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Jim Fadiman

Interviewed
By



Diane Darling

Diane Darling Interviews Jim Fadiman
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“DD” (Diane Darling) / “JF” (Jim Fadiman)

DD: Who were you before you experienced psychedelics?

JF: At college someone asked behind my back, “Does he ever have a serious thought?” I was smart, shallow and neurotic, characteristics I’ve maintained, but I’ve added something to myself since psychedelics.

DD: Well, that’s a good question. What changes in your own personality and worldview did you notice after you took psychedelics?

JF: My first session —psilocybin with Richard Alpert— broke my connection with believing that if I didn’t have a great many books around me, I had no identity. It was a falling away from a slightly academic self-concept to actually being a person. When I first had LSD, I realized that Jim Fadiman was a sub-set of who I really was, and that was really the worldview change that has mattered.

DD: Do you notice any changes in some of the other characteristics that you mentioned, in particular your being self-conscious? Did you find yourself emboldened by your realizations?

JF: Very much so. I was totally delighted with almost everything in life, and ran around for the first several years convinced that since I was part of the Divinity that permeated everything, therefore, I probably knew everything and was everything. It was a little tricky being a graduate student in psychology with that amount of metaphysical arrogance, but I pulled it off, mainly by appearing to be a very conventional graduate student by day, and desperately trying to understand what really the universe was all about at night, reading *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, and *The I Ching*, and studying *The Tarot*...

DD: Was your work as a graduate student oriented towards your psychedelic realizations?

JF: There was almost no way to do that, but I snuck it in when I could. So I got a master’s degree doing a little teeny bit of research with psychedelics.

But the rest of my graduate work was taking courses, reading books, writing papers, and basically not being noticed so I wouldn’t be thrown out of the department and sent to my draft board, ‘cause I was in graduate school during Viet Nam.

DD: Right! Is your dissertation available for us to read now?

JF: It’s actually going up on line in the next few months, but I’ve summarized the core findings in an article that will be in a book I’m working on. I’ve summarized another piece of it in an appendix for the same book.

What I basically did was to ask people after they’d had psychedelic therapy, preparation plus one intense session, what behaviors had changed. What was different in their lives in a very obvious sense? Not only their metaphysics, but were they nicer to their kids, did they play more with pets, did they watch television more or less? Did they have any changes in their health? Very, very normal behaviors. That research has actually never been available until recently.

DD: On some of the psychedelic lists there’s been some discussion about the changes that, that we perceive in ourselves before acid and after acid. So could you just say a little bit about what changes these people remarked upon?

JF: I was asking about the most ordinary behaviors, so the questions were like, “Do you spend more time or less time at work? Do you have intercourse more or less often?” The answer to that was “more.” “Do you care or spend more time with your children or less?” Again, the answer was “more.” “Have there been any changes in your physical habits?” The answer was “very few.” Things like that. Very, very ordinary changes that someone from the outside would not associate with anything more than your feeling better about yourself and liking life a little more.

DD: Would you say about yourself that your, that your experiences with psychedelics have continued to shape you as a person over the last 40 something years since your earliest and continuing exposure?

JF: Big yes! . Since I first took psychedelics, they were the defining force in my life. They were the defining issue for which I pursued my graduate career; they were the defining kind of metaphysic of the work I did after psychedelic research was illegal. They're the reason I became interested in and helped found Transpersonal Psychology, and helped found the Institute for Transpersonal Psychology. They're the reason behind almost all of my books, especially my novel set in the Haight-Ashbury, to thank the Haight-Ashbury for being such a wonderful breeding ground for a few years for a lot of us.

St. Paul on the road to Tarsus had this moment where God said to him, "What on Earth are you doing and why are you doing it?" And Paul said, "I better stop doing it." [DD laughs] I had a less interesting shift, but quite as profound which was a voice saying to me "Do you have any idea of who you are and what the universe is?" My answer was, "No!" The response was, "Well, let me show you as much as you can stand, and you'll behave differently."

I think of psychedelics, not as a rock concert, but more like major learning... There's a World War I song, which goes, "How you gonna keep them down on the farm after they've seen Paree (Paris)?" [DD laughs] Once you've seen and felt Paradise, you see the entire world differently.

DD: Would you say that describes the spirit of the early research that you engaged in?

