

Why has the world become

so fascinated with [Ayahuasca](#)

[The Nature of Ayahuasca \(2019\) Documentary](#)

Very good question

My name is Howard Lawler

I grew up in the rural areas of Kentucky

in North America

My interest in Shamanism began

very early in my life as a child

My grandmother was a renowned healer

and was known in those parts as a Kentucky root doctor

of course when I was a child I had no

knowledge of Shamanism per se

but my grandmother would tell me

stories of how she learned about

medicinal plants from her grandmother

who was a full blood Cherokee Shawnee Native American

So that inspired a keen interest in Native American culture

The first sacred plant I came in contact with was Peyote

in the Native American church tradition

That's where I began my practice

and my relationship with the sacred plants

In the early nineties I had the opportunity to come to Peru

and that opened the door to

engage another modality of core Shamanism which is

the Amazonian practices involving Ayahuasca My first

mission in my connection with Ayahuasca was actually

for my own personal healing

of acute chronic depression which I had
fallen into a few years prior to that period of time

which produced amazing results essentially healing
my depression in the course of just a few ceremonies
and through that I saw

the huge potential of this to help a lot of people

So in 1995

I established the
Ayahuasca Spiritquest Healing and Higher Consciousness
program here in the Amazon

It was at that time one of only 3 organized
opportunities for that type of connection available here

The topic of Ayahuasca has unfolded dramatically
exponentially indeed in the past 5 to 10 years

Prior to that there was a very small
base of interest in esoteric circles but
generally it was unknown to the western world

Ayahuasca is a traditional plant medicine
originating in the Amazon

It is a holistic medicine
that has many healing applications
dealing with psychological, psychical, emotional
and spiritual illnesses and conditions

Ayahuasca certainly has healing properties
that directly affect
a rather wide range of conditions

that are not effectively treated by western medicine. Ayahuasca is

perhaps the most effective treatment for depression

because it addresses that condition on both a

biochemical, physiological and psychological level

and in many cases people

having suffered depression for long periods of time

after working with Ayahuasca find that

they do not go back to those feelings

and they experience a permanent relief

Same is true for anxiety issues

phobias of various types

irrational fears of things

stress and trauma disorders

post traumatic stress disorder and things of this nature

There are

many, many accounts of remissions

of various types of cancer

following work with Ayahuasca

usually in a more extensive manner

Probably the most profound

improvements in physical conditions that

that we've seen in our work

are with people with

Parkinson's Disease and Multiple Sclerosis

Neurophysiological disorders in general

seem to be improved rather quickly

at least symptomatically
through even short term medication with Ayahuasca
What brought me here to Peru for Ayahuasca was
was really just a short experience I had
back in the States about a year and a half ago
with DMT

It was a very opening experience and
it made me realise that
the things that I struggle with aren't who I am
and that they can be washed away
with a little bit of work and
I had a ferocious appetite of learning more about
Ayahuasca and what it was after that I've been
dealing with depression for most of my life ever
since I was about 12 years old
and

I don't know, nothing's worked
I mean I've dealt with so many things
and tried so many meds and
different kinds of therapy and
you know, and still very unhappy
Ayahuasca seems to have a good track record at
helping people deal with things like depression and
post-traumatic stress disorder
things I've had to deal with so
it seems like it was worth giving a try

I first heard about Ayahuasca from my best friend
who got a fair bit into spirituality
discovering more about himself
and in turn I was
trying to discover a bit more about myself
when he showed me a documentary on Ayahuasca

I was very intrigued about
how it helped so many people
with so many issues
and
it led me here

Most people
have a tendency to think of
pleasant experiences as good experiences
and difficult, challenging or hard experiences
as bad experiences

