



DMT: The Spirit Molecule

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A Doctor's Revolutionary Research into the Biology of Near-Death & Mystical Experiences.

A clinical psychiatrist explores the effects of DMT: A behind-the-scenes look at the cutting edge of psychedelic research.

From 1990 to 1995 Dr. Rick Strassman conducted US DEA-approved clinical research at the University of New Mexico in which he injected 60 volunteers with DMT, one of the most powerful psychedelics known. His detailed account of those sessions is an inquiry into the nature of the human mind and the therapeutic potential of psychedelics. DMT, a plant-derived chemical that is also manufactured by the human brain, consistently produced near-death and mystical experiences. Many volunteers reported convincing encounters with intelligent nonhuman presences, especially "aliens." Nearly all felt that the sessions were among the most profound experiences of their lives.

Strassman's research connects DMT with the pineal gland, considered by Hindus to be the site of the seventh chakra and by René Descartes to be the seat of the soul. *DMT: The Spirit Molecule* makes the case that DMT, naturally released by the pineal gland, facilitates the soul's movement in and out of the body and is an integral part of the birth and death experiences, as well as the highest states of meditation and even sexual transcendence. Strassman also believes that alien abduction experiences are brought on by accidental releases of DMT. If used wisely, DMT could trigger a period of remarkable progress in the scientific exploration of the most mystical regions of the human mind and soul.

DMT: The Spirit Molecule Details

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From Reader Review DMT: The Spirit Molecule for online ebook

Leonidas Kaplan says

DMT: The Spirit Molecule
Rick Strassman, M.D.

DMT, the most psychedelic drug known to man, which is actually produced in the human brain and in almost every living organism. How did I come about learning of this molecule?

Several years ago, my work colleague played Terrence McKenna's theory on the evolution of man. Specifically how we co-evolved with psychedelic mushrooms which in high doses developed a higher level of consciousness for primates, and ultimately us.

Gradually, I delved deeper into McKenna's work, and learned about his many trips on DMT. I was intrigued and wondered a lot about this chemical, albeit listening to hours of McKenna's speeches while at work.

Months later, I listened to Joe Rogan delve into his trip on DMT, which was one of the most eye-opening listening experiences I have ever encountered. DMT continued to become more and more of a mystery and something I really wanted to try.

One day, my buddy came back from a trip to Peru, where he did Ayahuasca with the local shaman. I knew a bit about this substance that the Amazonians brew from plants in the Amazonian jungle. More specifically, that it contains the active substance DMT in the drink. His experience consisted of spiritual and demonic entities.

Being a conscious explorer, I had to try this for myself.

A year later, he calls me up to give notice of another trip, and without much hesitation, 2 days later, we are off deep into the Peruvian Amazon.

Historically, the Amazonians used this ayahuasca brew to provide clairvoyance, subconscious introspection, and basically have a psychedelic experience that they would extrapolate into something surreal.

My ayahuasca trip wasn't anything special, unfortunately. Ayahuasca also has a tendency to cause nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

To explain the effects of ayahuasca, it is simply a mixture between the emotional connectivity of magic mushrooms, the introspection of marijuana, and the drunkenness of alcohol. Also add in the nausea, vomiting and diarrhea of ipecac.

Nonetheless, I wasn't deterred, so during my trip I continued to read about DMT, and the crazy psychedelic experiences you could potentially obtain.

More specifically, DMT is a natural molecule secreted by the pineal gland within the human brain. The pineal gland is almost in the center of the brain, and is about the size of your pinky-finger nail.

DMT is released while you dream, thus you have vivid imagery that can actually affect your physiology. Furthermore, on the 49th day of conception, when the foetus is considered alive, is the exact time that DMT is secreted by the brain of the fetus as well, thus becoming conscious.

Finally, near-death, and death experiences, such as white lights, spiritual experiences, tunnels, and flashes of your life, and drops in your body temperature are also caused by the secretion of DMT by the pineal gland.

DMT is considered the spiritual molecule, or the consciousness molecule.

When DMT is consumed through ingestion, injection (medically), or inhalation, you have a very real, and very vivid spiritual experience. Perhaps your consciousness becomes aware of other dimensions that co-exist with ours. Other times, you have a deep spiritual introspection.

