# Richard Alpert

Richard Alpert/Ram Dass wasn’t the first hippy to go to India seeking enlightenment, but he was by far the best known with his 1971 book, *Be Here Now*. Previously, he was a Harvard psychology professor and associate of Timothy Leary in their Harvard psychedelic adventures.

Alpert was an atheist until he tried psilocybin in 1961. Of Jewish parentage and with a PhD in psychology from Stanford University, he said, "I didn't have one whiff of God until I took psychedelics." He experienced psilocybin while teaching at Harvard University with Timothy Leary in 1961, and they then co-founded the Harvard Psilocybin Project to study the therapeutic effects of hallucinogenic drugs.

In 1962, Alpert and Leary co-founded The International Federation for Internal Freedom (later The Castalia Foundation) to investigate psychedelics' spiritual aspects. Both Alpert and Leary were dismissed from Harvard in 1963. They then created a community, commonly known as Millbrook, at a rented estate in Millbrook, New York, to explore divinity and higher consciousness.

Dissatisfied with the ephemeral nature of the divine connection on psychedelics, Alpert went looking for a way to make the spiritual experience stick. In India, he apprenticed to a guru called Maharajji (Neem Karoli Baba), who gave him the name Ram Dass, meaning "servant of Ram (God)."

Returning to the United States, Ram Dass began to serve as a bridge between the spiritual traditions of the East and the mind expansion explorers of the West. In 1971, he published, with the help of the community at the Lama Foundation in Taos, New Mexico, the best-selling "countercultural bible," *Be Here Now,* an instruction manual for spiritual seekers. "It isn’t true that everyone should follow one path. Listen to your own truth," he said. Over the next 40 years, Ram Dass wrote a dozen more books on spirituality.

In a lifetime of spiritual service, Ram Dass co-founded nonprofits such as the Hanuman Foundation (promote spiritual well-being), the Prison-Ashram Project (help convicts via spirituality; now the Human Kindness Foundation), the Living/Dying Project (help those facing death), and the Seva Foundation (help cure the blind). His emphasis on spiritual service was based on his belief that the divine is in everything. "Treat everyone you meet like God in drag," he said.

In addition to his service work, Ram Dass produced a large body of teaching — books, articles, talks in audio and video formats — on spiritual topics including accessing and optimizing our spiritual powers, practicing meditation, using mantras, serving others as a spiritual discipline, and dying consciously. He said, "I help people as a way to work on myself, and I work on myself to help people."

Even after a 1997 stroke left him partially paralyzed and with difficulty speaking, Ram Dass continued to share his knowledge with his international community of followers. He died in 2019, at age 88. "We're all just walking each other home," he said.

# Rick Doblin

Rick Doblin is president of the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, which he founded in 1986. MAPS is a nonprofit research and educational organization with the mission to raise knowledge and awareness of psychedelics. It works towards prescription-medicine status for psychedelics and marijuana and for their use in personal growth and therapy.

Doblin was a MDMA dealer early on when it was still legal.  Psychologists, mostly in Northern California, had found MDMA to be very effective in healing emotional traumas. A federal judge assigned to research it by consulting with pharmacologists, psychologists, epidemiologists, etc., concluded that it was safe and had probable medical usefulness. The FDA chose to disregard his recommendation and place it in Schedule I, the most severe category, where by definition it has high abuse potential and no medical usefulness. Thus began a 16-year-long series of legal procedural interactions between MAPS and the FDA to finally allow a psychiatrist to give it to 12 patients with PTSD.

Doblin's life is profiled in the book, *Acid Test: LSD, Ecstasy, and the Power to Heal*, by Tom Shroder. (Read at <https://archive.org/details/acidtestlsdecsta0000shro>).