When working with Ayahuasca
those criteria are not really
not really legitimate simply because
the very nature of Ayahuasca is to bring up
things that people would otherwise tend to avoid dealing with
and this is one of the greatest attributes of Ayahuasca from
a standpoint of personal
auto-psychoanalysis as it were
enabling those issues to come up
come to the surface
so that they can be confronted, addressed

and hopefully resolved in the conscious mind

or at least that process initiated

Very often these processes of confrontation

are very unpleasant

very difficult, very challenging

In reality those experiences tend to be the most beneficial in the long run

providing the person is able to

allow the process to run its course

to allow those things to come up

to engage in the hard work of processing

those revelations or those confrontations

Ayahuasca is an opener

Ayahuasca is a potentiator

It brings things to the surface

that are often otherwise

deeply submerged in the subconscious

Its hard, hard work

People don't come out here to do this for fun

It's been pretty gruelling with some experiences

you really get your butt kicked

and you learn really quickly to fight

you know, to resist

to over-analyse, to over-think

really does a disservice to you

In my experience the more you can

live in your heart

and live through your soul

live through your nature

that's when you really start

figure out what life is about

This will actually be my second time doing Ayahausca

This experience this year has been

so much more rewarding

and so much deeper for me

It's been a gift, really

to come a long way and really know

to let go and follow your heart

Its sounds so cliché but it's so true

A lot of the ceremonies even at their hardest

were just terrific

because either you fly

and

you have just a very good experience

that makes you feel good

Perhaps you might have visions

A lot of times it can be very difficult

but even the hard ceremonies

where you're suffering a lot of it

when you become aware enough

you realize the beauty in your plight

and the beauty in the plight of all of us and

that's not to say that we can't improve

and make each others lives better

No, I'm not saying that or suggesting that I'm just
saying there's so much opportunity for growth and
every hardship, every trouble that we have
is really just a blessing in disguise
and that's just the other dimension
to life
and

I would not had that
had I not been to Peru
the first time and this time
so its just been
incredible

Sometimes when you're in your rut
whatever it is
you think you're alone
you think you've got it the worst
you think no one will understand
and

in this process
in these ceremonies
and these talking circles afterwards
you realize that
everybody is having a similar
fight at a fundamental level
and it's just profound

When one comes to work with Ayahuasca
an appropriate amount of preparation

training and guidance is extremely helpful, beneficial, indeed for most people essential in order to

be prepared for some of the

surprises Ayahuasca often brings

to help people diminish expectations that are unwarranted

there's a tendency often for people to

expect or desire Ayahuasca to be what

they want it to be rather than

being capable of surrendering to it

and allowing it to work as it naturally does

The preparation must focus

perhaps first and foremost on intention

that is to say the reason a person

wants to undertake the process

Its important to understand that work with Ayahuasca

is a process and not a singular event

All of the benefits of Ayahuasca cannot be realized

in a single session or

in many cases even a single cycle of work

I am actually hopeful that

when I get back I'll be able to do

what needs to be done

to get to the next step, to be happy again

She

she made it very clear

she's like, I can't take you there

but I can show you the way

and she did a very good job at that the other night

and the nice thing is she gave me

several hours of what the finish line is

So I know what I'm aiming for

I know why it's worth it

She just showed me infinite love

and

that's the word that just came up over and over again

in the experience of it

I mean it's beyond words obviously

but just this space of infinite love

and

anything else is crap

Everything else is just a distraction from that

infinite space

that we all live in

that we just forgot about

and any time I started to lose it a little bit

she'd take me right back to it just to

hammer it home

This is what you're going for, this is what it's all about I

mean I would never say that this work is for everyone

It's not easy, it's not a fun experience

and you definitely have to be prepared for it

Like it took me 10 years to get to the point
where I felt comfortable with trying it
because it can be terrifying
it can be infinitely frustrating
The first few attempts were very frustrating for me
but I just kept with it and
there was always an insight you would get and for
me it was in the sharing circle the next day
when I'd listen to other people talk
and it wouldn't necessarily their experiences
but something about being in that shared space I would
start to process what I learned from the night before even if
it felt like nothing at the time
I would be able to go into the next ceremony
with a new perspective and
the next ceremony I'd get something more
and I'd use that and then

