school.
46.	S3: As a result of taking it? That's difficult to quantify, because I didn't have any deep experience that it's hard to say,	States it is difficult to quantify, because there was not a deep experience,
47.	but I do have to say my shift in attitude was where I got in the preparing. Having tasted that attitude now I know I can repeat it and apply it to my life.	but there was a shift in attitude in the preparing. States that having tasted that attitude he can apply it in life.
48.	I: Do you mean, naturally, on your own, you now possess that attitude?	I: Do you mean, naturally, on your own, you now possess that attitude?
49.	S3: Having experienced it, it has now become something internalized, so I	States having experienced it, it has now become something internalized
50.	S3: I think it is all mine	States it is part of him
51.	I: Is there anything else you want to add?	Interviewer asks if there is anything else
52.	S3:I would add that were it not for sitting quiet for an entire day I would not have come to this place. So if it weren't for the ayahuasca then I wouldn't have come to this place. So I just didn't get the experience I was looking for, but I got something else.	States that although he thought he was looking for one thing, learned another.

Table B4

Meaning Units and Transcribed Text for S4

	Meaning Units	Transformed Text
1.	I: Hello, welcome, to start off with I'd like to get a sense of how you have experienced depression within your life.	Interviewer asks participant research question
2.	S 4: How I have experienced it? Well, it's been different over time, is that what you want to hear about?	Asks for clarification of question
3.	S 4: I mean I am adopted so I feel like I was just set up to be depressed. (laughs)	States being adopted is inherently depressive
4.	I: I'd like to learn a little about how the experience was really lived out by you, more about the felt experience than necessarily root causes of it.	Interviewer clarifies question in a frame of phenomenological research
5.	S 4: Oh, okay, ummm, for me, it's dark, I mean really dark, I have Pluto rising in my astrology chart and let me tell you I can go down a dark and heavy path	States she can go to a dark place, uses an astrological reference that implies intensity, obsessive quality
6.	S 4: And no one, not anything can touch me or help me, I mean it is intense.	States she goes so deeply she cannot be reached by others
7.	S 4: I will obsess over every wrong that has occurred, I will want to hurt people who have hurt me, I will take things out on others, like I know I can rip people apart with my words and I am a monster when I am deep in my depression. I am mean.	States obsesses about slights and feels vengeful, is aware of her ability to inflict emotional pain on others out of her own hurt
8.	S 4: And I drink, and that lets me really be an asshole. I mean some of the things I have done when drinking are appalling	States that she drinks and can become belligerent.
9.	S 4: Oh and then the shame and guilt that sets in, holy shit, that is something awful. I will try to think my way out of what I have done, I will try to justify it, like those guys are assholes	States she will eventually become overwhelmed with shame and guilt, tried to defend against it by making excuses for herself.

	they deserved what I did	
10.	S 4: But you know what, it doesn't work and it is crushing. It feels like something internal is being crushed, just like my lifeblood is toxic	States her excuses do not provide a defense that can't be punctured. Internalizes herself as the bad object.
11.	S 4: And there is no escape from it. I think it is actually hell, that is what hell is, it's not some place below, it's right here during those times in my heart	States that this is hell, not a mythic place but this feeling in the heart.
12.	I: Are there any other images conjured by your experience of depression?	Interviewer asks for images that she associate with this experience
13.	S 4: Like a big anvil on my chest. Yeah, it feels like my heart is just being crushed and my shoulders will hurt, like a big anvil on top of me.	Describes a large anvil on her chest, crushing her heart, shoulders hurt, a heavy weight
14.	I: How long have you been aware of this feeling	Interviewer asks how long participant has been familiar with this sensation
15.	S 4: Well, like I said, I was, am adopted and I almost felt like I was doomed from the start, but really I guess I first became aware of it around 9.	States again that she is adopted and this is like already being doomed. States first awareness came at age 9.
16.	I: I know it is a difficult question but as best as you can recollect what was that felt experience like for you?	Interviewer asks participant to attempt to recollect that feeling
17.	S 4: You know it is crazy, I remember it well, I know you don't want me to go into history, but seriously this has to do with how it felt.	States, she remembers it well, acknowledges interviewer's previous hope that she could capture the essence of experience rather than history
18.	I: Okay	Interviewer agrees to let her continue with train of thought
19.	S 4: Alright, I remember literally sitting in my room looking at stuffed animals and feeling like I was suffocating. I was panicky and upset and I don't know thought am I allergic to these stuffed animals.	States that she literally recalls looking at stuffed animals and was overcome with a feeling of panic and suffocation. States she thought it was an allergic reaction, had strong reaction
20.	S 4: But that sounds weird, right, it was like I was thinking what, what is this feeling I am having, it is overtaking me and I am drowning	States that must sound weird, but defends that it was a feeling of being overtaken, of drowning
21.	S 4: it was like that was the start of something that was just going to stick with me for a very very long time, years.	Describes an initiation into depression

22.	S 4: And there is was, that was the seed, it was like melancholy turned into a dark night of the soul that was going to last a long fuckin' time and the question became do I want this life, or not, maybe not.	Describes it as the seed that was to take root into a long journey and association with depression
23.	I: Did you try anything to help you cope with the experience?	Interviewer asks if participant tried methods to cope with depression
24.	S 4: Did I try anything, you bet I did.	Repeats question and says yes
25.	S 4: I was sent to a therapist by my parents when I was sixteen because my mom caught me throwing up, I tried becoming religious for awhile, I started studying astrology, oh what else, I have meditated, I have exercised, I have done yoga, I have taken herbs, I have gotten acupuncture, I have tried drinking it away, I have gone to my own therapists over the years, I have tried that stuff Sam-e, some natural antidepressant, I have tried AA, shall I stop?	Lists various methods attempted.
26.	S 4: I mean what I am saying here is that I have done a lot.	States she has done a lot to cope with her depression
27.	S 4: Then I just thought I should resign myself to it, maybe I'm just supposed to live my life depressed and it is some sort of horrible karma because I was an asshole in another life so I don't get to have serotonin in this life.	States after a number of efforts, decided to resign herself to depression, that it was somehow a deserved state
28.	I: can we go back a little and tease out what your experience was with these different attempts of yours. You listed a lot of things.	Interviewer asks for help understanding previous efforts attempted
29.	S 4: Well, with therapy, and I know you're a therapist, right? It was pretty boring honestly, all it did was put me back in touch with what I already knew, and I remember looking at my therapist's shoes one day thinking, huh I paid for those.	States that therapy reiterated her already known issues and that she felt resentful towards her therapist for making money off of her
30.	S 4: What had some impact was yoga and meditating, actually, maybe because I was left with me, I didn't	States that she got the most benefit from yoga and meditating, because she confronted herself and had no one else to