This book explains what happened during the deep scientific study of DMT.

Absolutely a must read for the psychedelically curious.

Red says

No question about it, this book changed my life. The very fact that the human body produces N,N-DMT, one of the most powerful hallucinogens that the West is aware of, absolutely changed my perspectives about spirituality and religion. I had been aware of issues like temporal lobe epilepsy and other conditions that can produce visionary states, but the fact that every healthy human produces DMT (in varying quantities) completely complicated my atheistic worldview. No longer do I think of visionary/mystical reports as lies, but rather as neuro-biological functions to which nearly every human is in some sense capacity capable of. Who knows, it may even have some function in the fascinating science of dreaming.

I disagree with many of Strassman's speculations. However, he clearly states that they are indeed speculations rather than simply spouting fantastic fictions and attaching his degree as a badge of authority on the matter. This I feel is intellectually honest and deepens my respect of the man.

A powerful book. A landmark in reintroducing psychedelic studies. A fascinating step forward in understanding human consciousness.

-Red

Erik Graff says

This one came in the mail as a gift from a friend, a very, very good friend as it was exactly what I wanted most to read at the time.

Despite the prohibition of research on naturally occurring psychotropic drugs--as opposed to patented pharmaceuticals!--instituted by the Nixon administration in the seventies and the still continuing and unwinnable war on drugs enforced by the DEA et alia, some people continue to be seriously interested in the implications of such altered states of consciousness as relativize ordinary epistemological and ontological presuppositions.

The author, a research scientist at the University of New Mexico Medical Center, represents in this book

several stories. One is political, the story of how, over years, was finally able to obtain permission to study DMT, the only known psychedelic naturally produced in the human body. Another is personal and political. He is a believing Anglo-Buddhist, a member of a congregation who found himself treated by his coreligionists like mediaeval mystics tended to be treated by the Vatican. Another is professional. Previous work on sleep and the pineal gland led him to one of the gland's psychoactive products. He was given the necessary clearances because of a record of research and publication which it could be argued led to the topic of this book. Another is his account of this research project itself, the experimental design, the participants (all of whom, ironically, had to be experienced illegal drug users in order to qualify for the study so as to protect the university from lawsuits) and the results.

The most interesting, and ostensibly unexpected, result of the study, a result which led far afield from the awarded grant proposals and governmental permits, was that a significant percentage of subjects went to other worlds, worlds reminiscent of Terence McKenna's stories and stage performances, worlds reminiscent, to me, of personal experience and, in one case, to the "gnostic" texts of the first centuries of the last millennium.

It's no big deal to go to other worlds, idiosyncratic ones. We do it every night, virtually all of us, dreaming. The big deal would be if we went, lots of us, to the same worlds, world not clearly derived from this one, worlds similar in ways that cannot be accounted for by similar conditionings of subjects. The claim that his disparate set of subjects did just that makes this book very important indeed.

Note that this is a popular book which attempts to explain some serious biochemistry. It does it well. The nonspecialist reader gets a short, understandable course in neuroanatomy. The footnotes are there for those who want to pursue the vetted, academic papers.

Brad says

In *DMT: The Spirit Molecule*, Strassman tells the story of how he came to be interested in psychedelics as neurochemical tools to unlocking the mind and consciousness and the subsequent research that he conducted to explore the one chemical he theorized was central to it all: DMT. In the first part of the book he details the harrowing experience of gaining approval from various review boards, funding sources, and ultimately the DEA and FDA - who would be the ultimate decision makers in whether he could have access to the drug, which is scheduled by the US Gov't among other drugs deemed to be of high potential for abuse and to have no potential for medical use. A socio-cultural perspective on this topic can be found in Daniel Pinchbeck's "Breaking Open the Head."

Once he received the proper authorizations to go about his research, Strassman embarked on what would be a five year project involving the administration of DMT to 60 patients. All of the participants were volunteers and were chosen on two primary factors: previous experience with psychedelics and overall mental stability (indicated by strong relationships, usually). What he finds throughout the process of his research ...