In a telling of his origin story ([https://youtu.be/4s\_j2OJOhrI](https://archive.org/details/acidtestlsdecsta0000shro)), Doblin says, "I've been driven to spend my life trying to reduce the potential for [human] evil and increase the potential for good through working toward mass mental health and the spiritualized humanity. I focus my work on trying to mainstream and globalize legal access to the therapeutic, spiritual, and celebratory uses of psychedelics." His story is also told in Rachel Nuwer's book, *I Feel Love: MDMA and the Quest for Connection in a Fractured World.*

His first use of psychdelics in the 1970s when he was a college student opened him up to his emotions and helped him feel a sense of interconnectedness with the whole world. He felt it was like what some of the astronauts were saying as they looked back at the Earth from space. "I decided that if more people could have this experience, this could be the antidote to evil."

He studied with Stanislav Grof, an eminent psychiatrist specializing in non-ordinary states of consciousness, including holotropic breathwork. Doblin encountered MDMA in 1982 at Esalen and as part of his journey to becoming a psychedelic therapist used it on a suicidal patient, who was healed. In 1984, the U.S. made MDMA illegal. Doblin's journey to try to make it legal again saw him getting a PhD. in Public Policy from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard so he would understand politics.

Influencing the FDA, a large-scale MAPS study showed a two-thirds cure rate for PTSD, measured 2 months after 3 MDMA sessions. Therapeutic use of psilocybin is also making its way through the FDA. Doblin anticipates FDA approval that will allow training of 25,000 therapists, and administration of a million MDMA sessions in 6,000 or more psychedelic clinics throughout the United States by 2030. He emphasizes our need for storytelling and public education to prepare the culture for what's coming.

MAP continues to work towards a drug policy shift from prohibition to public health and to promote the "fundamental human right to explore our consciousness however we see fit." Doblin's TED talk is at [https://www.ted.com/speakers/rick\_doblin](https://archive.org/details/acidtestlsdecsta0000shro).

# Bill Hicks

Bill Hicks was a daring stand-up comedian of the 1980s and early 1990s, often compared to Lenny Bruce. Among the taboo subjects he pioneered: religion, politics, philosophy, and drugs — he encouraged the use of marijuana, LSD, and mushrooms. He writes:

I was born William Melvin Hicks on December 16, 1961 in Valdosta, Georgia. Ugh. Melvin Hicks from Georgia. Yee Har! I already had gotten off to life on the wrong foot. I was always 'awake,' I guess you’d say. Some part of me clamoring for new insights and new ways to make the world a better place... I always wanted to be ... that lone voice in the wilderness, fighting corruption and evil wherever I found it, and standing for freedom, truth and justice.

In his video, *Sane Man,* he says:

You know what the problem with the war on drugs is? They lump all drugs together. You know what I mean? Pot and crack! And they're not the same. Not only do I think pot should be legalized, I think it should be mandatory.

This excerpt, from his album, *Relentless,* is classic Hicks on drugs:

D’ you ever see a good drug story on the news? Never. News is supposed to be objective, isn’t it supposed to be, theeeeee NEWS! BUT, every drug story is negative. Oooh, hold it! I’ve had some killer fucking times on drugs. Let’s hear the whole story....

How about a positive LSD story, that would be newsworthy, don’t you think? Anybody think that? Just once to hear a positive LSD story; “Today a young man on acid… …realized that all matter is merely energy condensed to a slow vibration. That we are all one consciousness experiencing itself subjectively. There is no such thing as death, life is only a dream and we are the imagination of ourselves… …Here’s Tom with the weather.”

Hicks died on February 26th, 1994, of pancreatic cancer at the age of 32. More than a quarter of a century later, he is more popular than ever, an icon, sampled in popular music and discussed and quoted endlessly online.

# Albert Hofmann

Albert Hofmann was a Swiss chemist working for the pharmaceutical company Sandoz Laboratories investigating the fungus ergot when he first synthesized LSD on November 16, 1938. He set it aside (without trying it) for five years until he felt drawn to reexamine it — and inadvertently contaminated himself with a small amount. That would be April 16, 1943, commonly known as Bicycle Day to honor Hofmann's LSD-fueled trip home on his bicycle, with his assistant trailing worriedly behind.