	have anyone else to pick on, like with the therapist, I could call the therapist a dipshit, but when you're doing yoga you're like oh hi, I see what shit I need to work on	blame essentially.
31.	S 4: The natural antidepressant, I don't know I don't think that worked.	States the natural antidepressant was of no effect
32.	S 4: AA is pretty cool actually, you know why I like that is because that's a whole room full of tragedy, you don't just sorta get there on accident, right?	States that AA was good because she trusted the people in the rooms more
33.	S 4: I liked it and it helped because it works on making you think differently, it's like cognitive behavioral therapy, I think, it tells your mind to shut up because it got you into trouble so now we're going to do things this way.	States that AA is a form of cognitive behavioral therapy, which is why it is effective
34.	S 4: Huh, actually that is what happens during ayahausca too sometimes for me, that's funny, I just put that together.	States that ayahausca is similar to what she likes about AA and cognitive behavioral therapy
35.	I: Maybe we can get back to that	Interviewer wants to explore that again
36.	S 4: Yeah, I'd like to finish this up, but that's a good one	Participant agrees that she would like to get back to that
37.	S 4: So the AA thing is that the people are real, the experience is real, it's like these folks have gone through some stuff and they are going to survive, that impresses me	Impressed by real life experience of AA participants
38.	S 4: I mean as I am speaking about this, it's what I realize works for me about ayahausca	Realizes that real life experience that appeals is similar to what works for her during an ayahausca experience
39.	S 4: Ayahausca takes you down, I think I need a good ass kicking, because I am just so stubborn, I do not listen, being obstinate is second nature to me.	States that ayahausca penetrates her own stubbornness, her own self identified character defects
41.	I: You've already sort of begun, so perhaps some amplification on your lived experience of ayahausca	Interviewer lets participant follow own train of thought regarding lived experience of ayahausca
42.	S 4: Oh well it is a doozy, I mean this last time was unreal, I felt like I was going through a meat grinder, honestly.	States recent experience was intense

43.	S 4: At some point I saw a DMT elf and I thought to myself, oh no, you gotta be kidding me, if I am seeing you then I am seriously in the shit	Recalls a portion of her experience, comes into contact with a DMT elf and considers this serious shit
44.	S 4: And you know he was really busy with this huge belt sander or something, and I was like what are you doing? And he seemed super unconcerned with me and said, don't worry, I am sanding you down, I am taking out your rough edges.	Continues to explain experience resulting in the message that she was being altered by having rough edges softened.
45.	S 4: that actually was the lightest moment in the whole thing	States that this was a humorous component
46.	S 4: I wanted to get back to the cognitive behavioral stuff, right, so what I mean by that is often times there will be a voice, mine that will just be blunt and direct and tell me exactly what I doing wrong.	States she would like to return to her understanding that cognitive behavioral therapy and this experience are related.
47.	S 4: it isn't gentle, it's like this, it's like stop pretending to be nice and just be nice. Stop saying you are going to improve and just do it. Basically it is like shut up and do it.	States that it is difficult, but the message is very clear and blunt
48.	S 4: It doesn't feel good to be put in touch with that shadowy stuff, but I'd rather know who I am than not know who I am dealing with	States that it is uncomfortable to be in touch with difficult personal material but it is ultimately meaningful.
49.	I: What was your experience of depression in the week prior to this ayahuasca experience?	Interviewer asks what depression was experienced as in week prior to taking ayahuasca
50.	S 4: Hmm, good question, it was kind of bad, actually.	States this is a good question, and that she suffered depression in that week
51.	S 4: You can't drink 3 days before ayahuasca, so I didn't and actually I was getting freaked out about the whole thing. I was like why am I doing this	States that prior to taking ayahuasca she did not drink and had concerns about embarking on the experience
52.	S 4: But I felt drawn, like I just had to, and maybe it is because I was just feeling so scared that I was like I obviously have to do this thing	States felt compelled regardless
53.	I: Can you describe the sensations, any images you would associate with the depression during this time, metaphors, feelings?	Interviewer asks for sensations and images associated with the depression

54.	S 4: Umm, ok dread, it was like this, like Frankenstein or Dracula was just waiting for me, waiting to drain me of life and just keep me captivated in this place of fear.	States that it was a feeling of dread, of dead, undead characters waiting for her , wanting to drain her of her life, States being paralyzed in a fear state
55.	I: And then after the ceremony, what is your experience?	Interviewer asks how she felt after the ceremony
56.	S 4: It's like I confronted Dracula and he was a big pussy, actually. I am more like wow, what was I so afraid of? I'm afraid of me. I'm afraid I will actually know all of my flaws, and I do, and you know they are not that bad. I am not awful, actually.	States it was empowering, that what she had perceived as weaknesses, were not as bad as she thought
57.	I: Can you say more on that?	Interviewer asks for further amplification
58.	S 4: Oh, I'm not perfect and that's what it let me know too, I am definitely not perfect	States that she knows she is imperfect
59.	S 4: But it is accepting of my humanness, it's like telling me to do some work, but it's also telling me you are not that scary or awful that you need to keep punishing yourself	States she is accepting of her flaws, but also realizing that she does not deserve a harsh self judgment
60.	S 4: And in fact, stop punishing yourself because it is an insult to God	States that in insulting herself she insults something higher than herself, God.
61.	S 4: Stop insulting God	States stop insulting God
62.	S 4: it made me appreciate my life, you know my legs work, I can see, I have arms that work, that is huge	States she found more appreciation for her life and the functions of her body
63.	S 4: For so long I have had issues with my body, and it was like time to let that go, stop beating your body up and how about thanking it for every thing it does. I mean really, it's a miracle.	States she had self -destructive impulses towards her physicality and began to realize that her body is actually miraculous.
64.	S 4: That helped me with depression, actually. It is hard to be depressed when you are thanking your life for the small miracles.	States that this realization helped her with depression. It is difficult to be depressed when you are expressing appreciation
65.	S 4: In this week since the ceremony, I am more filled with awe, more amazed, I run in the park and I say hello to the trees, and I see the beauty in my world.	States that in the week following the ceremony, she is more aware of the beauty in her surroundings
66.	S 4: That is not depression, that is	States depression is not what she feels,

	love.	she feels love and implies this is the opposite
67.	I: Can you still feel aspects of the ceremony present now?	Interviewer asks if the ceremony still has an impact
68.	S 4: Oh sure, I mean it has faded, but the feeling, the sense of being I think connection is the vital piece for me in this work connected to something else is still with me.	States that the intensity of feeling has faded but the importance of connection has remained vital
69.	S 4: My relationships with others has changed too. Remember I said I am mean, I am mean when I drink, well I might still be mean if I drink, but I will be conscious, I will feel wrong about it. It's like I have to answer to my own morality more.	States that she is mean when she drinks, but she may have insight into this issue. She may feel a different sense of morality when she is mean while drinking
70.	I: How about relationships with others who are more connected to you on a daily basis?	Interviewer asks if relationships with others of a more intimate connection has changed
71.	S 4: Oh those relationships seem a little different too. Like at work there is a lot of gossip a lot of backbiting and I just don't want to hear it, it actually feels bad, it actually hurts physical this week.	States that she cannot tolerate the gossip and backbiting at work
72.	S 4: Ugliness hurts me this week, I don't want to agree to toxic emotions	States that ugliness feels toxic now upon her experience of ayahuasca
73.	S 4: So I am saying no to it. That is different too. I am not passively agreeing to just be swept up in what I don't like. I am standing up for myself.	States that she has taken a stand against what she feels is harmful to her
74.	S 4: It's amazing actually, I hope it lasts.	States that she hopes the effects are lasting
2 nd interview		
75.	I: Welcome back, I noticed in looking over last week's interview the last thing you said was I hope it lasts.	Interviewer welcomes her back and reminds her of the last remark she made
76.	S 4: I did? Interesting, so has it lasted I guess is a good question.	States some surprise and reflects on her reminder of her last remark
77.	S 4: It has and it hasn't.	States that her experience has lasted in some ways and that it also has not in some ways
78.	S 4: I did drink three days ago and I got drunk, so it didn't cure that I can drink excessively. I didn't really know	States that she has had alcohol since taking ayahuasca and that it did not cure her uncomfortable relationship