Well I've already gone into far too much detail (more than a review should contain I realize - I'm new at this) so I'm going to end my synopsis there and allow prospective readers to finish where I've left off.

Prospective readers would include anyone with an interest in the mind and consciousness, as well as an openness to the possibilities that lie in the little known world beyond the realms of our normal perception. The book itself is a pleasure to read. Strassman's writing is clear and his reasoning process is sound. Despite his established career as a scientist and researcher, he writes in an engaging and non-technical way. He goes about presenting his argument in a thorough, well-reasoned, and well-supported manner -- taking care to

point out previous research. Strassman makes clear his own background and interest in the study. He is careful, however, never to mention whether he's ever personally experimented with psychedelics. I understand is reasons for leaving this out however, I think it would provide a lot of context for his theories and research.

Nevertheless, "The Spirit Molecule" is a great read and suggests a lot of exciting possibilities for the future of scientific exploration into psychedelics. Hopefully his fresh and frankly remarkable findings will inspire others to tread down similar paths. We must also hope that his study, which proved safe for his subjects and fruitful for the scientific community, will help change minds among politicians and legislators about this drug in particular, and psychedelics in general (nearly all of which are scheduled as the most heinous and useless in existence).

Jeremy says

This is a fascinating book about psychedelic research on dimethyltryptamine, a chemical that naturally occurs in our bodies and is likely produced in the pineal gland. The book takes us through the authors research projects from start to finish, including the painstaking process of getting the research approved by various review boards and actually obtaining DMT by navigating a labyrinth of bureaucracies from the DEA to the FDA. Strassman calls DMT the spirit molecule because in his research he found it induced experiences similar to near-death, alien-abduction, being-contact, and mystical experiences. Subjects were convinced that beings were in contact with them, curious about them, and even experimenting on them. Strassman includes some information from theoretical physics regarding parallel universes and dark matter because he himself had difficulty assimilating the subjects' reports into his own atheistic, materialistic worldview. I include so many quotes because I was interested in the science behind DMT, since it occurs naturally in our bodies, and because the writings of the research subjects were also very interesting. Enjoy.

Quotes:

Philip's and Nils's experiences smoking DMT were typical: a startlingly rapid onset of effects, a kaleidoscopic display of visual hallucinations, and a separation of consciousness from the physical body.

Why were Nils's and Philip's reports so sparse? One possibility was "state-specific memory." This refers to the phenomenon in which events experienced in an altered state of consciousness can be recalled clearly only upon reentering that state, and not in the normal one. This happens under the influence of substances such as alcohol, marijuana, or prescription drugs like the sedatives Valium, Xanax, or barbiturates. It also results from non-drug-induced altered states, such as hypnosis or dreams.

In 1948 researchers discovered that serotonin carried in the bloodstream was responsible for contracting the muscles lining veins and arteries. This was vitally important in understanding how to control the bleeding process. The name for serotonin came from the Latin sero, "blood," and tonin, "tightening."

Sandoz also recommended giving LSD to psychiatric interns to help them establish a sense of empathy for their psychotic patients. These young doctors were amazed by this temporary encounter with insanity.

Many of today's most respected North American and European psychiatric researchers, in both academics and industry, now chairmen of major university departments and presidents of national psychiatric organizations, began their professional lives investigating psychedelic drugs.

There are two main chemical families of psychedelic drugs: the phenethylamines and the tryptamines...The

best-known phenethylamine is mescaline...Another famous phenethylamine is MDMA, or “Ecstasy.”...Tryptamine is a derivative of tryptophan, an amino acid present in our diet...Serotonin is a tryptamine—5-hydroxy-tryptamine, to be exact—but it is not psychedelic. It contains one more oxygen atom than does tryptamine...DMT is also a tryptamine and is the simplest psychedelic...The “grandfather” of all modern psychedelics, LSD, contains a tryptamine core, as does ibogaine, the African psychedelic with highly publicized anti-addictive properties...One of the best-known tryptamine psychedelics is psilocybin, the active ingredient of “magic mushrooms.”

