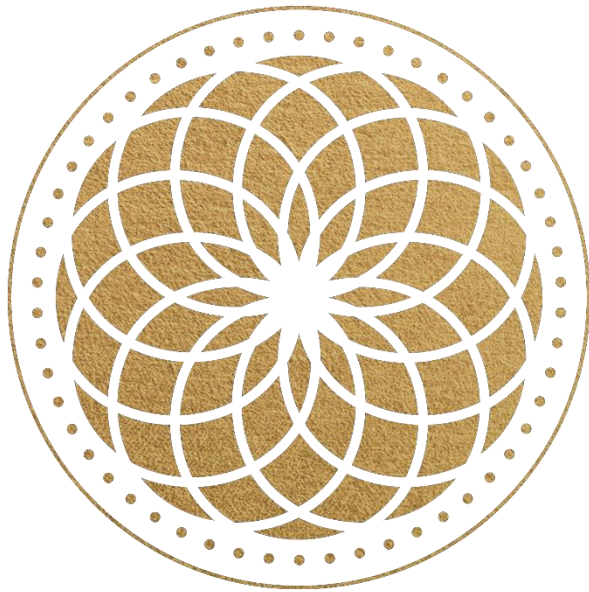




Psychedelic
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Psychedelic Institute Australia

Essential Skills for Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy:
Clinical Skills intensive workshop
Full Workshop Description

Melbourne, June 24-28, 2024



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Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy Essential Skills Workshop

Background

The Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) rescheduled MDMA and psilocybin as Schedule 8 Controlled Medicines from the 1st of July 2023 following increasing emerging evidence that MDMA-assisted psychotherapy and psilocybin-assisted psychotherapy are effective at treating PTSD and Major Depressive Disorder, respectively (Bright & Williams, 2018; Bright et al., 2017; Kisely et al., 2023; Strauss et al., 2016; Thal et al., 2021). In doing so, Australia has become the first country in the world to recognise these drugs as medicines. Training has been identified as a key part of safely translating these new treatments from research to the community (Williams et al., 2021).

Two Phase 3 Randomised Controlled Trials have examined MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for PTSD. Following treatment between 67% and 71% of participants assigned to the MDMA condition no longer met criteria for PTSD compared with 32% of participants assigned to the placebo condition (Mitchell et al., 2021; Mitchell et al., 2023). These and other studies have used the MAPS MDMA-assisted Psychotherapy Manual (Mithoefer, 2017).

While a number of clinical trials have examined whether psilocybin-assisted psychotherapy is an effective treatment for Major Depressive Disorder, Phase 3 trials have not yet been published (Carhart-Harris et al., 2021; Carhart-Harris et al., 2016; Goodwin et al., 2023; Griffiths et al., 2016). Unlike MDMA-assisted psychotherapy, the psychotherapy component of the treatment investigated in these studies has not been standardised, with several treatment manuals used in research to-date (e.g., Guss et al., 2020; Harvey, 2021; Watts, 2021). Despite being informed by different schools of psychotherapy, these manuals all outline a similar structure for psilocybin-assisted psychotherapy: preparation, administration and integration.

Two of the present trainers (PS & SB) were authors of a recent systematic review of preparation in substance-assisted psychotherapy ($k = 83$ studies) which found that the way in which clients have been prepared for an administration session has varied widely across the studies (Thal et al., 2022). Likewise, these authors reviewed the content of administration sessions ($k = 82$ studies). They found that there was a range of therapeutic approaches used in the studies to-date and that these approaches then informed the conduct of therapists in administration sessions (Thal et al., 2023). Nonetheless, the key qualities and competencies required of psychedelic-assisted therapists engaging in this work have been well defined (Phelps, 2017; Harvey, 2021), and will be a key focus in the present training.



PIA's Bespoke Training Model

1. Learning Processes and Program Goal

There are 3 basic processes involved in developing new therapist skills: acquiring theoretical knowledge (declarative information), learning procedural skills, and engaging in reflective practice. PIA's Psychedelic-assisted Therapy Essential Skills program addresses all 3 elements.