F: I worked with people who were getting experiences specifically focused on helping them transcend their personality, transcend their body, transcend time and space, so they would have this classical mystical view and experience of unity. It's like what Houston Smith said when he took psychedelics, he experienced what he had been studying and teaching and thought was so, but till then, he never experienced it and it made all the difference.

DD: His new book has some extensive remarks about that. Yaaaay! Out of the closet, Houston! [JF laughs]

JF: Exactly!

DD: So in your early research, you were working with not necessarily disturbed people to engender this, experience of the unity field.

JF: Two thirds of the group I actually worked with and did research on and sat in a lot of sessions on were a normal outpatient range the third had, in psychiatric jargon, no presenting psychopathology, what we would call high functioning normals. That third had more metaphysical and more profound psychedelic sessions, because they didn't spend much time looking at neurotic stuff.

psychiatric clinic. Problems but these were all functioning people. The other third had, in psychiatric jargon, no presenting psychopathology, what we would call high functioning normals. That third had more metaphysical and more profound psychedelic sessions, because they didn't spend much time looking at neurotic stuff.

DD: Do you agree with Aldous Huxley in his opinion that the best and brightest should have access to psychedelics and not others?

JF: What Huxley was saying if people like Huxley clearly benefit from it, why shouldn't people like Huxley have access? And I think Huxley probably didn't have much experience with people who had less education, less erudition or less leisure time. The fact of the matter is that psychedelics also were incredibly helpful in those with long term, deeply unsuccessful, almost dying of cirrhosis alcoholics. And helping severely autistic children. Almost every population that psychedelics have been used with seems to have benefitted, except for people who were not very well tethered to this reality.

DD: Right. I'm reminded of Leary's remark that psychedelics seem to cause psychosis in people who don't use them. [Both DD and JF laugh]

DD: Let's talk about personalities. My readers are interested in hearing stories or comparisons, remarks on Lilly, Kesey, Leary ...

JF: Pick someone.

DD: OK, what about Lilly? Did you have much time with Lilly?

JF: I had a little bit of time with John Lilly. He seemed to be one of the people who needed excess stimulation in order to feel alive. We're now doing wonderful neuroscience research on high-risk takers.

He seemed to be one of the people who needed excess stimulation in order to feel alive. We're now doing wonderful neuroscience research on high-risk takers. They literally lack a certain amount of gray matter in certain parts of the brain. They have less of it than the rest of us, so, in order to feel alive, they need extra stimulation. They are the bungee jumpers, the people who need to climb high mountains. If you look at Lilly's life in general, he was always seeking for what was the most expansive kick available. He ended up, I recall, with a ketamine drip on his arm attached to a bottle. He was always pushing the edges of consciousness.

I didn't understand that kind of person very well, so the little bit I knew of him was social, collegial and friendly, but not really with much understanding.

DD I know you had a more personal relationship with Ken Kesey.

JF Yeah. My wife Dorothy had been a girlfriend of Ken's before we got together, and, partly through her, I became a very outer member of the Kesey circle. My major reason for being part of it at all was that, to them, I was quite exotic, 'cause I was working with psychedelics legally. So it was as if you had someone in your group who chewed on light bulbs and therefore was inherently interesting because of their peculiarity. [DD laughs] I was definitely not a prankster, not sure I was even a friend of the pranksters. I was a person who the pranksters didn't mind having around.

DD Right. What did you think at the time, and what do you think now, of their famous practice of distributing LSD to people by the hundreds?

JF: Well, the idea of putting it in the punch bowl, and letting people drink as much as they wished doesn't feel like the best possible way to give psychedelics. Psychedelics to me are sacred substances. They were designed to bring about awareness of the sacred. The idea that they could be recreational drugs is almost unheard of in any culture that uses any kind of psychedelic. One exception, by the way, is probably Socrates and his crowd who were using the sacred substance from Eleusis in parties. The authorities came down on them hard. In fact, possibly Socrates was sentenced to death for those escapades. His sentence wasn't for being a difficult personality that was corrupting the youth. He was killed for what was called "impiety."

There are some lovely fights in the scholarly press at the moment on what was the impious act he did. We know there was another group in Athens who did psychedelics recreationally, and they were just punished very severely.

DD: Interesting ... Interesting! That just goes "click" in my mind. That explains why they would be willing to just dispose of such a valuable member of their culture: because he violated the Mystery.