A few days later, Hofmann took a dose he thought would be extremely small (250 mcg) and found out it was quite big, as he took the Earth's first LSD trip. He took small doses throughout his life and said it was a sacred drug for experiencing the true nature of reality. His book, *LSD: My Problem Child*, tells the story.

# Julie Holland

Julie Holland, M.D., is a psychiatrist specializing in psychopharmacology. She is the editor of two non-profit books: *Ecstasy: The Complete Guide: A Comprehensive Look at the Risks and Benefits of MDMA* and *The Pot Book: A Complete Guide to Cannabis*; proceeds go to fund therapeutic studies.

Other books by Dr. Holland are *Weekends at Bellevue*, about her experiences running a psychiatric emergency room on weekends; *Moody Bitches: The Truth About the Drugs You're Taking, the Sleep You're Missing, the Sex You're Not Having, and What's Really Making You Feel Crazy*; and *Good Chemistry: The Science of Connection, From Soul to Psychedelic*.

Dr. Holland has appeared as an expert on mental illness and drug use on *Today*, *Good Morning America*, *Dr. Oz*, and *Katie Couric*, among other shows. She lectures widely and has been quoted in *Time*, *Harper's*, *Slate*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal*.

# Timothy Leary

Timothy Leary was the controversial clinical psychologist and Harvard University professor who popularized the use of LSD. After having an interesting psilocybin experience in Mexico in 1960, Leary founded the Harvard Psilocybin Project. LSD was still legal at that time, and he conducted experiments with it that eventually got him fired for alleged breaches of scientific ethics, such as taking the drugs along with his research subjects.

In 1963, he and his fellow teacher Richard Alpert (Baba Ram Dass) were both fired from Harvard. In 1962, they had co-founded The International Federation for Internal Freedom (later The Castalia Foundation), and then created the community called Millbrook for exploration of higher consciousness.

In Leary's quest to spread the word about LSD, he was arrested at least 36 times, and Richard Nixon famously called him "the most dangerous man in America." Many people blame him for LSD being made illegal and thus unavailable for research. His many books include *Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out.*

Leary was the most famous / infamous LSD proselytizer. The following is an excerpt from his 1966 Playboy interview. I recommend the entire interview. It is readily available online.

PIAYBOY: Would you elaborate?

LEARY: I'm saying simply that sex under LSD becomes miraculously enhanced and intensified. I don't mean that it simply generates genital energy. It doesn't automatically produce a longer erection. Rather it increases your sensitivity a thousand percent. Let me put it this way: Compared with sex under LSD, the way you've been making love no matter how ecstatic the pleasure you think you get from it is like making love to a department-store-dummy. In sensory and cellular communion on LSD, you may spend a half hour making love with your  eyes, another half hour making love with breath. As you spin through a thousand  sensory and cellular organic changes, she does too. Ordinarily, sexual communication involves one's own chemicals, pressure and interactions of a very localized nature in what the psychologists call the erogenous zones. A vulgar, dirty concept, I think. When you're making love under LSD, it's as though every cell in your body and you have trillions is making love with every cell in her body. Your hand doesn't caress her skin but sinks down into and merges with ancient dynamos of ecstasy within her.

PLAYBOY: How often have you made love under the influence of LSD?

LEARY: Every time I've taken it. In fact, that is what the LSD experience is all about. Merging, yielding, flowing, union, communion. It's all lovemaking. You make love with candlelight, with sound waves from a record player, with a bowl of fruit on the table, with the trees. You're in pulsating harmony with all the energy around you.

PLAYBOY: Including that of a woman?

