

PROMISING RESEARCH ON PSILOCYBIN

Sept 1st, 2022

WARM-UP QUESTIONS: *Discuss the following questions with your partner(s).*

1. Do you like mushrooms? Did you like them as a child?
2. Read the headline above. Have you heard this news story? If so, say what you know. If not, can you guess what it is about?

VOCABULARY: *Match the following vocabulary words with a description. Use a dictionary if you need to.*

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|------------------|---|
| 1. Cut back | a) a formal event that happens according to tradition or rules |
| 2. Hallucination | b) someone whose job is to help people with physical, mental, or emotional problems |
| 3. Ceremony | c) a type of drug that makes the user see and hear things that are not there |
| 4. Recreation | d) when you cannot stop doing or using something |
| 5. Psychedelic | e) seeing something that does not exist |
| 6. Addiction | f) to reduce something |
| 7. Therapist | g) seeming to be from another world, spiritual |
| 8. Placebo | h) the process or result of making something smaller |
| 9. Otherworldly | i) a substance that is not medicine but is used for comparison in testing the effectiveness of medicine |
| 10. Reduction | j) things you do for enjoyment |

LISTEN: *Listen to the audio track on eslnewsstories.com or to a reader of the text. Try to fill in the missing words. Then check your answers with the full text (below).*

New research on psilocybin shows that it can help _____ drinkers cut back on alcohol. Psilocybin occurs in several species of mushrooms, which are known informally as 'magic mushrooms.' They cause people to experience _____ effects such as hallucinations.

Historically, some cultures have used magic mushrooms for religious ceremonies, and modern users often do so for recreation. Although taking psilocybin is illegal in most places, medical

researchers are currently interested in it and other psychedelic drugs for the _____ of addiction and depression.

In the study, heavy drinkers were given a pill and cared for by therapists in a comfortable environment. Half of the participants received psilocybin and _____ received a placebo. They were encouraged to wear an eye mask and to listen to music through headphones. They also took _____ in therapy sessions in the weeks before and after taking the pill.

The participants who received psilocybin reported having otherworldly experiences and in most cases were able to _____ that they got the real psilocybin. Both the psilocybin takers and the placebo takers experienced a reduction in drinking following their treatment. However, there was an 83% drop in heavy drinking _____ those who received the psilocybin versus a 51% drop among those who received the placebo.

Researchers say more study is necessary to learn about the long-term effects of using psilocybin.

WORD FORMS: *Fill in different forms for the vocabulary from the article. Use a dictionary if you need to. Where there is an x, the word is unimportant for ESL students, has a different meaning, or does not exist. Sometimes there are multiple possible answers, and sometimes the adjective form is a past or present participle.*

VERB	ADJECTIVE	ADVERB	NOUN
			hallucination
x			ceremony
			addiction
		x	reduction

FULL STORY:

New research on psilocybin shows that it can help heavy drinkers cut back on alcohol. Psilocybin occurs in several species of mushrooms, which are known informally as ‘magic mushrooms.’ They cause people to experience strong effects such as hallucinations.

Historically, some cultures have used magic mushrooms for religious ceremonies, and modern users often do so for recreation. Although taking psilocybin is illegal in most places, medical researchers are currently interested in it and other psychedelic drugs for the treatment of addiction and depression.

In the study, heavy drinkers were given a pill and cared for by therapists in a comfortable environment. Half of the participants received psilocybin and half received a placebo. They were encouraged to wear an eye mask and to listen to music through headphones. They also took part in therapy sessions in the weeks before and after taking the pill.

The participants who received psilocybin reported having otherworldly experiences and in most cases were able to guess that they got the real psilocybin. Both the psilocybin takers and the placebo takers experienced a reduction in drinking following their treatment. However, there was an 83% drop in heavy drinking among those who received the psilocybin versus a 51% drop among those who received the placebo.

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Sources: theguardian.com, nytimes.com, wikipedia.org, jamanetwork.com
For source links, see the article on ESLNewsStories.com

COMPREHENSION: *Decide if the following are true (T) or false (F), and then discuss your answers with your partner(s).*

1. Psilocybin is found in mushrooms. (T / F)
2. Taking psilocybin is legal in most places . (T / F)
3. Heavy drinkers drank less after taking psilocybin. (T / F)
4. Therapy was not helpful. (T / F)

COMPLETE: *Re-order the following sentences. Capitalize certain words and add punctuation.*

1. some / struggle / with / heavy / people / drinking
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2. too / psilocybin / it / early / prescribe / is / to
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DISCUSSION: *Discuss the following questions with your partner(s). Try to speak in sentences and ask follow-up questions.*

1. What did you think about this story? Was there any surprising information?
2. How much drinking is okay and how much is too often?
3. Is anyone you know a heavy drinker? Does it cause problems for them?
4. Are you addicted to anything? What would you like to cut back on?
5. Have you ever picked wild mushrooms to eat? Is it easy to know if a mushroom is safe to eat or poisonous?