Boom

the one night just out of nowhere
it was all there

As far as people who would think it's hippy dippy
all roads lead to Rome so to speak, so
as long as people are ready
they'll find their way

In one's work with Ayahuasca
there are 2 principal phases of the work
3 if you consider the preliminary preparation

The second phase of course is the intensive phase

The intensive phase is the

the ceremonial experience

the experience one has when one partakes of Ayahuasca

So the third phase of ones relationship with Ayahuasca is

actually the most important phase of the 3

and that's the phase we call integration

and integration is the processing and the realization

of what one has received in the intensive phase

and integration is an open ended process

Often the benefits are not immediately evident

and in many cases it will initiate a healing process

that will unfold step by step

and will eventually lead one to resolution

of those physical or psychological conditions

or awaken one to certain realities that perhaps

they have not been aware of up to that point

Pretty much all my life as long

as I can pretty much consciously remember

I've dealt with anxiety

high, high anxiety

and

in a way it's forced me to become someone who I'm not it's

forced me to become emotionless I guess you could say I

bottle up a lot of things because

it was just too hard to face

I wouldn't go to parties and stuff like that

It really led me to

to discovering more about myself

I had always found excuses like work

I used marijuana as a crutch

and even in relationships

I would use that as another excuse

I was using their happiness to really fuel mine

and I wasn't been true to myself

I wasn't been true to them

It's incredible what 10 days has done to that

I mean an entire lifetime of dealing with it

and

you know the talking circles that we've had here

have been a major part in that

not just the Ayahuasca, not just the medicine

This whole place has had an effect on me

that I would never have imagined

For me personally

I mean it's helped me see my family and friends

more so some family members

who I've had a tough time appreciating

It's really shone a light on that

In one of my ceremonies I saw each member of my family

all their faces, they came to me in a vision

and it was just like

I love you so much

I have so much appreciation for everything you've done for me

and

I would never have felt that before

I know I've got a lot more healing to do

I know I need to open my heart a lot more

and I'm not there yet but I have been shown the way and

I'm looking forward to more progress

I'll let all this sink in and

when I go back home I'm going to give all my family

the biggest hug

There's a serious question about
the future of Ayahuasca availability

as consumption of Ayahuasca increases here

in the Peruvian Amazon

its also expanding exponentially all over the world

and many, many, many tons of Ayahuasca

are exported every year from Peru

from other South American countries

source countries

There are a number of organizations and individuals

who are actively involved in the

cultivation and propagation of Ayahuasca and

Ayahuasca companion plants such as Chacrana

Yagé

to try to offset this growing demand in consumption

This is extremely good

It must be encouraged

Certainly anyone using Ayahuasca on a regular basis
should be doing something to propagate
or sustain their own consumptive needs
or use of the plants

A common reference in the context of work with Ayahuasca
is the purge

The purge simply represents a cleansing
or a purification process

Purging can involve virtually any kind of
clearing or elimination process that's

either physical, emotional or energetic in nature
The physical aspects of purging with Ayahuasca

usually involve vomiting, throwing up

but many people

in the course of an Ayahuasca ceremony

engage in a purging process

experience that an elimination of negativity

toxicity and harmful energy that is lodged in their being

and so they have a feeling that all of that is coming up

and coming out in the course of that physical purging

Purging may occur as crying

or some other emotional release

sometimes it involves defecation

The purification process is

really the essential first step in forming one's

deeper connection with Ayahuasca

A person may come to Ayahuasca in a relatively impure state and

have an exciting, entertaining or even highly visual experience
that they might find
personally gratifying or rewarding in the short term
but the deeper long term benefits
require that purification process and deeper connection that
penetrates to the very core of ones soul if you will
and if that penetration occurs successfully
there is usually a transformation involved which
changes the goal or motive of the person for their lives
It creates a more profound, more thoughtful
objective for their life