While chemically simple, this “spirit” molecule provides our consciousness access to the most amazing and unexpected visions, thoughts, and feelings. It throws open the door to worlds beyond our imagination.

DMT exists in all of our bodies and occurs throughout the plant and animal kingdoms. It is a part of the normal makeup of humans and other mammals.

‘It would be so easy not to return. I am faintly aware that I am a doctor, but this is not important; family ties, studies, plans, and memories are very remote from me. Only this world is important; I am free and utterly alone.’ Research subject

Endogenous DMT, then, is DMT made within the body. There are other endogenous compounds with which we’ve become familiar over the years. For example, endo-genous morphine-like compounds are endorphins.

If excessive naturally produced DMT was causing the patient’s psychosis,...anti-DMT would have antipsychotic effects.

Twenty-five years ago, Japanese scientists discovered that the brain actively transports DMT across the blood-brain barrier into its tissues. I know of no other psychedelic drug that the brain treats with such eagerness.

We need to hold on tight, and we must be prepared, for spiritual realms include both heaven and hell, both fantasy and nightmare.

The pineal gland is unique in its solitary status within the brain. All other brain sites are paired.

Noradrenaline and adrenaline (or norepinephrine and epinephrine) are the two neurotransmitters that turn on melatonin synthesis in the pineal...The unique enzymes that convert serotonin, melatonin, or tryptamine into psychedelic compounds also are present in extraordinarily high concentrations in the pineal. These enzymes, the methyltransferases, attach a methyl group—that is, one carbon and three hydrogens—onto other molecules, thus methylating them. Simply methylate tryptamine twice, and we have di-methyl-tryptamine, or DMT.

Stress worsens hallucinations and delusions in psychotic patients. DMT levels in those patients are related to the degree of psychosis—the more intense the symptoms, the higher the levels of DMT...Individuals with schizophrenia received pineal gland extracts as an experimental treatment in the 1960s. Their symptoms improved markedly.

I already knew that the Tibetan Buddhist Book of the Dead teaches that it takes forty-nine days for the soul of the recently dead to “reincarnate.”...It takes forty-nine days from conception for the first signs of the human pineal to appear. Forty-nine days is also when the fetus differentiates into male or female gender. Thus the soul’s rebirth, the pineal, and the sexual organs all require forty-nine days before they manifest...The pineal could act as an antenna or lightning rod for the soul. And sexual differentiation into male or female, occurring at exactly the same moment, provides the biological framework through which the life-force now may assert itself...Until this forty-nine-day watershed, the fetus may be only a physical, rather

than a physical-spiritual, being.

Lung, liver, blood, eye, and brain all possess the appropriate raw materials for DMT production. In fact, for some years researchers jokingly referred to schizophrenia as a lung disease because of the high concentrations of DMT-forming enzymes within the lung!

Psychedelics don't cause craving or withdrawal.

I said, "Sometimes people think they've died, or are dying, or that we've overdosed them. So far, no one's been injured. This is a physically safe dose, although your blood pressure and heart rate will probably take a nice jump. We can respond if there are problems. "If you think you've died, there's two ways I tell people they can deal with it. One is 'Man, I'm dying, and I'm going to kick and scream and try and stop it.' The other is 'Okay, I'm dying, now let's see what this is like. Very interesting.' Easier said than done, of course."

DMT's lack of tolerance development also was one of the factors making it a likely naturally occurring schizotoxin...If tolerance to endogenous DMT did develop, psychotic symptoms of schizophrenia, for example, would last only as long as it took for tolerance to build up. Since psychotic symptoms are usually chronic and constant, demonstrating that DMT could not elicit tolerance would be powerful evidence that it could play a role in these disorders.

Cyproheptadine prevents drugs from attaching to the serotonin "2" site, the receptor researchers believe is the most important in controlling how psychedelics work.

Describing what it's like in the DMT realms is about as easy as giving words to scaling a mountain peak, sexual orgasm, undersea diving, and other nonverbal but breathtakingly profound experiences.

Even more impressive was the apprehension of human and "alien" figures that seemed to be aware of and interacting with the volunteers...Beyond their own loss of control, some volunteers felt another "intelligence" or "force" directing their minds in an interactive manner. This was especially common in cases of contact with "beings."