JF Right. And the Mystery, as you know, was the central element in Athenian culture and in Greek culture for two thousand years.

DD: All right! Aw! I'm getting chills from that. [JF laughs]

JF: Yeah, I really dug it when I came across it, that notion, 'cause again like you, it clicked into place.

DD: Well, now, Leary was also a proponent of the popular use of psychedelics. I know you spent a lot of time with him. My readers would love to hear a few stories about Leary and their work, and so on.

JF: The wonderful thing about Tim Leary was, and even his most virulent enemies admit it, how fun and charming he was. However, and I saw him in lots of settings, he couldn't stand either authority or institutions. If something was working, including if it was totally serving him, he would undermine it and destroy it. So working with Tim was always kind of dancing at the edge, knowing whatever you were doing was not going to work fairly soon thereafter. Remember, this was a guy who was thrown out of West Point, Harvard, and a string of tropical resorts. [DD laughs]

Then he goes to jail, and escapes. He was in nineteen different jails. This is a guy who was taken up by the Black Panthers, and he escaped from them! Tim was anti-social in the nicest way. Like a cavalier, he would wrap himself in his cape, draw his sword, and battle his way out of whatever castle he was in, including if it was his friend's. [DD laughs]

Tim's feeling was, "Yes, psychedelics should be widely available to everyone." If you think about it, if psychedelics teach you that your own personal identity is really a sub-set of who you

you are, then it's hard to make that Huxley distinction of really smart people's personality should use it and less educated people's personalities shouldn't. It's like going down to the seashore and deciding which part of the ocean should get to use the beach and which part should be kept offshore. It doesn't make sense when you take it up a level.

DD: Ah-hah.

JF: Tim gets too much credit for destroying the chances to do research. I think that's quite unfair. Tim always said, "Use it carefully, use it wisely, use it to understand the real situation, and then come back into the culture with wide-open eyes." Kesey doesn't get enough credit for making it difficult for everyone. Kesey truly said, "Yes, people will hurt themselves, and that's tough. That's not my job to protect anyone." A wonderful phrase of Kesey's is, "I went along the road tearing up the fence posts."

DD: You're right. Kesey was did as much as anyone to frighten the straight people off.

JF: Yeah. Kesey said that anarchism is still too much structure. [DD laughs]

DD: I have a question here that says that Leary listed ketamine it as the top chakra drug. Did he talk about it at all?

JF: Not to my knowledge. I'm part of the of the era when psychedelics were legal. LSD and psilocybin and mescaline were available and we weren't looking much beyond those. We learned how to use them; we knew what they did; we discovered their limitations. There wasn't really much interest in all these other drugs.

Years ago, Diane, you once asked an online list, "Why are you people so interested in incredible, rare and exotic and hard to find psychedelics?" I remember reading something about the inside cheeks of puffer fish from Indonesia [DD laughs]. The answer that you were given was, "The reason we're interested in all these other things is 'cause LSD isn't available."

DD: So, tell a wonderful story about Millbrook that maybe is not in the top ten wonderful stories about Millbrook.

JF: I wasn't involved with Millbrook. There's this wonderful book, just coming out, of Ralph Metzner and Ram Dass reminiscing about Millbrook. It's wonderful fun. Millbrook was an incredible haven of experiments, as inept in their way as the CIA was in its. Only they were trying all the ways of doing it well, making mistakes, trying a new variation, getting it right, trying it yet another way. An amazing living laboratory.

DD: Somebody had to charge out there without maps, or ... or elders, or, you know, much common sense, and just ... just like, thrash their way through...

JF: It was our version of that famous nonsense that if you put a bunch of chimpanzees in a room with enough computer keyboards, they'll produce Shakespeare. [DD laughs] Millbrook tested the proposition that if you put enough really nice, intelligent well-intentioned people in a big enough mansion with enough time, space and lots of LSD, they would produce high beings. Now and then they did. [DD laughs]

DD: OK, here's my ... here's my personal question ... Fill in the blank: "Tune in, turn on, drop out ... [a bit of silence]"

JF: Fill in the blank? Where was the blank?

DD: It's after "drop out."

JF: Oh! It's "Come back in and do it better!" [DD laughs]

DD: So what is our duty as psychedelic rangers, today, now, having learned what we learned and picked ourselves up and dusted ourselves off innumerable times ... Now, what does dropping in look like? How can we re-integrate and re-introduce ourselves into the mix and thereby improve the mix rather than ruining ourselves?