The Amazonian Curanderos with whom I work are
Don Rober Acho Jarama

Doña Eliana is his wife

Don Carlos is his son

Don Carlos is the third generation

curandero in his family lineage

I've worked with Don Rober for almost 13 years now

and Don Robers experience is very rich

He began his work with Ayahuasca when he was 11 years old

He was trained by his uncle and his grandfather

and he began to conduct ceremonies on his own

when he was 18 years old after

an apprenticeship of 7 years

which is about average for most curanderos who come up

within the culture and undergo a shamanic apprenticeship

at some point in their lives, not all start that early

some a little later

but the amount of time required to attain competence
skill and sufficient knowledge to administer Ayahuasca is
6 to 8 years of training

The reference to shamanism is a
relatively newly introduced term that
20 to 30 years ago was rarely heard here in the Amazon that's
been largely imported by western influences People here now
recognize what they do is a form of shamanism but in their own
minds they generally think of it in other terms In the end of the
year 2010

I like to do yoga teacher training
On the day when I was to transfer the money
to the yoga training

I went on the internet
and I found a picture of a Jaguar behind a leaf
and I clicked on that picture
and then I came to the website of Howard
and 4 weeks later I was here

What brought me to Ayahuasca was to
break the cycle of insanity
doing the same thing and expecting different results
Working through past traumas, I needed a way to release
to cleanse myself, cleanse my soul
and it suffered with my relationship at the time
and with connection with people
so that's why I needed to change

What brought me to Ayahuasca

really I can't pinpoint it directly

I was doing writing in my spare time

A lot of things I wrote about led to consciousness

and shamanism and I decided to explore these things in research

and at the time I was going through a marriage breakup so I had

a lot of time to myself to look inward

and I didn't want to be that person that I was

So that led me down the rabbit hole of finding out more

There are really 2 kinds of people interested in Ayahuasca

in the broad category

The primary category would be genuine seekers

The other broad category is more centered in curiosity or thrill-seeking
Increasingly I see more people coming to Iquitos without

real intentions for their connection with Ayahuasca

What this has caused is a change in attitudes

not only among with western people

but also in the local culture as well

15 years ago the few people that came here

interested in Ayahuasca tended to fit the former category of

seeker of healing or spiritual realization

Now people here in the Amazon

are increasingly aware that many people come

for other reasons as well

and this has changed their attitude and perspective

on the nature of the western mentality

I think they probably respect a little less in general
but they also see opportunities for themselves
economically and otherwise so there's a very mixed response

Well of course Ayahuasca is endemic to the Amazonian
region of South America

It has a very deep cultural history
going back most likely thousands of years

Western influence has a very poor track record
in it's discovery of indigenous practices

particularly shamanic practices
and the subsequent appropriation
of the knowledge and the resources

The important thing for people to bring to this work
if one comes to the Amazon to engage the medicine
and to engage the traditional practices surrounding it
is to bring sensitivity

to bring respect

to understand that one is not coming into this culture
from a position or stance of superiority
to understand that people of western birth and heritage
have as much to gain, as much to learn from people
and culture and practices in this culture

as this culture has to learn from them

to understand that there is a reciprocity
for everything that is received something should be given
to realize that they are bring potential benefits

but they are also bringing potentially harmful influences as well
to be aware of that, to be sensitive to that
and to try to help preserve the
foundations of this culture and these cultural practices
as purely as possible for as long as possible
recognizing that all forms of trans cultural contact
inevitably produce change