The basic processes of psychotherapy seemed to be at work: thinking, recollecting, feeling, connecting emotions with ideas. For most of us, facing painful feelings is difficult, and DMT can make those feelings easier to confront.

'Yes, it's very refreshing. It feels like there are thousands and thousands of separate parts of me and this drug brings them all together. It feels very complete.' Research subject

'DMT is far better than any therapy ever was for me. All therapy reminds me of is how bad things were and are. On DMT I saw and felt myself as a good person, as loved by the DMT elves.' Research subject

I'm hopeful that these reports will accelerate interest in the nonmaterial realms, using whatever intellectual, intuitive, and technological tools we possess...Once there is enough interest in, and even demand for, information about them, such phenomena might become an acceptable topic for rational inquiry...DMT has shown me the reality that there is infinite variation on reality. There is the real possibility of adjacent dimensions.

'You can choose to attend to this or not. It will continue to progress without you paying attention. You return not to where you left off, but to where things have gone since you left. It's not a hallucination, but an observation. When I'm there, I'm not intoxicated. I'm lucid and sober.

It felt like going backward from life in a physical body to life as simply an energy form with no body. The

essence of who I am was alone in the void, back in the staging area for life where souls wait to incarnate. I was in a place where there are no physical life-forms, only colors and sounds.’ Research subject

Clearly, many of our research subjects experienced a radical and complete separation of consciousness from their bodies. For most of us, this would make us feel as if we had died. However, many of our recruits had already undergone this type of dissociation in their previous psychedelic experiences.

‘It was so much more real than life.’ Research subject

‘It’s like a cosmic joke. If we all knew what was waiting for us, we’d all kill ourselves.’ Research subject

‘Everyone should try a high dose of DMT once. I don’t know if the beings today were saying “Try death once” or “Try life once.”’ Research subject

Those who have had a near death experience do not rush off to suicide. Rather, they reside in the knowledge that there is “life after death,” and that transition loses its sting... Thus, they are able to live life more fully, because the fear of death that drives so many to distraction is now so much less.

DMT reproduces many of the features of an enlightenment experience, including timelessness; ineffability; coexistence of opposites; contact and merging with a supremely powerful, wise, and loving presence, sometimes experienced as a white light; the certainty that consciousness continues after death of the body; and a first-hand knowledge of the basic “facts” of creation and consciousness.

MDMA is what I like to call a “love and light” drug, one that accentuates the positive and minimizes the negative. If only life were so simple.

‘I have had many psychedelic experiences in my life, but nothing could compare with or prepare me for what happened today. I feel I have come back a changed person. I realized that there are many more realms than the one we exist in.’ Research subject

As opposed to Elena, when Don met face-to-face the vast and impenetrable nature of the source of all existence, he despaired. Elena was steeped in Eastern mysticism, while Don was raised in, and continued believing in, the Catholic faith. Elena saw the love behind the “impersonal” void. Don, on the other hand, felt shocked, stunned, and betrayed by the absence of a personal God or Savior behind it all.

Psychedelics, if anything, provide a view. And a view, to one so inclined, can inspire the long hard work required to make that view a living reality.

It’s been shown that membership in the peyote-using Native American Church reduces the incidence of alcoholism. Similar effects on alcohol and cocaine dependence seem to occur in members of ayahuasca-using churches in Brazil.

These new, easy-to-take chemical agents are forcing us to reevaluate the risks and benefits involved in making us better than average. Why not use psychedelics, too, for indications other than treating the sick?

Johanna Hilla says

Comprehensive, clear, and curious!

A detailed study of ever-first human intravenous DMT-study done in the 90's.

It is a big book, but so is the topic. First 150 pages deal with Strassman's battle with bureaucracy, and the construction of the hypothesis. For anyone interested in psychedelic research, (especially in the US) these parts are probably interesting, but I felt the most interesting parts started after. Although, Strassman's previous studies with melatonin were very relevant especially for the discussion about the pineal gland. Personally, I enjoyed the most the patient records in chapters 13-15.