JF: Who comes to my mind are Galileo and Columbus. Galileo said, "If you look through this little glass, you will not be able to do certain things in the future because the universe is not what you think it is." And Columbus said, "You know even if I didn't know which continent I was landing on, I got real clear that it was round."

building little flat Earth business models. It is our job as, I love the term of “psychedelic rangers,” [DD laughs] to continue to expand people’s vision of what reality truly is. The new frontier looks to me like ecology, because the ecologists are saying, “If you don’t understand that we are just one part of a matrix of living beings, the other living beings are going to vote us out.”

DD: [DD laughs] Off the island!

JF: Right! “You’re fired!”

DD: That would be fair. I just don’t want to take too many of them with us.

JF: Ram Dass once was asked about truth, and he said, “Truth is anything that brings anyone closer to their own enlightenment.” Our job is to find ways of telling a little bit more truth to people who are not closed to it, it just never occurred to them.

The image I like about how do you change beliefs is asking people to remember when the idea of having somebody else’s tongue in your mouth was disgusting. All your peers were in total agreement. At some point, somebody in the group found out that there was an alternative way of holding that experience, and gradually everybody came around. Our job is to help other people get closer to the larger reality.

DD: So, if psychedelics were decriminalized in the foreseeable future, what do you think would be the best way to introduce them into the non-outlaw population, the in-law population, as it were?

JF: It’s a fantasy that the non-outlaw population isn’t already using them. [Both JF & DD laugh] but let’s go along with the fantasy. If psychedelics were being discovered and weren’t readily available in every college and every prison in the country, I would start with the model of the way you learn to fly a private plane. Which is, you need to pass the kind of basic exam. Our exam would ask: do you understand consciousness, do you understand your own body, do you understand your own pathology? Your first voyage needs to be with a licensed instructor... or, at least with someone who recently had a guided experience, or at the very least with someone who says, “I’ll be your anchor.” I’d want anyone to be introduced to psychedelics in a healthy, open, and fundamentally “personality dropping away”

mode. It’s the same argument of why would we want people’s first sexual experiences to be good. They’re going to have more of them, and if their first sexual experiences are good, they’re likely to go for good sexual experiences in the future and not be damaged. I’m for harm reduction, of course but I’m much more interested in maximizing the benefits of psychedelic experiences from the onset.

DD: By controlling set settings ...

JF: By teaching about set setting and all the rest of it. The driving license is actually a good model. We’d like everyone to learn to drive. It’s not just for the elites. We say you need to know enough of the rules of the road so you don’t hurt yourself or other people. However, as I said, this is all a fantasy because, according to the federal government, six hundred thousand new people each year are trying LSD, and that’s only LSD. All the other drugs, I don’t have as clear numbers on. If psychedelics were legal, there would be a lot of driving schools. As it is, a lot of people are learning to drive without a license.

DD: What kind of institution or organization would offer this driving school? Does it not belong in the churches, educational institutions, or medical or psychological institutions?

JF: Just as the people who do marriage improvement include psychotherapists, clinics, community groups, churches and more, there are lots of different institutions that could easily include psychedelic driving licenses as a part of the curriculum. The school system, grudgingly and grumblingly, and with all kinds of bizarre bumps along the way, gradually has put in sex education, as well as learning how not to be prejudiced. Learning how to best use your consciousness is just another basic set of skills.

I ask my graduate students, “Has anyone ever given you a course on how to learn?” They look at me like I’m from Mars. I go on, “If you noticed for the past sixteen, eighteen years, all you’ve been doing is being in situations where you’re supposed to learn. However, no one ever gave you the basics.” If we think finding out who you are in the universe is valuable, you also want to start out with the basics. In the Daime communities, children are given ayahuasca at a very, very early age. As a result, they grow up with an awareness

that this particular view of consciousness we call normal awareness is not the only consciousness available. So, as they get older and more mature, it's not a revelation.

DD: I know that you have direct connections to both Catholicism and Sufism. Can you compare the direct experience of the great field of dreams in those religions, the Holy Light teachings, in relation to quantum and fractal physics, with the direct experience of that field experience with psychedelics?

JF: Glad you are saving the difficult questions for later. It seems to me and a lot of people I talk to that once you've had psychedelic experiences that parallel the classical mystical experience of the overarching unity of all beings, that the mystical writings and teachings of the various traditions have a obvious similarity.