	that I wanted it to, but part of me thinks that would be good.	with drinking. States that she is unsure of whether or not she intended to aid her dependence on alcohol
79.	S 4: And then what has lasted is that I am still amazed by my life, I also started yoga again, and that feels amazing. That keeps me centered and grounded and it's like I want to be kind to my body and love it.	States that she is still amazed by her life and that she has restarted a yoga practice which is very beneficial to her.
80.	S 4: After every yoga practice I bend down in reverence and I thank my body.	States her gratitude in taking up a yoga practice again
81.	S 4: And I still won't talk about other people,	States she also still will not gossip about others
82.	I: Can you explain?	Interviewer asks for clarification
83.	S 4: I told you about all the gossip. At work.	Reminds interviewer of what she said earlier about work and gossip.
84.	S 4: So okay maybe I do talk about other people but now I only say things I will say to people directly, so like if I talk about someone I make sure I say it to them directly too.	Recants somewhat and says she will still say things she would say directly to them as well.
85.	S 4: I know it doesn't sound like much, but it is.	States that although it may not sound meaningful, it has personal meaning
86.	S 4: I know I have a lot more work to do, but this was a good start. I am off to a good start and it is a lifetime of work and in fact many lifetimes of work and I am okay with that.	States that she has more inner work to accomplish, but this is a good start and that this kind of work is more than a lifetime's work
87.	I: Is there anything more that you feel you'd like to express on your experience?	Interviewer asks if there is more she would like to express about her experience
88.	S 4: Sure, I'd like to say this worked for me, this definitely worked for me	States that this has proven to be important to her
89.	S 4: And I don't know if it is because I am built the way I am built or what	States it may have to do with her own temperament
90.	I: You mean your temperament is suited for this?	Interviewer asks if her temperament is suited particularly to this kind of experience
91.	S 4: yes, I mean I can be a brat, I can be really stubborn and reject help or reject something because I see it as criticism and for whatever reason	Agrees, states she can be a brat who is stubborn and easily criticizes others. It is easy for her to project her suffering onto someone else
92.	S 4: I don't reject ayahuasca's advice. I listen I don't argue, I am just pinned down and told here is your shit. This is	States that ayahuasca offers advice that she cannot ignore. States she meets herself, uncomfortably yet undeniably

	your shit, you created it, you get to face it.	
93.	S 4: It also has a wicked sense of humor, which I love. It makes me laugh.	States that ayahuasca has a sense of humor, which suits her
94.	S 4: It can make fun of me, make light of me in a way that is hilarious and I can take it.	States that ayahuasca makes her more at ease with laughing at her faults
95.	I: Was that a consequence of taking ayahuasca, that ability to take yourself less seriously?	Interviewer asks if that was a revelation offered by ayahuasca
96.	S 4: Well, no, actually I laugh at myself a lot. I just think it's funny that ayahuasca can match me, you know?	States it was not, that it comes naturally but that ayahuasca can meet her humor
97.	S 4: I don't know I haven't got much more to add to what I've already said, I don't think.	States she does not have more to add to what she has already stated
98.	I: Okay, thank you for sharing your experience	Interviewer thanks her for sharing her experience
99.	S 4: yep.	States yes

Table B5

Meaning Units and Transcribed Text for S5

	Meaning Units	Transformed Text
1.	I: To start off, can you please describe your experience of depression	Interviewer begins by asking for description of experience of depression
2.	S 5: Well, I guess the way I would describe it as a feeling of tightness, contraction, but because of some kind of heavy, heavy weight.	States that it is like a gripping tightness, like a heavy weight
3.	S 5: I would feel it in my heart like a gripping cold sensation	States would feel it as a sensation in heart of coldness
4.	S 5: But you know sometimes it takes different forms	States it takes different forms
5.	S 5: sometimes it is utter dread, like impending doom, paranoia almost	States it is utter dread, like impending doom, paranoia
6.	S 5: Then at other times it's like just a slow drip of pain, awful, awful torture	States at other times a slow drip of painful torture
7.	S 5: I am thinking you know the nights were the worst, just lying there and not being able to sleep because my mind is just going and going around with the dread of being alive	States that the nights were the worst, suffering insomnia, mind would loop with the dread of living
8.	S 5: But then , oh wow, the days were a lot worse, at times. Kind of walking around numb,, just not feeling like there was anything worth doing, just blah	Realizes the days were even worse than the nights. Felt there was nothing worth doing
9.	I: For how long would you say you have felt this way?	Interviewer asks how long participant has experienced this feeling
10.	S 5: Ummm, I don't know I am 40 now, so when did it start? Maybe I really started noticing it around in my 20's	States that he is 40 and it started in 20's
11.	I: Did you seek treatment for it?	Interviewer asks if treatment were sought
12.	S 5: I did. I first off self medicated, I think. I started drinking a lot in my 20's and that just exacerbated my depression	States that first began treatment by self medicating, which took form of drinking, leading to a heightened depression
13.	S 5: I switched to sleeping pills when I couldn't sleep, I think that was some self medicating	States he switched to sleeping pills from alcohol, but still perceives this as a form of self medicating

14.	S 5: But more proactively, I did speak to someone to try to get some help.	States also spoke to a therapist
15.	S 5 : That was good actually, it was helpful to some extent. I think it was just connecting another person, who just listened. I mean really listened	States this was a good experience, mainly because of the connection it provided to another, who really listened
16.	S 5: How often does someone just get to be listened to	Asks rhetorically how often it is that someone really feels heard
17.	S 5: So that was sort of all that I tried and it helped me some, but you know my depression felt still unresolved	States that even with these efforts the results were minimal and the depression remained
18.	S 5: I think I just needed to get to something more, I mean I tried acupuncture for my depression	States he thinks he craved and was in need of something more
19.	S 5: I think I am the kind of person that just needs a lot to budge	States he has a stubbornness and needs a lot to combat that
20.	S 5: Maybe that is why I went the ayahuasca route	States this is perhaps the reason for seeking ayahuasca
21.	I: What caused you to turn to ayahuasca perhaps if you could give more detail	Interviewer asks for more detail
22.	S 5: Interested in it for, I don't know what attracted me in the first place. I heard different descriptions of it. I had heard ten different sessions of psychotherapy wrapped up in one session.	Cannot say exactly what attracted him to ayahuasca initially, however had heard it described as if it was a transformative experience, like 10 sessions of therapy in one.
23.	S 5: I have read all these different things about it, so anyway in my reading I got more and more fascinated to try it.	States he read about it and became intrigued, compelling him to try it
24.	S 5: I have tried other drugs over the years and this seemed interesting to me to try.	States he has tried other drugs and this captured his attention
25.	S 5: I mean not just the self medicating ones, I have tried salvia and pot, and LSD	States he has tried other hallucinogens
26.	S 5: I had never had a huge epiphany with any of those	States he did not have revelatory experiences in those circumstances
27.	S 5: but I thought after all the testimonial I read, that I just should try it	States that testimonials convinced him
28.	S 5: It sounded pretty incredible actually and I knew it could be scary, but I hadn't heard of any person having any lasting ill effects and in	States that even with some apprehensions he wanted to try it as he had never heard of anyone suffering permanently and had in fact heard that

