

# WHY VERMONT SHOULD LEGALIZE MAGIC MUSHROOMS

By: Melinda Moulton

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When I was twelve years old, I lost my mother suddenly and my default was to stop eating. They say that one of the things that a child has total decision-making power over is eating. This provides them with a sense of “control.” Certainly, I was trying to control my circumstances which were out in left field during that time. For eight years I weighed a mere 90 pounds and refused to eat except for low calorie items: oranges, apples, pineapples, and pears – I called myself a “Fruitarian” to avoid judgement. I never ate lunch with my friends at school and I was considered a bit of a weirdo. Because of a lack of food, I developed Amenorrhea which meant that I no longer had my period. My father frantically tried to find specialists to help me with what he considered a “rebellious and stubborn phase” but at the time – during the early 1960’s - anorexia was not a known mental health issue. With no diagnosis, they reported to him that I would probably never have children. Fast forward to my college years and being introduced to a psilocybin experience. That night under the influence of these naturally grown mushrooms, I had a period. The journey to heal my mind and body and return to a more normal life began in earnest. I was reborn with a sense of purpose and a lust for living. Two years later, I was pregnant with my first child, Eli. So why am I sharing all of this with you? Because I have firsthand knowledge that psilocybin mushrooms are a medical and mental health remedy. Did you know that the US Food and Drug Administration recently assigned magic mushrooms with a breakthrough therapy designation? According to COMPASS Pathways (a mental healthcare company that is dedicated to supporting wide patient exposure providing evidence-based innovation in mental health) *“early studies have shown that psilocybin therapy can provide an*

*immediate and sustained reduction in depression following a single treatment – the effect has been described as psilocybin shaking the brain up like a snow globe, or rebooting the brain, providing new connections and deactivating connections that might have caused depression*". Reported experiences have included personal feelings of peacefulness, discovery of self, unconditional love, heightened joy, openness, and a newfound ability to relate to the surrounding world.

The earliest known written record about psilocybin is in the Florentine Codex compiled between 1529 and 1579. Since then, there has been much written about magic mushrooms. For this commentary, I have chosen to focus on science and research. Here are a few of the findings. Emotions and brain function are positively altered up to one month after a single dose of psilocybin. Anxiety and depression are reduced for as long as six months. Long-lasting beneficial effects help people with life-threatening illnesses. Psychological flexibility is increased along with feelings of personal meaningfulness resulting in an improved mental outlook. I have been reading scientific research papers that clearly show that magic mushrooms are effective in treating a plethora of mental and physical conditions in a safe way without lingering side effects. It is just a matter of time before we see mushroom treatment part of an accepted regimen for those who suffer from cancer, impending death, depression, eating disorders, addiction, PTSD, migraines, anxiety, bi-polar disorder, suicide, schizophrenia, phantom-limb pain, and many other mental and physical conditions. And yet, psilocybin is illegal under federal law and is classified as a schedule 1 controlled drug which means jail time. Full legalization of magic mushrooms is only available in the State of Oregon and Washington, DC. Here in Vermont, they are still illegal.

That said, the times they are a 'changing, and our Vermont Legislature is beginning to take notice. Legislator Brian Cina stated, *"In some cultures, peyote is used to cure mental and physical illness, and the same can be said for psilocybin mushrooms"* Brian believes

that plants are a gift from nature, and they are part of the web of life that humans are connected to. Today hundreds of clinical studies are confirming the potential of psilocybin-assisted therapy as *“a promising adjunct to psychotherapy.”* Gary Fisher, inventor of the modern mountain bike, believes that *“with psychedelics, if you are fortunate and you have a breakthrough, you understand what is truly of value in life. Material, power, dominance, and territory have no value. People would not fight wars, and the whole system we have currently would fall apart. People would become peaceful, loving citizens, not robots marching around in the dark with all their lights off.”*

I will be grateful for that day when humans can freely use psilocybin to understand and embrace true consciousness and expand their psyche toward enlightenment where Love transcends all else. Thank you for listening and for supporting H.371.

Melinda Moulton

Huntington, Vermont