They've all been to that same mountain top, saw the same vista, and come back into their culture trying to make it work one way or another. So if you read Rumi, and you read some of the Gospels, Buddhist scriptures, Hindu scriptures, et cetera, you see the experience that they're drawing from.

When look into what Westerners call Pagan, or the people who never lost touch with Nature, it's the same. The difference between traditions doesn't occur at the top. Everyone finds the same mountaintop, but they all go down on different trails or paths. There's different vegetation and they meet different people. A couple of hundred years later, a whole complicated structure has arisen, by people trying to guess at what the founders had experienced, and trying to re-create it one way or another.

So, I teach about Rumi's poems, but none of my students and none of the people I know who love Rumi hold on to a pole and walk 'round and 'round and 'round it to see divine verse comes out. That was what Rumi did. But nobody seems to think they should imitate Rumi. Rather they realize, Aaah! That piece resonates and illuminates their own experience."

DD: Ah-hah! Ah-hah! So do I hear you say, "It's the same mountain?"

JF: Another metaphor I use is, "it's all ice cream." [DD laughs] There's Christianity ice cream, and Islamic and Jewish and Hopi ice cream as well. That people argue about flavors is absurd. That chocolate people feel that the strawberry people should be banished from the

Earth and shouldn't be allowed to breed seems to miss the point. It's all ice cream! As one of my friends said when asked what religion he belongs to, he answers, "Is there more than one?" [DD laughs]

DD: Do you think the plant allies are other ways up the same mountain, or are these different mountains that ayahuasca, iboga, salvia, and others, are taking us to?

JF: This is only an opinion but when you're taking a plant-based substance, say ayahuasca or peyote or mushrooms, that those plants have their own agendas. They are seen by the people who've used them for thousands of years as teaching plants, and one of the things they teach you about are other plants and other species.

The pure synthetics, LSD is the one I know the best, seems to have less of an agenda, so the used can focus in a specific direction. The newer ones have slightly different properties and allow you to discover slightly different areas.

It's like if you're in a large city, say Paris. It has quartiers or little neighborhoods. The neighborhoods are quite different, however they're all part of Paris. It's hard to find a neighborhood where you can't use French, but there are certainly neighborhoods where you can use other languages very well. My feeling is that the folks who take all kinds of different psychedelics are also the people who say, "I want to visit many different cultures." When I visit different cultures, I tend to learn more about my own as a reflection, because I'm really only a visitor in the other ones. So I'm not a big advocate of, "If it's new, let's try it," and, or "Let's mix it with something else and see how it goes." I'm not a chemical experimenter; I'm really more of a kind of simple explorer in the few areas where I already know something. We forget is the really critical and important books that excited a whole generation, Huxley's, *The Doors of Perception*, was written about a first experience. Imagine if people who had sex once, even if, for them, it was really good, wrote your sex manuals!

DD: OK, to change course here ... There are several questions submitted about psychedelics and paranoid ideation, delusion, negative paranoia during sessions...

JF: The whole purpose of a safe secure setting with a

sensitive aware guide, no distractions and careful use of music, is that you just don't see those kinds of events. If you do, they're very brief, because you are there to help the person get through that little patch. Paranoia and metanoia are very close. Paranoia is that everyone is out to get you and metanoia, which I prefer, is that everyone is out to help you. *[DD laughs]*

What happens again and again with people is when they "break through," meaning they break through the shell of their personality, the experience is like angels singing, "Hurray, hurray, hurray! You woke up!" The beings don't say, "This is a surprise!" They say, "You know, you've forgotten who you really were!" The experience is almost always called re-remembering. I love it when the dash is still in re-remembering, not discovering, and that's a very, very big difference. So to return to the paranoid ideation and the freak-outs, I recently asked a whole bunch of San Francisco State students about their drug experiences, particularly their worst one. They almost all understood exactly why they'd had a bad experience. They said, "I was with the wrong group," "I was not with people I trusted," "It was not a safe setting." They understand. And the way you cut down bad trips is to set yourself up not to have them. Again, it's like driving. You don't drive if the fog is so thick you can't see. And if you have to drive in the fog when it's so thick, you drive really, really slowly with your head out the window.