	fact I had heard people had a lot more insight	people had derived benefit from the experience
29.	I: What were your symptoms of depression experienced as before the ceremony?	Interviewer asks what his symptoms of depression were prior to the first ceremony
30.	S 5:oh, the same, I guess. But maybe a little more hopeful, because I thought I am going to do something to address it	States they were the same as described earlier, but there was an added element of hope
31.	I: So, a little different in anticipation of taking ayahuasca?	Interviewer inquires if anticipation of ayahuasca generated the hope
32.	S 5:Yeah, I guess so	Agrees
33.	I: And then were you still feeling any of the similar feelings of depression you described previously, before the ceremony?	Interviewer asks again if the symptoms of depression were still present however, even with the sense of hope
34.	S 5:Oh sure, I mean just because I was a little more hopeful didn't help me out with just the underlying depression that just was there	States that underlying depression remained
35.	I: Can you describe the experience of ayahuasca as it was lived out by you?	Interviewer asks for description of ayahuasca experience
36.	S 5: It is kind of hard to put my finger on it exactly. If I go to the first session in Oregon with the Santo Daime church, I was expecting a lot more. I didn't have all these visual diamond pattern shapes driven by sound I had a fair amount of insight.	States hard to describe, but conveys that in his first ceremony, which was first experience of ayahuasca his expectations were not met, he did not experience what he had read about but he had a fair amount of insight
37.	S 5: And I had a fair amount of the stuff, I went back 4 times	States he had a large quantity of ayahuasca, having gone back to drink it 4 times
38.	S 5: I went outside and I was seeing plants as vastly different beings, in nature, sort of their unity with the environment around them. At least the ones I was looking at were undefended.	States he went outside and perceived plants differently as if they were interconnected with the environment around them. He perceived them as undefended
39.	S 5: But I had all these expectations.	States he had expectations
40.	I: What were your subsequent experiences?	Interviewer asks about other experiences
41.	S 5: The second time I did it, I had more of an awareness of what I was looking for and it was one of the seated works of the Santo Daime.	States the second time, he had more awareness of what he was hoping to experience
42.	S 5: What struck me there was something really interesting	States he was struck by something interesting

43.	S 5: There was a woman, a little Brazilian woman, like 4 feet tall, she is kind of cross eyed blind looking, she is about 70 and you know if you met her on the street you'd think she was retarded.	Describes the woman who facilitated the ceremony, who initially looked unimpressive, is cross-eyed, around 70 and if she were encountered on the street may give the impression of being impaired
44.	I: (both laugh) I don't think that's a politically correct term	Interviewer and participant share a joke about term used
45.	S 5: Developmentally delayed	Rephrases term
46.	I: Ok	Interviewer acknowledges rephrasing
47.	S 5: Anyway she is one of the head honchos down there in Brazil and they sort of brought her in assisted her to come in and sit down. And she was unbelievable.	States that this is a woman of great stature in the community and that she was unbelievable
48.	S 5:As soon as she walked in, the whole place just exploded with energy. She was kind of sitting there, kind of looking around, but you could just feel her attention. She looked at me once and it was it was unbelievable.	Describes that the atmosphere in the room was altered by her presence, felt that when she looked at him, it was a unique experience
49.	S 5:Like totally transparent, she could look right through me, she was in both ceremonies I did. So that was a highlight.	States her look was penetrating and that she was in two ceremonies which was meaningful for him
50.	S 5:And the second ceremony seemed to be much stronger and when you're sitting I think they give you stronger stuff.	States the second ceremony seemed to have a stronger effect on him
51.	S 5:So at one point, I just I just wasn't there. I was totally in the deepest sleep, like I wasn't present and then suddenly I don't know how long I was in that state,	States that he was in a very deep state which felt like sleep and did not know how long he had been in that state
52.	S 5:but suddenly I came to and I was in this kind of vortex that was taking me and taking me up to where some sort of sacrifice is going on where the universe is created, and I was on my way to be sacrificed and I it, it what I didn't like about it was	States he suddenly became aware of his experience and was being carried in a kind of vortex, which was to lead him to an area where sacrifice takes place, where the universe is created. He states that he was to be sacrificed and he did not like what was happening to him
53.	S 5: I mean I am not saying it was them doing it to me, but it was like I was not aware. I did not know it was happening to me and then I came to,	States didn't feel like he was being victimized, but he felt like he was being taken somewhere which was not of his own volition, that he was not more

	so it was like I was being led to the slaughter and I was halfway there before I realized what was going on and my mind was like whoa wait what is going on here,	involved in the decision
54.	S 5:and I got scared and I aborted the mission.	States he was scared and did not continue
55.	S 5:So that was a full on hallucination and that was more of what I was looking for but the way that I kind of woke up and didn't realize what was happening to me.	States this was a hallucination, which he had sought, but this was too jarring for him
56.	S 5:So that is what I remember about that and then the third time I was with this woman in Sonoma and I was really disappointed, it was fine I had some insight into my early childhood my family dynamics, my personality formation. I don't know if it freed me from anything but it gave me more space that I didn't have access to,	States this is what he recalls about that time and then the third time he had some insight into his childhood and early family dynamics. States that he does not know if it freed him from anything but it provided him with access to more information
	S 5:but I was disappointed in it because again I didn't think the medicine was very strong, and again it gave me I don't know I drank their strong stuff, I just didn't get out of my everyday consciousness. So it wasn't really that powerful.	States he was disappointed, because he did not feel the effects of the ayahuasca.
56.	S 5: But it did bring me into my childhood a little. Do you know the enneagram at all, my mom is a number 9	States it did bring him into his childhood a little, then asks interviewer if she is aware of the enneagram and states his mother is a 9 in that system.
57.	S 5:and so my father dies when I was 12 and she didn't handle it very well	Continues train of thought and states his father dies when he was 12 and his mother did not handle it well.
58.	S 5:So I think I had to be the adult in the situation so I saw what was going on with her and I see we had support from family friends, but it was just me and her in the house. So my dynamic with her how I related to her how my family dynamic was formed	States he had to be the adult when his father died and although there was some community support, in the end he was left with his mother and that family dynamic.
59.	S 5: So I had that insight	States he had that insight
60.	I: Has that been useful insight?	Interviewer asks if that has been useful
61.	S 5: Yes, as I was walking here I was thinking about that and I don't know	States he does not know, but maybe this grown in time with more sessions

	yet, maybe with more sessions I can understand more. I guess as I do it, I will learn more stuff.	
62.	S 5: I would like to keep doing it, I have always gone out into the forest. Since I was 16 or 17, I have always just gone off, take a backpack and walk into the forest, I would just walk around and things I get a lot of insight, I am able to go into myself and see what is next, so I am curious without any external sources I'd like to just know what see what happens when left alone with me.	States he would like to pursue it, reveals that since he was a teenager he has sought solitude in nature as a means of gaining insight. States he would like to experience ayahuasca without any external sources to find what it is like to be alone with himself.
63.	I: Since those experiences what has been your relationship with depressive symptoms?	Interviewer asks what his depressive symptoms are after these experiences with ayahuasca
64.	S 5: Oh, ummm well I don't know	States he does not know
65.	S 5: I will say there has been some kind of shift	States there has been some kind of shift
66.	S 5: But I don't know I mean for right now I feel pretty good, I have to wait and see I guess	States that for right now he feels pretty good, but feels he needs to wait and see
67.	S 5: I don't know I think that's all I really want to say and still be authentic about my experience	States that is all he really has to say for now, given his desire to be authentically connected to the experience
Second Interview		
68.	I: Welcome back, I wanted to give you this second meeting as an opportunity to reflect more on your experience	Interviewer welcomes participant back and provides opportunity to reflect more on experience
69.	S 5: Yeah, I think you kind of asked me last time if my depression was back or I don't know something like about whether or not I felt depressed	States that he thinks interviewer asked about his current symptoms of depression
70.	S 5: I have thought about that, and it's funny. I am sort of detached from it	States he thought it over and feels detached from it
71.	S 5: I think the best way to describe it is that I am kind of an observer	States his best description of it is that he feels like an observer
72.	S 5: It's like I see it happening, I see that normally it might be what follows, but that I have a choice	States he feels more like a witness to it and is more aware of choices he can make
73.	S 5: Like maybe I choose, no, ummmm I don't have to follow that depressive strain I can turn my attention to something else	States he doesn't have to choose a depressive path