Theoretical/didactic knowledge will be acquired through pre-course online learning and a limited amount of didactic content during the workshop. However, **the primary focus of PIA's Psychedelic-assisted Therapy Essential Skills program will be on Skills Training**, acquired through a mix of pairs and group role-plays, demonstration, self-experiential learning, and reflective practice (Bennett-Levy, 2006).

Our overriding goal is that after the 5-day program, clinicians should feel equipped to step into the role of psychedelic-assisted therapy practitioner.

(To be clear: a prerequisite for any psychedelic-assisted therapist is that they should already have a strong foundation and experience as a therapist. We shall not be accepting anyone onto this program without that foundation. Equally, we are not suggesting that, after 5 days training, you will be a highly competent psychedelic-assisted therapist. That requires a range of clinical experience, ongoing supervision, and self-reflective practice. Our goal is that after 5 days, you will be ready to take your first steps as a psychedelic-assisted therapist - with clinical supervision and a strong self-reflective practice already in place.)

2. Course Content

The basics of psychedelic-assisted therapy are Set and Setting. To these, the PIA program adds third and fourth 'S' categories: Skills Training and Self-Reflection. Over the course of the 5 days, the focus will be on each of the S'es.

- **Setting:** Creating a well-managed and safe experience for the client is fundamental to good psychedelic-assisted therapy. Workshop content will include elements such as: how to set up the therapy space, the use of music, safety equipment/strategies, physical monitoring, and other aspects of managing the client's wellbeing and comfort.
- **Set:** The client's mental set in approaching psychedelic-assisted therapy is central to achieving positive outcomes. At all points in the workshop, the focus will be on enhancing the client's mental set through attending to all aspects of preparing the client, as well as administration and integration sessions.



- **Skills Training:** Building on trainees' existing therapist skills, there are a number of skills specific to psychedelic-assisted therapy that are used in preparation, administration and integration sessions. Trainees will be coached in the use of these skills by our trainers and will then practice them in small groups. For instance, we'll address a range of likely challenges that may occur in administration sessions, such as clients becoming agitated and wanting to leave, how to navigate difficult experiences and aspects such as boundaries related to physical contact. Crucial aspects of Integration will be covered: for instance, how to manage situations where clients have had particularly challenging experiences. External management going forward is also important and will include the role of the wider support system as well as how clients can continue to keep their experience alive, consolidating and growing the positive gains moving forward. The interface with other approaches to therapy will be covered here too, so that therapists can manage smooth integration of therapy prior to and following the experience to maximum effect.
- **Self-Reflection:** Personal practice is important for all therapists in achieving the best outcomes for their clients (Bennett-Levy, 2019). However, it is particularly important for psychedelic-assisted therapists, who may be dealing with therapeutic challenges completely outside of their previous experience. Hence, there is a focus on self-reflective practice throughout the 5-day training. Trainees will reflect on issues such as: working in a co-therapy dyad, working with their own and others' non-ordinary states of consciousness, managing clients with particularly challenging experiences, and integrating psychedelic-assisted therapy skills with their existing clinical practice.

3. Course Structure

This course is delivered through a blended Hybrid modality: **In-person** and **Online**.

The online portion is comprised of 5 modules and is delivered through the [Psychedelics Today](#) education platform [Psychedelic Education Center](#). Once enrolled, you will receive access to the course 4 weeks before the five-day intensive.

You are not required to complete the online component before the course, but you are required to complete it in order to receive your certificate of completion.

The five day intensive will be delivered at the designated location, from 9am to 5pm daily.



4. Learning outcomes

Upon completion of **part 1 (eLearning)** training component, participants should be able to:

- name the main categories of psychedelic substances,
- identify key events and figures of psychedelic history in western civilization,
- name the main research areas of the 50's and 60's,
- summarise the main research findings of contemporary research,
- describe Grof's model of the psyche and use it to assist in understanding a participant's psychedelic experience,
- explain the key components and dimensions of altered states of consciousness induced by psychedelics,
- describe the fundamental principles and methodologies that underlie psychedelic therapy, and
- evaluate the potential benefits and risks associated with psychedelic therapy.