I enjoyed Strassman's honest expedition of his own beliefs and values, and the part of the reception of the Buddhist community was fascinating too. After all, it seems that the design of the study was not that successful, because the dosage was too high, and the therapeutic value of the substance, therefore, appears to be minimal. His disappointment regarding it can be felt too. After reading it is clear that what was left unsaid is the far greater portion, than what actually can be found in the book.

Additionally, I would have loved to see some illustrations from the patients, and the visual aspect of the book could have been far greater. Nevertheless, a mind-expander surely, and a great read for anyone interested in absurdities of the universe.

...What is DMT? Seriously, what the hell is it?

Erica says

It really is a shame that so much constraint is put on the research community when it comes to medicinal research. When something like DMT, an endogenous molecule that can even be found out in the yard is put under so much control one can only marvel as to why? The research Strassman does with DMT is very interesting, not only is it a great insight into the process of medicinal research but also an aspect of our bodies that remains undiscovered and/or mysterious. What causes the vividness of dreams? What is happening during a near death experience? Strassman aims to answer these questions and still leaves them open to speculation as the book ends (as research isn't always as well funded). I am happy that the research did not end with this book but will be pursued further despite government restrictions/control.

Irene says

Takes a loooong time to get going and very repetitive, boring, and frustrating to read so far. Some seriously strange and interesting stuff toward the middle and ending though. Really there are only a few interesting chapters. I'd say 12-16. I don't know how this book has an over 4 star overall rating. Maybe my expectations were just too high for this one.

David Katzman says

Interesting but in the end I learned very little from it. I found Rick Strassman to be an amateur psychologist in his various commentaries and the statements he makes to draw his patients out during their DMT trips. And further, his hypotheses about the effects and process of the drug, even calling it the "spirit molecule," smack of junk science. He didn't perform true experimentation, where you attempt to disprove your hypothesis but rather came in and carried through many assumptions and beliefs. Such as his belief (or, as he

claims, a belief he was lead to accept as *possibly true* by the statements of his patients) in the existence of "other worlds" in what he calls "other dimensions" that DMT shows you and his very poor knowledge of physics to justify it. In other words, when his patients claimed they physically encountered other beings while on their DMT trips, he accepted it at face value because they were so adamant that these beings were "real." The multiverse theories of quantum physics do not conceive of "other dimensions" that we can contact. Dimension is a science fiction concept nowhere near the same as a universe that splits off from quantum interactions. There can be no communication between universes in those models (which may or may not even be valid).

Strassman also seems to have a poor grasp of evolution, posing the question "why" does the body produces DMT. He hypothesizes that it is produced by the pineal gland (which, not being a biologist, I have no idea if this is reasonable or not) and then goes on to try to explain "why" the body would produce DMT so close to the brain and what it's "purpose" is. Sadly, evolution does not work by purpose. This is pure teleological thinking. All you need to do is look at the peacock who has developed the most ungainly, poor functioning tail that hampers its ability to survive predators to realize that all kinds of features develop that do not have a survival benefit. Often called dead-end evolution. We know of course that peacocks are attracted to them, for breeding, so they can pass on their genes. But as a survival mechanism, it just makes them easier prey. Similarly, DMT may exist in the body as some fluke that does not have a "purpose." A byproduct of other evolutionary aspects.

Which isn't to say that psychedelics such as DMT don't have great value. I am a believer in the value of psychedelics. For example, ibogaine was shown in the 70s to be highly effective at eliminating addictions such as cocaine, heroin and alcohol. Strassman puts way too much credence in the "reality" of these otherworldly figures in the human mind simply because his test subjects rejected it, claiming they literally *met* these otherworldly/alien beings. By doing so, he severely shortchanges the power of both the brain and our imagination. It's naive at best to believe that the brain can't conjure up believable "other" figures. The brain is not even really one brain. We aren't one self. We have many aspects always vying for influence. One part of the brain could easily be triggered by a psychedelic drug that another part views and thinks, I couldn't possibly have created that. People who have had sections of their brain severed off have analogous experiences. It's similar to being in a writer's trance. And herein lies what I believe is the greatest value of psychedelic experiences. Widening our imagination and our openness to new possibilities in life. And potentially, although not necessarily, a greater sense of empathy for the "other." For realizing that we are as much alien as anyone else.