DD: In a therapeutic setting using psychedelics, sometimes, a person who is deeply disturbed, something visceral, will come up and it will turn into a huge raging nightmare, similar to what you see with people with people who are in the wrong setting.

JF: Yeah. But if you are in a safe secure therapeutic setting, it's set up to let you know that that it's Okay and you can get through it. The dark space is a place in consciousness, not the core of your identity. It is more like a pothole or a bridge that's out. There are detours, easy enough to take if you're with people who know the territory.

DD: I recently met someone who does that practice. People come to him to surrender themselves to their nightmares. And they go out into LSD space and he keeps them facing their nightmares. He stays there; he works through it with them. He stays there with them while they're just tripping around in their darkest spaces.

JF: My personal theory is it's a lot easier to take someone into the light - whatever we mean by that. On the way back their dark spaces look really very small. I recall a wonderful friend on LSD who is walking into the light. She turns around and behind her she sees on the road little ugly beings that are her serious disturbances. She realizes that they're not going to survive without her. She has this moment of wanting to run back and pick up and take them into her arms and carry them with her, or as strongly to let them stay behind her and go on without them.

DD: Ah! Which did she do?

JF: A little of both. *[Both laugh]*

DD: We all have our favorite little problems, don't we?

JF: When you come back into your personality at the end of a good session, for many people, it's a surprise that they're in the same body and the same time zone in history, and that the same personality is still running it. It's an amazement and they wonder, "Couldn't I have made a better choice of person to come back to?" *[DD laughs]* And then people say, "I guess there's probably some reason why I'm back as ... as me, as Jim Fadiman, as Diane Darling. I guess I'll work with that."

DD: Tell me what you're working on now. Tell me about your new book.

JF: Well, I came to the conclusion that I knew things that were gradually being phased out because no one else was working on it for the past few decades. I knew a lot about was on setting up really good sessions for what I would call entheogenic or God-manifesting experiences. So I started putting together a little manual, based on what I've been taught on how to do it well. Of course, it got out of hand. It's chapter One of a book I'm calling *Shattering Certainty: Using Psychedelics Wisely and Well*.

There are three major uses for psychedelics that I see, two of which are fairly well understood. One is as central to a spiritual practice or spiritual awareness, spiritual realization. Two is psycho-therapeutically, because it really is a wonderful psychotherapeutic tool. You know, why not take a psychedelic and get a year or two's worth of therapy in a day, it's practical, and we have lots of data that says it's really good.

The third use, not as well known, is for scientific problem solving. For real ahas! on rational hard-nosed problems like those in circuit design, or architecture or mathematical theory. How do you design a better crank-shaft? How do you design a better water system? Using a lower dose and a different kind of focusing works. I'm also writing a manual for that as well as describing results from working this way.

I'm putting in a few other unpublished bits and pieces that I think are useful. For instance, there was a moment when the federal government told all the legal researchers in the country they had to stop. It was a strange feeling to be working with the most psychiatric drug in the world, and the federal government says, "We decided there is nothing you can learn or be allowed to learn about it. Please shut your doors, shut down your institution, and we won't give you any reasons 'cuz we don't have to."

DD: Hmm. What a tragic moment.

JF: It might be like when you're in the best relationship you've ever had in your life, and it's obvious to both of you that's true. And you come home one afternoon and there's a note saying, "It isn't working. Good-bye. I've taken all my stuff and left no forwarding address."

DD: Gosh. You know, I never ... looked at it that way, from the point of view of the researchers. I always thought what a tragedy it was for people who were actually having successful therapy, but it must just have been a terrible blow to their therapists, too...

JF: I was doing successful research on successful therapy as well as doing successful research on scientific problem solving. Since then, of course, lots and lots and lots of scientists, particularly in the computer industry, use psychedelics covertly for their break-throughs. But they don't usually talk about it until they get quite elderly, or are being given a number of awards.

DD: [DD laughs] Yeah, right! Do you think you'll ever be able to resume that research?

JF: Tactually going to be the easiest to resume, because people will do it once they have a little manual. There are a lot of people doing it now who are just kind of guessing their way through it. Look at Burning Man: fifty thousand people, almost all have experimented with psychedelics around art and around technology.

The idea hasn't vanished. It's merely that how to do it easily and well and safely has vanished.

DD: Burning Man ... we kind of sequester ourselves from, you know, the threat of the law, but other than that, safety at Burning Man is uh ... pretty random.