LEARY: The three inevitable goals of the LSD session are to discover and make love with God, to discover and make love with yourself, and to discover and make love with a woman. You can't make it with yourself unless you've made it with the timeless energy process around you, and you can't make it with a woman until you've made it with your- self. The natural and obvious way to take LSD is with a member of the oppo- site sex, and an LSD session that does not involve an ultimate merging with a person of the opposite sex isn't really   complete. One of the great purposes of an LSD session is sexual union. The more expanded your consciousness the farther out you can move beyond your mind the deeper, the richer, the longer and more meaningful your sexual communion.

PLAYBOY: We've heard about sessions in which couples make love for hours on end, to the point of exhaustion, but never seem to reach exhaustion. Is this true?

LEARY: Inevitably.

PLAYBOY: Can you describe the sensatioof an orgasm under LSD?

LEARY: Only the most reckless poet would attempt that. I have to say to you, "What does one say to a little child?" The child says, "Daddy, what is sex  like?" and you try to describe it, and then the little child says, "Well, is it fun like the circus?" and you say, "Well, not exactly like that." And the child says, "Is it fun like chocolate ice cream?" and you say, "Well, it's  like that but much, much more than that." And the child says, "Is it fun like the roller coaster, then?" and you say, "Well, that's part of it, but it's  even more than that." In short, I can't tell you what it's like, because it's not like anything that's ever happened to you and there aren't words adequate to describe it, anyway. You won't know what it's like until you try it      yourself and then I won't need to tell you.

PLAYBOY: We've heard that some women who ordinarily have difficulty achieving orgasm find themselves capable of multiple orgasms under LSD. Is that true?

LEARY: In a carefully prepared, loving LSD session, a woman will inevitably have several hundred orgasms. PLAYBOY: Several hundred}

LEARY: Yes. Several hundred.

PLAYBOY: What about a man?

LEARY: This preoccupation with the number of orgasms is a hang-up for many  men and women. It's as crude and vulgar a concept as wondering how much she   paid for the negligee.

PLAYBOY: Still, there must be some sort of physiological comparison. If a   woman can have several hundred orgasms, how many can a man have under optimum conditions?

LEARY: It would depend entirely on the amount of sexual and psychedelic     experience the man has had. I can speak only for myself and about my own    experience. I can only compare what I was with what I am now. In the last six years, my openness to, my responsiveness to, my participation in every form of sensory expression has multiplied a thousandfold.

PLAYBOY: This aspect of LSD has been hinted at privately but never spelled  out in public until now. Why?

LEARY: The sexual impact is, of course, the open but private secret about LSD which none of us has talked about in the last few years. It's socially dangerous enough to say that LSD helps you find divinity and helps you discover yourself. You're already in trouble when you say that. But then if you announce that the psychedelic experience is basically a sexual experience, you're    asking to bring the whole middle-aged, middle-class monolith down on your   head. At the present time, however, I'm under a 30- year sentence of imprisonment, which for a 45-year-old man is essentially a life term; and in addition I am under indictment on a second marijuana offense involving a 16-year     sentence. Since there is hardly anything more that middle-aged, middle-class authority can do to me and since the secret is out anyway among the young I feel I'm free at this moment to say what we've never said before: that sexual ecstasy is the basic reason for the current LSD boom. When Dr. Goddard, the head of the Food and Drug Administration, announced in a Senate hearing that ten percent of our college students are taking LSD, did you ever wonder why? Sure, they're discovering God and meaning; sure, they're discovering them-    selves; but did you really think that sex wasn't the fundamental reason for this surging, youthful social boom? You can no more do research on LSD and  leave out sexual ecstasy than you can do microscopic research on tissue and leave out cells. LSD is not an automatic trigger to sexual awakening, however. The first ten times you take it, you might not be able to have a sexual     experience at all, be- cause you're so overwhelmed and de- lighted or       frightened and confused by the novelty; the idea of having sex might be     irrelevant or incomprehensible at the moment. But it depends upon the setting and the partner. It is almost inevitable, if a man and his mate take LSD    together, that their sexual energies will be unimaginably intensified, and  unless clumsiness or fright on the part of one or the other blocks it, it   will lead to a deeper experience than they ever thought possible. From the  beginning of our research, I have been aware of this tremendous personal    power in LSD. You must be very careful to take it only with someone you know really well, because it's almost inevitable that a woman will fall in love  with the man who shares her LSD experience. Deep and lasting neurological   imprints, profound emotional bonds, can develop as a result of an LSD session bonds that can last a lifetime. For this reason, I have always been extremely cautious about running sessions with men and women. We always try to have a subject's husband or wife present dur- ing his or her first session, so that as these powerful urges develop, they are directed in ways that can be lived out responsibly after the session.