74.	S 5: I don't know if that is ayahuasca or not	States he does not know if ayahuasca contributed to that or not
75.	I: Do you think that it could be the result of ayahuasca or is it another influence or is that hard to say?	Interviewer asks if it is possible that it is the influence of ayahuasca or if participant thinks it is something else or is this too hard to say
76.	S 5: I think it must be the ayahuasca, I mean it's like nothing else brought that about really.	States he thinks it must be the ayahuasca, because of the timing
77.	S 5: Or unless I grew up and there's something about this time in my life that is making me do ayahuasca and grow up and it is all interrelated	States another possibility however is that he has reached a different understanding at this age and perhaps ayahuasca and insight have to do with his level of maturity
78.	S 5: Gosh, it is an interesting question to me	States he finds the question an interesting one
79.	S 5: I mean just that I am even thinking about depression differently means I have a different perspective on it	States the mere action of thinking about differently must indicate a different perspective
80.	S 5: you know it's almost like I am just tired of it, it's so self indulgent and boring	States he finds it tedious
81.	S 5: So that feels powerful and cool and I am grateful	States that this is an empowering feeling for him and he is grateful
82.	S 5: I am grateful is huge to say, because I used to just whine and moan about my poor life	States that saying he is grateful is a vast improvement, he used to complain about his life
83.	S 5: Thanks actually for interviewing me, it gives me something to notice	Thanks the interviewer for the interview process as it has helped him to reflect on these things
84.	S 5: I think I may be done because I am kind of trying to digest that	States he may need to stop and digest what he has stated
85.	I: Okay, thank you for sharing your experience	Interviewer says okay and thanks participant
86.	S: Yep, thank you	States yes, and thanks interviewer

Table B6

Meaning Units and Transcribed Text for S6

1.	I: To start off, can you please provide a description of your experience of depression, as you have experienced it throughout your life	Interviewer begins by asking for description of experience of depression
2.	S 6: Ummm, well do you mean you want to know like when I first felt it	Asks for clarification
3.	I: Not so much a history of it but rather how you experience it, how it is actually felt by you	Interviewer phrases question in phenomenological frame
4.	S 6: Hmm okay, well I have a few different experiences of it, I guess	States has a few different experiences of it
5.	S 6: one experience of it is uhhh, um, well just a general discomfort, insecurity, kind of being afraid of something, but now knowing what	States one is of discomfort, insecurity, fear of something not easy to identify
6.	S 6: I don't know, maybe that is anxiety, not depression	States might be describing anxiety not depression
7.	I: It's more important what you feel in regard to it, there's no right answer to this	Interviewer assures her it is more important for her to express her own responses to it
8.	S 6: Okay, well I am going to tell you about it because actually I sort of think it is depression,	States she thinks it has to do with depression
9.	S 6: I would have night terrors as a young child, a lot of apprehension that I would not do well in school, I mean it was now, I see, just total insecurity in the world	States had night terrors, experienced apprehensions as a child
10.	S 6: So that I would describe as tightness in my chest, a paralyzing kind of coldness, my chest was just constricted, like it had spasmed and there was no way to unlock that	States it was like a tightness in her chest, a paralyzing cold, chest was constricted, as if chest had spasmed and could not be relieved
11.	S 6: I feel like that was even more apparent in my teen years, in those times, I was very lonely. I was kind of an outsider in school. I was into art and sort of studying up on esoteric topics, and I just didn't find anyone like me in high school.	States felt that this was more obvious in teen years, was an outsider, interested in esoteric topics, felt lonely
12.	S 6: Actually I remember there was this	Recalls one girl was friendly with

	one girl who was nice to me, but I actually found her weird, and so that was depressing that only the weirdoes were attracted to me, so it was my fault I felt bad	her, but she did not want to become friends with her
13.	S 6: (laughs) you know I remember these popular girls went up to her one day and asked her if she was a witch, and gosh, my heart kind of ached in that moment	States the girl who had befriended her was made fun of and this made her feel poorly,
14.	S 6: Because she was probably just as miserable as I was, going to this school and being an outcast, but I just didn't want to be friends with her, I wanted to be numb, and I was after awhile	Feels empathy, because feels there may have been similarity, but did not feel she wanted to pursue a friendship, defended by turning numb
15.	I: I'd like for you to feel free to follow your train of thought, however can you provide more information on your depression, maybe some images you have of it, or metaphors for the experience	Interviewer requests more information on depression as felt by participant and any images or metaphors associated with it
16.	S 6: Oh sure, a tightly bound heart, I think	States a tightly bound heart
17.	I: I see	Interviewer indicates understanding
18.	S 6: I think I understand a little more what you mean.	States thinks understands the question more
19.	I: Great	Interviewer encourages participant
20.	S 6: So, one other image is like these cold, bony skeleton fingers, squeezing my heart, so it is just crushing it and it is almost this detached inhuman kind of energy. Is that more helpful?	States an image is of a skeleton's fingers, cold and bony squeezing her heart, it feels detached
21.	I: Sure	Interviewer agrees
22.	S 6: And so this has been something that just lies in wait for me, I feel. It's like it is always threatening to show up	States that it feels like this is an experience that lies in wait for her and the threat always exists that it will appear
23.	S 6: I can have a respite for a little while but even that is uncomfortable because who knows how long that will last	States she can have a break from it, but this is of little comfort as it can return any time
24.	S 6: Then it's like when it is present again, I think oh well of course, never should have gotten comfortable in the first place, that was stupid	States that when it does reappear, she feels upset that she had hope it might not
25.	S 6: It's like a drug addict or something who doesn't use for awhile and so they maybe get comfortable and think they	Describes it like a drug addict's experience of being cured, but then going back to an old experience and

