

Setting Intentions for your Ketamine Sessions

“Mind-Set and Setting” are very important for your medicine experiences. They are the internal and external environments that shape your journey. Developing intentions for your sessions is an excellent way to cultivate your mindset.

You can't control non-ordinary states of consciousness; thankfully! If you could, you'd likely recreate the same challenges you are trying to address out of deeply ingrained habits. However, an intention will give you a potential focus and direction to begin with and a grounding spot to return to.

Think of intentions like seeds: they might grow and fruit quickly, they may never sprout and go to compost, they could prepare the ground for another flower, or take many sessions to root before any sign of progress. Regardless of what happens: they are good for growth.

The benefits of setting an intention before the ketamine experience:

- Creates a more meaningful experience
- Helps to anchor you when your mind goes to unhelpful places
- Post-ketamine insights will be easier to integrate; you'll have a framework or meaning scaffolding to hang your experiences and insights on.
- Enhances the potential for a learning and healing experience
- As time passes after the experience, reflecting on the intention you set and how it is showing up will help further your personal growth

Your intentions will likely change between sessions, even within the course of one session. Wear them as a loose garment. For instance, you might find it's best for you to “drop” an intention, or allow it to transform, to make way for something you could have never predicted. In many ways healing is an exercise in flexibility; learning how to adapt and change your intentions is part of learning how to adapt and change yourself.

It's a good idea to start simple: many people begin with the intention of being open to what comes up: a curious, non-judgemental internal stance to learn about what the experience has to offer, and to learn more about themselves. Mental illness often tempts us to try to over-control ourselves or our environment; many folks find the intention to “learning how to let-go” a useful place to begin.

You might find it useful to frame your intentions not only in terms of what you want to lose or stop, but what you want to gain, or how you would like to be. For example, “learning to let go” is often paired with “learning how to trust; yourself, your community or the universe.” Lose a burden, find a gift.

Intention comes from the word “to tense or flex”, a willful energy. It can be useful to think of your experiences like a dance- flexing your intention, then relaxing. Asking, then listening. Moving, and being moved.



Resist the urge to tackle too much at once while leaning into challenging yourself to dig deep as you are able. Over time you might get more specific intentions around personal issues you wish to work on or gain clarity about. Some clients have found it useful to approach a major problem or particularly difficult memory within the medicine state so that they can think or feel about them in new ways. This can be a challenging practice! You'll want to feel comfortable with the medicine, as well as your capacity to regulate difficult emotions, before you attempt to challenge yourself. Once you do, you might find you have a new relationship to the difficulty; a new way of thinking or feeling about it that stays with you.

Meditation, prayer, journaling, and discussions with loved ones or a therapist are helpful ways to prepare and identify intentions that are in alignment with your personal growth. It can be helpful to find a place of stillness through meditation, spending time in nature, taking some deep breaths in a quiet space, until you arrive at a place of deep listening to your inner knowing. Your intention might be entirely non-verbal! Other ways to embody, express or cultivate intention:

Yoga

Dance/Movement

Poetry

Visual Arts

Continuing to process, clarify and refine your intentions in between sessions will help them evolve and grow as you do.

Questions you could ask when setting an intention

- Why did I choose to partake in this experience?
- What do I most wish to receive from this experience?
- What is missing from my life that I would like to experience more of?
- What is preventing me from having more of what I want in my life? Can I let it go?
- What am I grateful for? What inspires me? What dreams do I have?
- What fears, thoughts, beliefs no longer serve me?
- How can forgiving myself or others help me?
- What part of my life or myself is calling for me to more fully step into?
- What message do I need to hear, understand, or feel more clearly within myself?

A short affirmation or "mantra" can help distill and instill your intention. These mantras can be used at the beginning of a session and can be returned to in moments where you feel stuck or trying to move through a challenging moment. Try to hone your intention into a 3-8 word theme or phrase that can be repeated with mindful breaths. Here are some samples.

- *Be here now*
- *Trust, let go, be open*
- *I am in a safe space/ I am safe here*
- *May I be changed*
- *May I go somewhere healing*

- *I learn from all experiences, good and bad*
- *I am and I am becoming*
- *I release what I cannot control*
- *I am worthy of love / I deserve forgiveness*

Christian Smith, LLMSW