When I was here for my first time

I had no idea what's coming up

I had no expectations

I

I only knew that Ayahuasca is a great healer

and a great medicine

My first was very special, I will never forget that day

the medicine put me on an inner journey

and she showed me the things inside
they are not clean

They were like rooms

and I opened the rooms and I saw a lot of trash in the rooms

and over the years we cleaned all the rooms up It's now my

7th time here

I drank Ayahuasca nearly 60 times

When you take the medicine it's very important

to have the right set and the right setting

Medicines usually act local

and the medicine here is a local medicine

from the Amazon

From my own experience

it is very very important to have the jungle

to have the environment of the plants around

Ayahwasca to be in the jungle and not in a city

or in a country where there is no rainforest

You can do that, it work but it's not an optimum

Howard and Don Rober offer us the opportunity

to get real traditional healing

to learn real traditional medicine

because like I experienced

you can see where the plant is from

who cut the plant, who grows the plant

who cooked the plant, how it is cooked

the whole process

it's very transparent

For me it's better to come here

to support people like we do when we are here

We watch different tribes and we support them

We create connections through heart

to the people here

and they see, oh cool open hearted people

also in the western world

for me it's better than to bring the medicine to Europe For

me the biggest that happened is an inner transformation It's

about how do we deal with life

how does life affect us

different situations

I learned to stay in the middle
to take positions like an observer
stay calm and discover inner peace
In the first ceremonies I had a lot of healing
about my past, my mistakes, about forgiveness
about self love, how to love each other
and after that there comes the learning
It's about listening
listening to the medicine, listening to yourself
It's all inside us
the medicine helps to reveal that
to open yourself up because your teacher is inside of you
These lessons I can learn every day at home and I can
integrate that
and when I integrate these lessons I will come back
but not before
Work with the sacred plants often
brings people to a point of
of questioning virtually everything that they assume
to be absolute or true up to that point
There's an opening to the possibility in their lives
that they had not considered before
You know this is a path for the true truth seeker
revealing, helping us to understand where we've been
where we're coming from in our lives and in our deeper
spiritual journey, where we are now in the present and

perhaps by understanding those 2 points

having a sense of our destiny and where we go from here

The medicine is good

because sometimes you get lessons in way you never expect

sometimes it seems too tough and too strong

but I know the medicine only gives you what you can handle

no more no less

and if you think you can't handle it

it's the ego talking

that wants to protect you

and not allow the medicine to work

Last year was my time, I came last January

and my intention for coming was to

open my heart and connect with my emotions again

She showed me herself in this Native American form

which was very very beautiful and powerful

It brought me to this door of light and there was this big warrior

half man, half beast just blocking the way

and I didn't know at the time whether it was

something I had to conquer in order to get through to the door

and then as the ceremonies passed my intention stayed the same

so it was pretty much 5 nights of ceremonies

all based off of one long story

and it showed me a lot of love

a lot of passion, a lot of happiness

So at one point it brought me to this room

where I was able to start seeing

the intensity of my vision that were being shed and my emotions

So

it would be like this silhouette

and around it is this black dark smoke

just swirling around it

and the emotion attached to it

you could see was just stored up trauma

and it would pull away and kind of dissipate

and every time it would be almost a slight sense of relief

as it dissipated

That happened for a while and then it put me in this position

of seeing another silhouette and just raw decayed meat just

starts disintegrating off of it

but in this symbol it was more powerful because it was like

just this negative energy being stored in the body and how

bad it is for you

We dove into empathy

I have always been mentally strong and been able to

conquer and do things that I choose to do

It's a good attribute I have but on the same extent

it doesn't allow me to experience empathy towards other people

when it comes to the psychological effects from their minds So

anxiety, restless leg syndrome

I always thought were created by

the mind to deflect you from something

and when people would experience them

I would just be like "Oh, it's just your mind
just tell it to go away and it will"
you know, I'm able to do it but it doesn't mean everybody is
It wasn't until one ceremony where I felt
extreme, severe case of anxiety
restless leg syndrome and nausea
all at the same time for a long period of time
which pushed me to the point of giving in
and not overanalyzing and using my mind the way that I always do
As soon as I gave in and gave up
to the medicine
to the lessons
to my own emotions
that's when I went even deeper into the medicine
and it tied back all the way to the first ceremony where
it showed me that that beast that was blocking the door
was then slayed
Perhaps the most prevailing myth about Ayahuasca
is simply that
the
all one needs to do to become a better person
is drink Ayahuasca
That is a rather gross oversimplification
which simply isn't true
it has been demonstrated time and again
in people who lack intention or desire to change themselves