JF: It's matter of how you hold it. I met a wonderful brilliant young man becoming a very skilled body worker who said he would only take LSD at Burning Man. That was the only place he felt that his experience would not be limited. For him, Burning Man as the ultimate safe and secure setting.

DD: Do you, do you see yourself as becoming active as a therapist working with creative people in the psychedelic world?

JF: I could see doing a little work with creative people. But there are enough good therapists and enough good psychedelic therapists already.

I really see myself as putting back out into the larger culture in general, how to use it and how to use it well. The group that doesn't know much is really much younger and going to be using it anyway. I'd just as soon they would have good information. It's hard to realize that you have hundreds of thousands of people each year trying it out, with so little information. Certainly the government puts out none. Even good-hearted people, like the student counseling center for Brown University, for example, don't get it. Their advice for people taking psychedelics was incredibly well meant, not judgmental, but a lot of it was simply wrong. They just didn't know; they'd picked up rumors from a long time ago and amplified them in as kind a way as possible. Even on Erowid, there is really not a good manual on how to take psychedelics well but there is, thank goodness, lots of information on how to help someone who's in trouble.

DD: So do I hear you say that you're hopeful that introducing psychedelics in a measured way can have a profound affect on our chance of survival for the species? JF: If it doesn't help our chances of survival, we won't need to worry about whether psychedelics are legal or not.

Anything that teaches you that other people are not separate from you is good and necessary. It's like war. I used to say that the problem in war is that they ask

you to shoot at people as if they're not your brother and your sister. After you've used psychedelics, it's even harder to shoot at people. It's like shooting one of your fingers off.

That realization makes for compassion, makes for peace, makes for a lot of the values we have lost, really, since agriculture. The current model of bullying people and beating them up and making them do the right thing and having a hierarchy and so forth, is only eight thousand years old. It's not as if humanity's been doing that forever. We can recover the best of hunter-gatherers who had to cooperate. They did not have a fixed hierarchy, because the person who was better at tracking mammoths, he did that. But when it came to gathering the wild rutabagas, there was someone else who was better at that and would be the leader.

Think of the way a flock of geese fly. They have a "V" shape. The leadership keeps changing, because the leader actually doesn't have as much air support as the ones behind. So you have a rotating leadership, but everybody agrees on the direction. That looks to me like a model that people in the psychedelic world intuitively understand is the way to go.

DD: This is great! I have one more question: What are your minimum conditions for paradise? [JF laughs]

JF: I guess it's ... location, location, location? *[Both laugh]*

DD: Menlo Park, Menlo Park, Menlo Park?

JF: No, I think minimum conditions for location is when you close your eyes, that you're not worried about what's going on around you so that you can go inside ... which, as we know, is as large as outside ... and find in there that the universe is made up of cooperative people, events, molecules ... It's all cooperation. The image I'm carrying now, which is the maximum in humility for me, is that 90% or more of the universe is dark matter spread thinly. There are disturbances in the dark matter, little aberrations in dark matter. That's us; that's the stars and that's the galaxies. We're the minority of the minority of the minority. It's a freeing moment to feel, "If I really define myself accurately in terms of the universe, I am a small disturbance in the force."

DD: Yeah! A perturbation, a fractally expressed probability line that managed to extrude itself into three-dimensional reality.

JF: I bet you say that to all the guys. [DD laughs] I couldn't have said it better, Diane. And I'm really grateful for the questions the list produced, because it's what we're doing. It's a cooperative enterprise in that we all have questions.

I was looking at the questions, and my first Jim Fadiman thought was, "Some of these questions are really poor!" And then I thought, "Wait a moment. Wait a moment. There are no poor questions, there are only poor answers." [DD laughs] The question either evokes something in the answerer or the answerer is unable to make use of it. In this interview I feel well-evoked! Thank you.

DD: Yeah! You spoke beautifully! I'm so happy to just be able to talk with you on this level. It's just fascinating. You're such a fascinating mind with such a great heart. I'm so happy to be your friend.

Diane Darling



Diane Darling has lived many lifetimes and performed countless acts of Love and Magick.

Diane was the long standing editor of the late lamented "Green Egg Magazine", co-edited Ralph Metzner's Sacred Mushroom of Visions – Teonanácatl, and is a cherished member - contributor of "The Invisible College".