	can use and then they do and it's like oh yeah, that's who I am, the alcoholic, or drug addict. Well that's me and depression	realizing it has not changed
26.	I: In what ways have you tried to cope or manage it?	Interviewer asks how it has been addressed by her
29.	S 6: Umm, well, I have never taken antidepressants. There was no way I wanted to do that	States never took antidepressants
30.	S 6: I am pretty interested in alternative forms of treatment, so like I got acupuncture, I took tons of B vitamins	States is interested in alternative forms of therapy and lists some
31.	S 6: Ummm, conventionally, I have seen therapists	States that more conventionally, has seen therapists
32.	S 6: I did have an eating disorder which I think had to do with depression	States had an eating disorder which had to do with depression
33.	I: How so?	Interviewer asks how
34.	S 6: Well, I would feel depressed, stuff myself and then puke and get sort of high off of it, or I wouldn't eat it and would feel kind of high from that	States that bulimia was a form of coping, in that she would binge when depressed and get high from the purge or get high from fasting
35.	S 6: I mean weirdly, that was a way I tried to cope	Thinks this was a way to cope
36.	S 6: I also, ummm have tried exercise, which I still do, it's good to temporarily reduce the feelings of depression, but it wasn't a cure, it was just a nice break from it	States also tried exercise which temporarily reduced symptoms, but only provided a short relief
37.	I: Were any of these methods effective?	Interviewer asks if any of these methods were helpful
38.	S 6: Oh, well, not really, I thought therapy would be good, but it did not necessarily cure me it just kind of confirmed that yep, I am depressed	States therapy helped to illuminate that she suffers depression but did not offer anything other than confirmation
39.	S 6: I think I might have even bored my therapist with my constant talk about how depressed I was	States she thinks she bored her therapist with her depression
40.	S 6: I mean clearly I was at the point of trying anything when I thought about ayahuasca	States she was open to trying anything
41.	I: And so then what led you towards ayahuasca?	Interviewer asks what led her to ayahuasca
42.	S 6: Umm, I read that book 2012, by Daniel Pinchbeck, so I read that and I was like really impressed, then a friend told me I should read "Food of the	States the literature she read which influenced her

	Gods”, so I read that and then I read whatever I could get my hands on that would teach me about plant medicines	
43.	S 6: And I thought wow, I am just interested in this for one thing, but then I thought I wonder if this could let me know myself so deep down inside that I could really root out what it is that brings me down so much	Decided she wanted to try it for the personal insight it potentially offered
44.	S 6: So, of course it is not legal in this country, so I decided I had better figure out how to do this. So I just went on the web and googled it	States it is not legal in this country so sought out another source
45.	S 6: And what came up was Blue Morpho, this sort of retreat to go and do ayahuasca for a couple of weeks and oh yeah	States she found a retreat center in Peru where it is legal
46.	S 6: You probably want to know about my journey not to Peru but what I felt ayahuasca was	States what she thinks interviewer wants to hear about
47.	S 6: Anyway, blah blah blah, I went down there and was scared out of my mind	States was scared
48.	S 6: It is not the most comfortable thing, I don’t speak Spanish, I was alone, I figured I would make friends with people there, because it is mostly Americans that were there, and it is run and owned by an American so it was a lot more comfortable than I guess it could have been	Describes the challenges she faced, but that there was some comfort in knowing that she would be with other Americans, so less foreign than it could have been
49.	S 6: It wasn’t like I walked into the Amazon and had to find a wise man sitting under a tree who would administer ayahuasca if I answered his riddle, it was more like okay how do I get the money together to go there to take a drug I can’t get here	Describes a situation which would have been more daunting of a challenge to her
50.	S 6: But that does not mean it wasn’t the scariest feeling the hours before I was to take it, I didn’t now what to expect	States that even though more comfortable than other situations she can imagine, she was still afraid before she took it
51.	S 6: I thought I am embarking on something that is just me and God	States she was beginning something that would be between her and God
52.	S 6: I had fasted and meditated, quit coffee, I mean I prepared in ways I could	Describes preparing for the experience

53.	S 6: But emotionally I was stricken with real dread and fear and yet could not, not do it	States that emotionally she was filled with fear but could not turn back
54.	I: If we could refer back to depression as you felt it, what would you say you felt in relation to that just before this first ceremony?	Interviewer wants to return to topic of depression and what the relationship was just prior to taking ayahuasca
55.	S 6: Well, I would say some of my symptoms were mitigated because of fear. I mean it was sort of a trip to go to Peru alone, and I was nervous so that kept my mind from really focusing on depression	States that the circumstances caused her to be less aware of depressive symptoms
56.	S 6: Although I will say there were some nights down there in Peru before the first ceremony when I was just waiting to get to the camp and I was alone, and it was lonely, I was depressed, actually	Reflects on it more and realizes that she was depressed over feelings of loneliness
57.	S 6: I was really kind of adjusting to a break up I had just gone through and it was pretty disconcerting to know that I was really doing this thing by myself	States she was recovering from a break up that had left her feeling alone
58.	I: Can you describe the ayahuasca experience?	Interviewer asks for description of ayahuasca experience
59.	S 6: Well, it was amazing, I almost feel like ayahuasca was very nice to me the first time, it knew I was scared so it took me to beautiful places, I had blissful experiences, I saw a past life as a very wise woman and I realized I had lost some of that knowledge somehow and it made sense to me, I felt so appreciative	States that she had a very positive experience, saw a past life which was meaningful to her
60.	I: Would you care to say more?	Interviewer asks if she would like to say more
61.	S 6: You mean about what I experienced?	Asks for clarification
62.	I: Yes	Interviewer agrees with her understanding of question
63.	S 6: Well, I saw beautiful and kaleidoscopic visions and sometimes it felt like the joy was just so much, I never experienced anything like that kind of happiness before.	Describes beauty and joy that were unlike anything she has known before
64.	S 6: There was a point in which my mind turned to my ex and I thought oh no don't think about him, just stick to the	States that she tried to avoid negative thoughts about her breakup

	beauty we have here	
65.	S 6: So I didn't really turn to him in that first ceremony but it did later	States was successful in doing that in first ceremony
66.	S 6: In like the third ceremony, I finally felt that I should ask what it was all about	States that it was not something that could be put off indefinitely and she asked about it in subsequent ceremony
67.	S 6: And what I saw was myself just carrying all this baggage around and it was like this cognitive behavioral therapist or something showed up and said to me I am going to ask you some questions	Realized that she was still carrying baggage and states that a voice like a cognitive behavioral therapist asked her logical questions
68.	S 6: So this voice asked me why I was upset about not being with someone I had nothing in common with, who didn't feel connected to me, who my time with had run out	The questions were Socratic and allowed her to make own conclusions
69.	S 6: And it was just so logical, so simplistic and I wonder if it was just a higher part of, a wiser part of my own personality	States it was straight forward and wonders if this was a wiser part of herself
70.	S 6: I felt it was familiar and so maybe it was a super conscious part of me that knew better and needed to tell my little self that I needed to move on because that had become stagnant	States it was a familiar voice and that the lesson was pertinent in letting her know something had been outgrown
71.	S 6: I mean it was interesting because when I think about my trip and we had five ceremonies, they were all different	States each ceremony was different States the ceremonies were related
72.	S 6: It seems they sort of built on one another	States they built on one another
73.	S 6: There was one that was just a real drag, I spent the entire time in this kingdom of bugs	Describes a less desirable ceremony
74.	S 6: I mean it was beautiful at times and scary at other times	States it was beautiful and scary
75.	S 6: I met this sort of queen bug, which was kind of cartoony and then I just saw all these bugs crawling all over the place working away, kind of not caring about me so much	Describes encounters with bugs
76.	S 6: When I asked the shaman what that was about, he told me that bugs recycle and clean up things, that was what was going on in my soul, he said. It made	States that the meaning of the bugs was a recycling out of the old to make room for new growth