or change something about their lives

who've taken Ayahuasca and

gone back into their lives and continued to do and act

and live pretty much in the same way as they did before

and there's a corresponding assumption that

anyone who works with Ayahuasca as a Curandero

or as a facilitator is automatically trustworthy and

competent simply because they work with Ayahuasca

Unfortunately neither of the assumptions are true

There are risks in working with the sacred plants The

primary risk is in the qualities and characteristics the

individual brings to the work itself

The other risk is in determining the intentions

and authenticity and integrity of the person with

whom one will do the work

in terms of how trustworthy they are

how much do they know

are they capable of dealing with situations that might be

potentially dangerous or risky to you

When one works with sacred plants one

intentionally and knowingly and willing becomes vulnerable

to influences beyond their own

In fact Ayahuasca as other sacred plants

induces a light state of hypnosis

and so

when one takes Ayahuasca one is entering a state of

a lower threshold of suggestibility

and this lower threshold of suggestibility may be used to the patients benefit by a Curandero

A person of

dubious intentions might use that same quality of the plant to take advantage of a person in some way

All of these things should be considered

and this is not to overemphasize the risks or dangers but at the same time it's prudent not to ignore them either

The horror stories are the direct result of the

globalization and explosion of this whole process

and the expanded involvement of people

who are ill-prepared and unqualified to be doing it

All that said

if one undertakes this work

guided by someone of experience

integrity, knowledge, skill

and a genuine desire to be supportive and helpful

then such people are genuinely trustworthy and are

capable of guiding a person through this process

with great success

The new wave of dark and foreboding

tales of danger and so forth while some of that is true

overwhelmingly it is an exaggeration

and doesn't characterize the situation as a whole

I think for me I've had some really good

experiences with the Ayahuasca

Any expectations I had

were pretty much blown out of the water

but some that I did have were

that I was going to go crazy or something

because you hear all these horror stories

of things going all wrong

so it was just all in all the whole process

of the way they do things

On the first night it was just like a

I don't know, a contents page or something like that

but without really showing me anything it just made

me feel comfortable

and

there's some sort of feminine aspect to it but

once you take, it was a whole different world It

just took me down into myself

into the dark places I have and

it was able to just sort of like shred things apart

and

made me take layers and layers and layers

of armor off

stuff like I didn't want to be hurt

or

in a sense I had become a little bit stone cold These

are layers that I had stacked upon my heart and the

way that I present feelings in certain situations it was

able to show it to be with more clarity so I could see it

again

Over the last 10 days I think I've definitely

opened up something

and I think it's more my true feelings

and how I mask that a lot

For me it was like I was going through a process that

I had almost become a wolf in a way

and I was going through it in the first person

but I was also seeing it in

it was pictorial

from a third person point of view as well

and

It was like I was seeing it but like I had already seen it

and it was just replayed back to me in a weird sense

so I'd understand from all facets

I was able to not just see it from my side

but see it from maybe someone else's point of view

It leaves a fingerprint of that in your memory and

you can't really forget it

in fact it grows and you start to see all these

different things that help you understand

what you were let's say to what you could be

The 2 principle areas of positive benefit

one may realize through work with Ayahuasca

are in the area of holistic healing

and in the area of spiritual development and realization

often these 2 processes go hand in hand

and in the concept of holistic healing

obviously that involves healing in all aspects of ones being

and the spiritual realization dimension is

not fully realized by everyone

who works with Ayahuasca

at least to the same degree

People often experience a spiritual epiphany of sorts

whether they were previously spiritually inclined or not

The common response is an awakening at some level

or one's spiritual consciousness

If nurtured

the usual result or common result is a positive transformation

which leads to better things in people's lives

What led me to Ayahuasca about a year ago

was that I was sort of the guy

who had it all together on the surface

and it was slowly dawning on me

that I didn't have it all together

that I was numb and unhappy and

not on the right track for my life

so I came to Ayahuasca looking for solutions to those problems

My experience with Ayahuasca was that it was

it was like a defibrillator

it was like

came in and zapped me back to life

