

# Experiences of God – Whether Spontaneous or Via Psychedelics – Bring Lasting Mental Health Benefits

By [Nikki Harper](#), Staff Writer for [Wake Up World](#), November 8th, 2019

<https://wakeup-world.com/2019/11/08/experiences-of-god-whether-spontaneous-or-via-psychedelics-bring-lasting-mental-health-benefits/>



Research from John Hopkins University and the Council of Spiritual Practices has confirmed something we may have instinctively guessed at – a spiritually significant encounter with whatever you believe to be god brings mental health benefits which can last for decades after the encounter.

Indeed, of the study participants who categorized themselves as previously having been atheists, two thirds no longer identify as atheists following their spiritual encounter. Perhaps surprisingly for some, the mental health benefits of [spiritual encounters](#) are virtually identical for those who had a spontaneous spiritual experience and those who had the experience while under the influence of a psychedelic drug [1].

Researchers hope that this study could be another step in the pathway towards using some psychedelic drugs, such as [psilocybin](#), for mental health therapeutic treatment under controlled conditions.

The research involved examining the experiences of 4285 people from across the world, of whom 69% were men. The participants were self-selected via responses to advertisements. They were asked to fill in one of two 50-minute questionnaires, depending whether their spiritual encounter had been spontaneous or attributed to the use of a [psychedelic](#).

Across both groups, 75% of respondents reported that their encounter with god or a spiritual entity was the most meaningful in their life and both groups overwhelmingly reported positive changes in their life satisfaction, meaning and purpose following the encounter, even when the encounter was many years ago [1].

Those in the spontaneous encounter group were most likely to select 'god' or 'emissary of god' when asked to categorise who or what they encountered, while those in the psychedelics group were most likely to select 'ultimate reality' to describe their encounter [1]. However, although the terminology differed, there were very significant similarities in the experiences reported by both groups.

Across all participants, 70% described the entity they encountered as being conscious, and 80% perceived it as intelligent. 75% of respondents reported that they felt their encounter was benevolent and 75% also described it as sacred, with a further 70% of people categorising the entity they encountered as having eternal life or eternal being [1].

These life-changing encounters overwhelmingly led to a decrease in the [fear of death](#), although this was strikingly higher – 70% – in the psychedelics group than in the non-drug group, where 57% reported the same [1].

This research, published in the PLOS One journal, is significant in that it is the first time that researchers have sought to compare drug-induced mystical experiences with non-drug spiritual encounters. Some of the researchers involved have previously studied the potential of psilocybin to help people stop smoking or to lessen the psychological stress of a cancer diagnosis, and it seems that this latest research would support the idea that psychedelics can have lasting, positive mental health impacts.

The study authors caution that since this research involved self-selected and self-reporting participants, there is potential for inaccuracy or bias in the results. They also stress that the study was not intended to say anything about the existence or otherwise of god; it was purely intended to research people's experiences. Nevertheless, it is a fascinating insight into the healing qualities of mystical experiences, no matter how they come about.

**Article source:**

- [1] <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/news/newsroom/news-releases/experiences-of-ultimate-reality-or-god-confer-lasting-benefits-to-mental-health>

**About the author:**

Nikki Harper is a spiritualist writer, astrologer, and editor for Wake Up World.