# Shane Maus

Shane Mauss is a science podcaster, mental health advocate, and award-winning stand-up comedian who partnered with MAPS (Multidisciplinary Association Of Psychedelic Studies) on a psychedelic comedy tour called *A Good Trip*. A film crew followed him to make a documentary called *Psychonautics: A Comic’s Exploration of Psychedelics*.

Together with Ramin Nazer, he has a comedy and philosophy podcast called *Mind Under Matter* that explores big ideas and the "meanings of life." He spearheads an occasional "consciousness-expanding comedy show called *A Better Trip*, which explores some of the most intriguing substances on Earth."

Maus is a former factory worker who has appeared on Comedy Central, *Conan*, *Jimmy Kimmel*, Netflix, Showtime, Epix, and Amazon Prime, and on Duncan Trussell’s *Family Hour*, Pete Holmes *You Made It Weird*, and podcasts such as Marc Maron’s *WTF*, Andrew Santino’s *Whisky Ginger*, and Theo Von’s *This Past Weekend*. When he tours, he reaches out to scientists at universities along the way to get interviews for his science podcast, *Here We Are*.

# Dennis McKenna

Dennis McKenna is an ethnopharmacologist and the author of many scientific papers. With his brother, Terence McKenna, he wrote the books, *The Invisible Landscape: Mind, Hallucinogens, and the I Ching* and *Psilocybin: Magic Mushroom Grower’s Guide*.

McKenna has studied plant hallucinogens for more than four decaes and has a doctorate focusing on research in ayahuasca and oo-koo-hé. He has received post-doctoral research fellowships in the Laboratory of Clinical Pharmacology, the National Institute of Mental Health, and the Department of Neurology of Stanford University School of Medicine.

He has served as Director of Ethnopharmacology at Shaman Pharmaceuticals and as Senior Research Pharmacognosist at Aveda Corporation. He is an adjunct assistant professor at the Center for Spirituality and Healing at the University of Minnesota and a founding board member of the Heffter Research Institute, a non-profit focusing on investigating potential therapeutic uses for psychedelics.

# Terence McKenna

Terence McKenna was an ethnobotanist and advocate for naturally occurring psychedelic plants, especially psilocybin, ayahuasca, cannabis, and DMT. He spoke widely and conducted workshops on these and many other subjects, including shamanism, extraterrestrials, AI, virtual reality, and self-empowerment.

In the early 1980s, McKenna became a pioneer of the psychedelic movement, influencing Timothy Leary and Bill Hicks, among many others. He championed psychedelics' abilities to help people explore the great mysteries, get back in harmony with nature, and stimulate their imagination.

In 1967, while attending an experimental college, McKenna, already no stranger to morning glory seeds, cannabis, and opium, became interested in shamanism, which led him to study Tibetan folk religion, which led him to visit Tibet and quiz shamans there about visionary plants.

In 1970, with his brother Dennis and three friends, he traveled to the Colombian Amazon in search of DMT in the form of oo-koo-hé. Instead, he found fields of gigantic psilocybin mushrooms, so they focused on that instead. Much experimentation followed.