got my heart beating again

It was like I was taken in a jet airplane

straight past all the dancing mice

and fireworks shows that people talk about

to what I would call the Great Spirit

I think religions have called it God

but that's where it took me

very, very quickly

no messing around

and I got to experience

what it was like to have that connection

That was a connection I couldn't have possibly imagined

and that's for me what this is all about

developing a connection between you

and something bigger than you

The whole idea is that there doesn't need to be a hierarchy

Shamanism in its best form just puts you and it right there

and in its best moments you merge completely and then

the dichotomy of you and it is gone and there's just the

one thing

that's something that you can only experience

There are no words

After having that experience I definitely struggled with

taking that and putting it back into my day to day life

and I'd say for me it took about a year

before I had integrated that

and I found that that was where the real work was
and also where the real benefits came
but that's an aspect that's sometimes overlooked
Integrating that experience required a shift in lifestyle
and a shift in the I was
the way I was in the world that required me to
to change me goals
change my work
change

change a lot

The other thing that Ayahuasca's being teaching
me this time around is about choice
and everything, everything is a choice
and we get to
every moment we get to choose between
really I look at it as the light side and the dark side
or however you want to conceptualize it but we
can make the world whatever we want it to be
with just our choice

and Ayahuasca has helped me see both sides
of this thing very clearly

and I feel like I'm in a much more centered position
to make the choices that are going to
lead us in the direction that's going to
be positive for myself and for everyone

My only advice would be Ayahuasca is not for everyone

and that if you have a calling to do it

then I suggest you pick up the phone

Many people are seeking alternatives to the western paradigm

I think one of the reasons for that is simply the fact that the

western world has been for some time

dissatisfied with its own status quo

and with the absence of a meaningful base

of reference other than rampant materialism

There's still a good many people whose

primary perception of Ayahuasca is as a new

and novel drug experience as opposed

to a holistic medicine

Helping people to form a healthy attitude

that is in line with the actual nature of the plant

the nature of the practice

and which recognizes its positive benefits

I think is a very important thing

This is Huambisa

Huambisa

The most powerful of the companion plants

In many respects science is kind of catching up

with traditional medicine in terms of providing the

proof if you will based on

scientific method and evaluation

to the satisfaction of the western mind that

this plant and related plants associated with it do indeed have

remarkable healing properties that

have great potential in service to humanity and
in dealing with things that modern conventional
pharmaceutical medicine doesn't not address well if at all
A very important cultural aspect of work with Ayahuasca
is in bonding

This has been an integral role of Ayahuasca
in indigenous cultures for a long time
that is the effectiveness it has
in bringing people together and unifying people
and helping people find common cause and common ground
and reducing competitiveness, increase cooperation What
we see in our work with Ayahuasca

with people coming together for the first time
within 48 hours
no one feels like anyone else is a stranger anymore
going through the trials and tribulations and
stripping away the barriers to communication

When people leave here invariably
they leave as brothers and sisters
They leave with a sense of love and appreciation of each other

As I tell everyone from the get go
when you start here everyone is an apprentice
and everyone is a maestro

Everyone is a teacher and everyone has something to learn
from everyone else

And indeed that's the way it unfolds
So it's that dynamic exchange

in the spirit of giving, in the spirit of sharing
in the spirit of compassion and tolerance of our differences
All of this has a very beneficial positive influence
on virtually everyone who does this work
which ideally carries on over into
everyone's personal life when they go back home
Well you know I pretty much hit the ground running
when I came back home with life here
Like I had all these incredible experiences at Spiritquest
You know I was all the things that were holding me back
and some things I did see before
and I guess we continue to do that right
when we get home we start reflecting back
on our experiences and they keep on at least for me just
birthing new insights you know
each ceremony that I go back on
When I got home
you see deeper into the day to day stuff
that you usually just kind of took for granted
even just simple stuff like work or
maintaining friendships or acquaintances
it just really helped me take everything to another level
and I'm definitely happier
You know we all have our stuff, we all have our issues
it's part of being human
and we get reflections every day in life