Upon completion of **part 2 (in-person workshop)** training component, participants should be able to:

- understand inclusion/exclusion criteria for the treatment,
- select, administer and evaluate appropriate baseline and outcome assessments,
- manage communication and collaboration with wider treatment professionals,
- set up and manage the treatment environment,
- demonstrate an understanding of how to conduct preparation of the participant for the dosing session,
- thoroughly understand safety concerns. They will be able to set up and implement safety protocols,
- demonstrate knowledge of the principles of integration, conduct integration sessions, and be able to help participants with application of integration strategies, and
- have a thorough understanding of ethical principles in conducting this therapy.



Daily Schedule: *

Day 1: Setting the Stage for Safe Journeys

- Creating a therapeutic environment.
- Managing the therapy space and client comfort.
- Safety protocols and physical monitoring.

Day 2: Self-Reflection and Preparation

- Recognizing essential therapist qualities.
- Enhancing personal skills and self-awareness.
- Role-play preparation sessions in small groups.

Days 3 and 4: Experiencing and Navigating Journeys

- Simulated dosing session experience.
- Being with clients during the journey.
- Addressing challenges and difficult experiences.
- Managing boundaries and physical contact.

Day 5: Integration and Beyond

- Focusing on post-session integration.
- Role-plays for handling challenging client experiences.
- Incorporating support systems and continued growth.
- Integrating psychedelic therapy with other therapeutic approaches.
- Ongoing support, supervision, and therapist development.

*Schedule is subject to change not final.



The Trainers:

Renee Harvey is a clinical psychologist who has had trial experience in studies of the use of psychedelics in the UK and in Australia, as well as over 30 years' experience working as a clinical psychologist in the mental health field with individuals with severe difficulties. During that time, she has run therapist training courses across the UK and internationally. Dr Harvey has appeared in podcasts and is a regular presenter at conferences. She has written a book chapter on the training of therapists in psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy. Renee has a particular interest in depth psychology and the potential for psychedelics to facilitate transformative change.

Dr Stephen Bright is a clinically trained psychologist who has 18 years' experience working with people experiencing a substance use disorder that is co-morbid with one or more mental disorders. He is the principal investigator of Australia's first clinical trial of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy where he works as a co-therapist with Associate Professor Petra Skeffington


Dr Bright is also an associate investigator and lead therapist in a Phase 2 trial of psilocybin-assisted psychotherapy for PTSD. He has been providing clinical training for the past 10 years and is a psychology board approved supervisor. Dr Bright is Senior Lecturer and course coordinator of the Addiction Studies program at Edith Cowan University.


Associate Professor Petra Skeffington is a Clinical Psychologist in Private Practice, and an academic at Murdoch University in Perth. Her research and clinical expertise centres on psychological trauma and recovery, including resilience to trauma, prevention of post-trauma pathologies, and innovative approaches to treating psychological trauma. A/Prof Skeffington was one of the first Australians to achieve MAPS certification for MDMA-Assisted Psychotherapy in early 2023, is a lead therapist on a clinical trial investigating MDMA-Assisted Psychotherapy and is part of the therapy team on a clinical trial investigating Psilocybin-Assisted Psychotherapy.

James Bennett-Levy is Professor in Mental Health and Psychological Wellbeing at Sydney University's University Centre of Rural Health (UCRH), based in Lismore. He is a clinical psychologist and researcher, who has trained therapists in 27 countries, and published 5 books for therapists. James' primary research interests over the past 20 years have been on experiential learning and self-reflection for therapists, and on experiential learning for clients (e.g. imagery). He is Series Editor of Guilford Press' Self-Practice/Self-Reflection Guides for Psychotherapists. Over the past 3 years, James has been involved in psychedelic-assisted therapy in Australia, variously as trainer, therapist, chief investigator, researcher, and facilitator of psychedelic-assisted therapy webinars for health professionals.



Workshop Details:

 **Dates:** February 12th - 16th 2024

 **Time:** 5 Full days 9am to 5pm

Morning and afternoon tea provided. Explore Byron cafes at lunchtime.

 **Location:** Abbotsford Convent
1 St Heliers St, Abbotsford, VIC 3067

Express your interest by filling out the form below:

Link to Expression of Interest form:

<https://gmk2v8v9sfd.typeform.com/to/xlu5JIAY>

QR Code:





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How to Contact Us

Questions? Feedback? More Information?

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