His books include *True Hallucinations: Being an Account of the Author's Extraordinary Adventures in the Devil's Paradise* and *Food of the Gods : A Radical History of Plants, Drugs and Human Evolution.*

# Ralph Metzner

Ralph Metzner was a psychologist involved in consciousness research with Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert at Harvard University in the early 1960s. He continued the research for over five decades, in such areas as psychedelics, shamanism, meditation, and yoga. He co-founded the Green Earth Foundation, a non-profit with the mission to harmonize the relationship between humans and the Earth.

Metzner is featured in the documentary *Entheogen: Awakening the Divine Within*, which explores the idea of finding an enchanted cosmos in today's world. His books include *Maps of Consciousness*, *The Unfolding Self: Varieties of Transformative Experience*, and *The Well of Remembrance.* He edited collections on ayahuasca and Teonanácatl, and a collection of reports of MDMA experiences.

# Michael Pollan

Michael Pollan is an author and journalist who was best known for a long time for his best-selling books about the social impacts of food — in fact, *TIME* magazine named him one of the one hundred most influential people in the world in 2010. His books include *In Defense of Food* and *The Omnivore's Dilemma.*

In 2018, his focus shifted with the publication of another best-selling book, *How to Change Your Mind: What the New Science of Psychedelics Teaches Us About Consciousness, Dying, Addiction, Depression, and Transcendence.* Now he's possibly best known for asserting that psychedelics help people become "more sane." He personally tried LSD, psilocybin, ayahuasca and 5-MeO-DMT as research for the book. Pollan can be seen on Netflix in the documentary series based on the book, also called *How to Change Your Mind.*

His 2021 book, *This Is Your Mind on Plants*, focuses on caffeine, opium, and mescaline.

# Alexander (Sasha) and Ann Shulgin

Known as the "godfather of psychedelics," Alexander (Sasha) Shulgin was a psychedelic researcher known for introducing MDMA to psychologists in the 1970s. He is also known for creating and personally testing, along with his wife Ann Shulgin, more than 230 psychoactive compounds, which they documented in the 1990s in their books, *PiHKAL (Phenethylamines I Have Known and Loved)* and *TiHKAL (Tryptamines I Have Known and Loved)*. His discoveries include 2C-B and DOM.

Sasha Shulgin had a PhD in biochemistry from UC Berkeley and did post-doctoral work in psychiatry and pharmacology. He went to work for Dow Chemical as a research chemist, and while there, in 1961, he invented the first known biodegradable chemical pesticide. He had started exploring mescaline in the late 1950s, and Dow gave him enough freedom in return for his valuable patent that he was able to research and write scientific papers about these kinds of other drugs that interested him. Eventually, Dow asked him not to mention their name, and in 1966 he left.

He set up a home lab and became a consultant. Through a lab friend who worked at the DEA, he became involved with the agency, teaching their agents about various drugs and giving them samples. He later obtained a Schedule I license from the DEA that allowed his analytical lab to synthesize any illicit drug.

# Andrew Weil

Andrew Weil, MD, is known as a seminal influence in the field of integrative medicine. In 1959, having just graduated from high school, he was awarded a scholarship that allowed him to live abroad for a year with families in India, Thailand, and Greece. His awareness thus became enlarged beyond standard American culture and science of the time.

Weil became interested in mescaline and was at Harvard University studying ethnobotany in the early 1960s at the same time Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert were up to their experiments there, and Weil wrote in a campus publication about what he considered the shoddy and unethical goings-on. He got his medical degree from Harvard in 1968, although a marijuana study he had helped conduct his senior year caused the university to threaten to withhold it.

He continued his research into medicinal and psychoactive plants at the National Institute of Mental Health and the Harvard Botanical Museum and studied indigenous healing, traveling extensively to learn about medicinal plants and their use around the world. He founded the Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine in 1994.

His books include *The Natural Mind: An Investigation of Drugs and the Higher Consciousness*, *The Marriage of the Sun and Moon: A Quest for Unity in Consciousness*, and *Spontaneous Healing*.