of the things that we struggle with
so I still have all that stuff
but it doesn't penetrate as hard as it used to you know and
Ayahuasca and my time at Spiritquest
definitely contributed to that growth and
I'm super grateful I did that
Yeah when I got back there was a hangover for a while
you know the Ayahuasca hangover where you're just
in love with everything and
Ayahuasca was in my head for a long time just kind of like
I don't know I had this feeling that she had a
ulterior motive
you know like she was trying to get me to
do things that weren't really me and it really
affected how I was when I got back and my relationships and
it made me much more clear with
what I was willing to put up with so
there was some friendships I just let slide
you know I just wasn't willing to put up with that anymore
I definitely still have a lot of work to do
my depression is still there
but it's definitely quieted down quite a bit
I have a different relationship with it now
It's much less antagonistic
and you know I'm a lot more accepting of that
situation than I used to be

Life took a very different direction than I expected

and I'm a very

different much more confident person now

but it hasn't been easy, it hasn't always been fun

but I see now, I feel like

the whole thing was leading to this point
to basically get back to some sort of ground zero

where I can relax for the first time in 20 years probably

which wouldn't have been possible had I not

you know, gone down to Peru

When I arrived back home I felt I was in a really good place

mentally and I think that made me realize that all the

problems and the challenges that I faced before didn't bear

as much weight as I had previously given them Integrating

my experience certainly wasn't easy I went back to the

same routine

and it wasn't long before I found myself slipping back

into old habits and unhealthy mindsets

So to try and eliminate that from happening

I had to change my lifestyle

I changed my diet, I started watching less TV

and just found things that were so much more fulfilling to me

Two and a half years on I still find myself sometimes falling

back into those old habits and mindsets but I'm by far in a

much better place than where I was For me Ayahuasca has

helped me gain

so much more self love

and more confidence within myself

It's just helped me in so many ways

So when I first got back from Peru

Life here was challenging in the aspects of

connections with my friends and people, life

wasn't as deep as it was down there

It was hard to find my place and it was a little challenging

just trying to figure out how to belong back into the past

before going to Peru

Since going down when I met everybody

in this documentary

I've been down 3 more times

and my growth has been amazing

Life has been very happy

my perceptions have shifted tremendously

and

Ayahuasca has helped me to let go of emotions that

caused me to be depressed which was

the reason I went down there

Things unfolded for me in a way that I didn't really know

You know some of the lesson I'm still learning from my

first Ayahuasca journey

Every time I'm learning more and it's still integrating now

The way that I think, the way that I am

how I hold myself

Plant medicine

it's challenging but it's also an absolute blessing

Looking back on my Ayahuasca work now

I would say I was quite naive about the integration process

You know I hoped that

drinking Ayahuasca would solve all my problems and I

I quickly found out that was not the case

I quickly found out that it would require work

and dedication and sincerity and to meet it half way
In doing so I realized significant benefits in my life

I can say that I'm a much happier

more well adjusted content person from my work

and that's substantial, that's not going anywhere

You know having a few years of perspective on it

I would say that my work with Ayahuasca was without

a doubt the biggest turning point in my life This

requires work but it's work that's well worth doing and

there's

there's big benefits to this

There's often no benefit in going back into ceremony

too quickly following a good cycle for work until a

sufficient amount of integration has occurred and

usually people know when it's time to do it again if

they feel called to do it again

because that integrative process

can actually go on for years

I got an email from a guy in Hawaii yesterday who

was here with me 18 years ago telling me how
much the medicine is still working in his life and
expressing his gratitude for

the treatment he received with it 18 years ago

and he's not had Ayahuasca since

That gives you an idea of the enduring

benefits and qualities that one can realize from it