	sense to me actually	
77.	S 6: So I really got a tremendous amount from these things, even though it was all terrifically fun each time	States she derived tremendous benefit, even in the things she did not enjoy
78.	S 6: I had an easier time than some people though, some people just had a terrible time based on their cries for help during the ceremony, but they even kept coming back	States others had even more difficult experiences
79.	S 6: It is really an amazingly magical kind of time that I had there. I mean I am sure it had a lot to do with the environment, I trusted the people I was with	States that the setting may have had to do with her positive experiences
80.	S 6: I didn't want to leave because I was worried that I might not maintain this heightened level of connection I felt	States was worried about losing the insight once she left the retreat center
81.	S 6: But I did obviously come back and it's been about a week and I still feel like I have remained in touch with things I learned	States it has been a week and she still feels in touch with things she learned
82.	S 6: I think I am a little more just relaxed about things, like I don't feel like I take things as personally or really care as much about other people's opinions	Feels takes things less personally
83.	S 6: Sometimes if I am around someone super negative I am like ahhh, I have to get out of here	States she does not enjoy being around those she perceives as negative
84.	S 6: It is like my skin sort of prickles, but I also feel like I could be a better example to people for like how to be nicer to one another	States it is a sensation like her skin prickling, feels she could model behavior, she qualifies as nice
85.	S 6: I have some new thoughts on what reality is and what my delusions are	States her thoughts on realist have altered
86.	S 6: I think I have noticed how self indulgent I can be like making something so much more about me than is necessary	Realizes ways she is self indulgent
87.	S 6: I think I have noticed how full of myself it is to so depressed and glum all the time	Makes the realization that being depressed is an inflation
88.	S 6: It's like that is just as bad as being full of myself and in fact it is just me being really full of myself	Realizes for herself that depression is equivalent to being full of herself
89.	I: So what would you say you have experienced in this past week as far as depressive symptoms go?	Interviewer asks if current symptoms of depression exist

90.	S 6: Ummm, none at the moment, really, I hope it lasts.	States not currently
91.	S 6: I guess I'll find out soon enough Second Interview	States she will find out
92.	I: Hello, about a week has passed since we first met. I'd like to know how you are experiencing any relationship to depression, as the last time we met you said you didn't have any to identify but thought time might be a factor	Interviewer asks that now that a week has passed, if she has anything to say about current relationship with depression
93.	S 6: Hmmm, yeah, I will say that I am more mindful, I am actually meditating and appreciating people.	States that she is more mindful, is meditating and appreciating others
94.	S 6: But you know uh, I am a little more I don't know pessimistic than I was initially.	States she is more pessimistic than she was initially
95.	I: What does that mean?	Interviewer asks what she means
96.	S 6:Ummm, well it just is stressful to be in this world you know. In the Amazon it was all la la la I get to just lie in a hammock and talk about how wonderful the world is	States that it is more stressful to be in the city than to be at a retreat center in the Amazon
97.	S 6: But like back here in San Francisco, it's like I can't find parking and I have to do my laundry and go to work and it is a little more challenging to be holy	States the daily stressors she experiences as challenges to serenity
98.	S 6: Although I will say I have more attention towards doing the right thing, being honest,	States that she has still retained an attention towards honesty
99.	S 6:and that affects my mood too, it's like it feels better to be in a stream of kindness than to promote anything hateful	States she is aware of the positive effects of kindness as opposed to hateful responses
100.	I: Do you want to add anything more	Interviewer asks if participant has more to add
101.	S 6: I do, I just want to say that I am really glad I did it, but I don't think it's like you do it once and then shazam that's it	Wants to say more, states that she thinks it is more of a process of self discovery
102.	S 6:It's actually like agreeing to do it the first time means you are making some kind of pact with God to live better and once you make that statement it becomes a challenge, a commitment	States that it is a commitment to undertake
103.	S 6:I think it's interesting that I didn't know exactly what I was asking for when	States that she was unaware of what she was embarking on when asking

	I was asking for self knowledge	for self knowledge
104.	I: Can you say more about that?	Interviewer asks for more understanding
105.	S 6: Wel, it's like I maybe unconsciously knew this was a big life decision, but it's like once you have gained access to a new dimension of yourself it's like oh how many other dimensions are there that I don't know about and I can't really just stop here can I?	States that she unconsciously may have sought out a transformative experience, but that once begun she has realized there is more to discover and that it does not stop
106.	S 6: It's like finding out how naïve you were and feeling a personal responsibility to correct that somehow	States that learning what she did not know has created an imperative of more personal responsibility
107.	S 6: I think that actually could be something to get depressed about	States this could actually be a reason to be depressed
108.	S 6: But actually it gives me meaning, some kind of purpose, some kind of hope or connection, I like myself	States that it has had a paradoxical effect and given her a greater sense of meaning
109.	S 6: The other day I heard someone say Life is the gift God gives us, the way we live it is our gift to God	Repeats a phrase she heard from someone else which is life affirming
110.	S 6: That has become very important to me to think about	States this has become an important phrase for her to consider
111.	S 6: That's ayahuasca, I think	Attributes ayahuasca with the change
112.	S 6: I think that's where I am at today with it	States that is where she is currently in relation to it
113.	I: Okay, thank you for sharing your experience	Interviewer thanks her for sharing her experience
114.	S: Sure.	Says sure

Appendix C: Map of Constituents to Participant's Meaning Units

Table C

Map of Constituents to Meaning Units for S

Constituents	Meaning Units
1. Lacking self-worth	2, 11, 14
2. Blaming self	4
3. Nameless dread, the world is not safe	3, 5-6
4. Depression took different forms in different phases of life	36-38
5. Abuse, trauma, mistreatment were factors	10
6. Sought therapy as a means of addressing depression, which was only somewhat effective	16, 22-25, 34
7. Tried medication for depression which was not effective	18, 30, 32
8. Became numb	
9. Turned to alternative methods of healing depression	
10. Had suicidal thoughts	
11. Depression feels like a painful feeling in the chest, heart area	
12. Depression was cyclical	27
13. Drinking, other forms of self-medicating fueled depression	
14. Experienced depression just prior to taking it	44
15. Ayahuasca gave clear messages on life issues	94
16. Realized new levels of self-understanding in experience	45, 49, 53-54, 88, 96-97
17. Felt a wiser part of themselves was speaking to them	
18. Emotionally difficult in anticipation and in actual experience	55, 65, 67-69, 85, 89-90
19. Felt experienced the numinous	139
20. During Ayahuasca returned to originally traumatizing life experience	106, 108, 133-137
21. Take things less personally	73, 102-103
22. Greater self-awareness and personal responsibility	
23. Greater awareness of own capabilities, self-efficacy, that difficulties can be managed	82, 105-106
24. Feeling of greater self-acceptance	121
25. Change in self-identity, experience of self has altered depressive symptoms	94, 117
26. Change in how one relates to others, thus impacting mood	
27. Depression has diminished, but feel cautious that it will last (after first interview)	
28. Feel depression has lifted, either because enough time has passed, or according to second interview	101, 128, 134-137

29. Feel grateful towards Ayahuasca	85, 110, 112, 128,
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Table C2

Map of Constituents to Meaning Units for S2

Constituents	Meaning Units
1. Lacking self-worth	2-3
2. Blaming self	10, 17-19, 23-24, 41
3. Nameless dread, the world is not safe	
4. Depression took different forms in different phases of life	41
5. Abuse, trauma, mistreatment were factors	14
6. Sought therapy as a means of addressing depression, which was only somewhat effective	16, 39
7. Tried medication for depression which was not effective	43-44, 46-47,
8. Became numb	4
9. Turned to alternative methods of healing depression	
10. Had suicidal thoughts	11
11. Depression feels like a painful feeling in the chest, heart area	21, 25,
12. Depression was cyclical	
13. Drinking, other forms of self-medicating fueled depression	
14. Experienced depression just prior to taking it	
15. Ayahuasca gave clear messages on life issues	61, 66
16. Realized new levels of self-understanding in experience	50, 52
17. Felt a wiser part of themselves was speaking to them	71
18. Emotionally difficult in anticipation and in actual experience	
19. Felt experienced the numinous	57, 62
20. During Ayahuasca returned to originally traumatizing life experience	59
21. Take things less personally	101
22. Greater self-awareness and personal responsibility	99
23. Greater awareness of own capabilities, self-efficacy, that difficulties can be managed	
24. Feeling of greater self-acceptance	73, 85, 101
25. Change in self-identity, experience of self has altered depressive symptoms	
26. Change in how one relates to others, thus impacting mood	91-92
27. Depression has diminished, but feel cautious that it will last (after first interview)	77-80
28. Feel depression has lifted, either because enough time has passed, or according to second interview	80
29. Feel grateful towards ayahuasca	

Table C3

Map of Constituents to Meaning Units for S3

Constituents	Meaning Units
1. Lacking self-worth	
2. Blaming self	
3. Nameless dread, the world is not safe	
4. Depression took different forms in different phases of life	14
5. Abuse, trauma, mistreatment were factors	
6. Sought therapy as a means of addressing depression, which was only somewhat effective	
7. Tried medication for depression which was not effective	11
8. Became numb	
9. Turned to alternative methods of healing depression	
10. Had suicidal thoughts	14
11. Depression feels like a painful feeling in the chest, heart area	8
12. Depression was cyclical	14, 16
13. Drinking, other forms of self-medicating fueled depression	
14. Experienced depression just prior to taking it	
15. Ayahuasca gave clear messages on life issues	
16. Realized new levels of self-understanding in experience	
17. Felt a wiser part of themselves was speaking to them	
18. Emotionally difficult in anticipation and in actual experience	
19. Felt experienced the numinous	26
20. During Ayahuasca returned to originally traumatizing life experience	
21. Take things less personally	
22. Greater self-awareness and personal responsibility	49
23. Greater awareness of own capabilities, self-efficacy, that difficulties can be managed	
24. Feeling of greater self-acceptance	
25. Change in self-identity, experience of self has altered depressive symptoms	49
26. Change in how one relates to others, thus impacting mood	
27. Depression has diminished, but feel cautious that it will last (after first interview)	43, 45
28. Feel depression has lifted, either because enough time has passed, or according to second interview	
29. Feel grateful towards Ayahuasca	52

Table C4

Map of Constituents to Meaning Units for S4

Constituents	Meaning Units
1. Lacking self-worth	10, 15
2. Blaming self	3, 7-8, 27
3. Nameless dread, the world is not safe	
4. Depression took different forms in different phases of life	
5. Abuse, trauma, mistreatment were factors	3
6. Sought therapy as a means of addressing depression, which was only somewhat effective	29
7. Tried medication for depression which was not effective	
8. Became numb	
9. Turned to alternative methods of healing depression	30-31
10. Had suicidal thoughts	22
11. Depression feels like a painful feeling in the chest, heart area	11, 13
12. Depression was cyclical	
13. Drinking, other forms of self-medicating fueled depression	8-9
14. Experienced depression just prior to taking it	50-51
15. Ayahuasca gave clear messages on life issues	46-48
16. Realized new levels of self-understanding in experience	
17. Felt a wiser part of themselves was speaking to them	46-47
18. Emotionally difficult in anticipation and in actual experience	39, 42-44, 52, 54
19. Felt experienced the numinous	42-44, 60-61
20. During Ayahuasca returned to originally traumatizing life experience	
21. Take things less personally	
22. Greater self-awareness and personal responsibility	59-60
23. Greater awareness of own capabilities, self-efficacy, that difficulties can be managed	56
24. Feeling of greater self-acceptance	58-59, 62-63
25. Change in self-identity, experience of self has altered depressive symptoms	62-64
26. Change in how one relates to others, thus impacting mood	69
27. Depression has diminished, but feel cautious that it will last (after first interview)	
28. Feel depression has lifted, either because enough time has passed, or according to second interview	68, 79-81
29. Feel grateful towards Ayahuasca	88, 92

Table C5

Map of Constituents to Meaning Units for S5

Constituents	Meaning Units
1. Lacking self-worth	
2. Blaming self	
3. Nameless dread, the world is not safe	5, 7
4. Depression took different forms in different phases of life	
5. Abuse, trauma, mistreatment were factors	
6. Sought therapy as a means of addressing depression, which was only somewhat effective	15-17
7. Tried medication for depression which was not effective	
8. Became numb	8
9. Turned to alternative methods of healing depression	18
10. Had suicidal thoughts	
11. Depression feels like a painful feeling in the chest, heart area	3
12. Depression was cyclical	
13. Drinking, other forms of self-medicating fueled depression	12-13
14. Experienced depression just prior to taking it	34
15. Ayahuasca gave clear messages on life issues	17-19
16. Realized new levels of self-understanding in experience	38
17. Felt a wiser part of themselves was speaking to them	
18. Emotionally difficult in anticipation and in actual experience	52-55
19. Felt experienced the numinous	48-49
20. During Ayahuasca returned to originally traumatizing life experience	56-59
21. Take things less personally	
22. Greater self-awareness and personal responsibility	
23. Greater awareness of own capabilities, self-efficacy, that difficulties can be managed	
24. Feeling of greater self-acceptance	
25. Change in self-identity, experience of self has altered depressive symptoms	79-82
26. Change in how one relates to others, thus impacting mood	
27. Depression has diminished, but feel cautious that it will last (after first interview)	66, 77
28. Feel depression has lifted, either because enough time has passed, or according to second interview	69-73, 80
29. Feel grateful towards Ayahuasca	76, 81-82

Table C6

Map of Constituents to Meaning Units for S6

Constituents	Meaning Units
1. Lacking self-worth	
2. Blaming self	12
3. Nameless dread, the world is not safe	9, 22
4. Depression took different forms in different phases of life	11
5. Abuse, trauma, mistreatment were factors	
6. Sought therapy as a means of addressing depression, which was only somewhat effective	31, 38-39
7. Tried medication for depression which was not effective	
8. Became numb	14
9. Turned to alternative methods of healing depression	30
10. Had suicidal thoughts	
11. Depression feels like a painful feeling in the chest, heart area	10, 16, 20
12. Depression was cyclical	23-25
13. Drinking, other forms of self-medicating fueled depression	34, 36
14. Experienced depression just prior to taking it	57
15. Ayahuasca gave clear messages on life issues	
16. Realized new levels of self-understanding in experience	59
17. Felt a wiser part of themselves was speaking to them	67-70
18. Emotionally difficult in anticipation and in actual experience	47, 50-53, 56, 64
19. Felt experienced the numinous	59, 74-76
20. During Ayahuasca returned to originally traumatizing life experience	
21. Take things less personally	82
22. Greater self-awareness and personal responsibility	102, 106
23. Greater awareness of own capabilities, self-efficacy, that difficulties can be managed	107-108
24. Feeling of greater self-acceptance	108
25. Change in self-identity, experience of self has altered depressive symptoms	
26. Change in how one relates to others, thus impacting mood	83-84
27. Depression has diminished, but feel cautious that it will last (after first interview)	90
28. Feel depression has lifted, either because enough time has passed, or according to second interview	93
29. Feel grateful towards Ayahuasca	93