Rupert Dreyfus says

There's a renaissance happening whereby neuropharmacologists are exploring the very real possibility of psychoactive substances--particularly psychedelics--as having tangible medicinal value. Strassman's book, *The Spirit Molecule*, was among the first serious studies in this field, advancing on anecdotal support from cultural icons such as Burroughs and Huxley. No longer was this about junky creatives getting their fix; in the most serious cases it is about relieving the suffering of cancer patients who are enduring end of life care.

The book explores not only the profound effects DMT has on his patients, but also the science behind it and the shared oneness which drives the psychedelic experience. While adequately clinical in its approach, the overarching message is anything but.

The argument has been settled. Governments are largely at odds with hard science. Books like this are a direct assault on their draconian drugs policy. There's recently been a seismic shift in decriminalisation, but there's work to be done. Slowly, however, we are moving towards an enlightened world. The sooner we all

educate ourselves on this topic, the faster this will happen.

As a side note it is my view that to propel the very real possibility of global reform of drug policy, recreational users, medical patients requiring such medicine and the professionals involved in the field should form a broad alliance so there can be no distinction between 'good use' and 'bad use'. There is simply a proportion of humans exerting their right to experience the dynamic planes of consciousness through the oldest and most organic tools available to us.

To some degree this is happening, but as with everything, we need more unity.

Dave Thompson says

Amazing. Incredible. Mind-blowing. This book will challenge your assumptions about life, death, consciousness, even the great unknown of outerspace. Is DMT a drug? Is it a tool? Is it the secret of life? After reading this boomk, I think I vote for all of the above.

Someday the serious research of DMT started by Dr. Rick Strassman will continue. Until then, fundamentalists and evangelicals will continue to try to sweep this kind of research under the rug. Sadly, this may take many years, but time is on the side of the truth.

If you want to read a bood about the amazing possiblities of the boundless mind, read DMT: The Spirit Molecule.

Lee Harmon says

Absolutely fascinating! Suspend your skepticism for a few hours and enter the incredulous world of Strassman's research with a powerful hallucinogen. DMT, sort of a fast-acting LSD, was used in DEA-approved clinical research at the University of New Mexico between 1990 and 1995, where volunteers repeatedly described experiences similar to near-death and alien abduction reports.

The question is this: Are the experiences entirely psychedelic, or is the drug allowing volunteers to tap into another reality, where aliens really do exist? Strassman takes the question seriously, and while the implications are more than a little disturbing, the volunteers "unquestionably had some of the most intense, unusual, and unexpected experiences of their lives." (After reading the case studies, I can believe it.)

Strassman connects DMT with the pineal gland, the "house of the soul." The pineal gland develops in the human fetus 49 days after conception, with its DMT chemical secretion serving as a portal to astral worlds. OK, this is wayyy outside my comfort level and not something I know anything about, yet I can't help it: This is a five-star book, guys, even though it steps on some religious toes. Skip ahead to part IV, The Sessions, if you must, and then come back to read the rest after your mind is blown.

Strassman presents his data like a research doctor, and he admits that one of his deepest motivations behind the DMT research was the search for a biological basis of spiritual experience. He went into this research already intrigued with the pineal gland, so his hypotheses are not unexpected. His application was entirely professional, with intravenous injections under strict supervision—this is not an experiment that can be undertaken at home. The experiences are kaleidoscopic and often frightening. Yet I couldn't help wonder how many people, after reading this book, found a way to obtain the drug and jump into the next universe. I

sure wanted to.

tim says

This is one of the most fascinating books I have ever read. In 1990, Dr. Rick Strassman succeeded in reinstating the first federally-approved study on a psychedelic substance in the U.S. since the 1960s. Not only did Dr. Strassman find a way through the impossibly long and thorny maze of contradicting laws and regulations, but the psychedelic compound he selected for his study was none other than dimethyltyptamine (DMT), one of the most powerful psychedelics ever known. In addition to his scientific, psychotherapeutic, and spiritual experience, it is Dr. Strassman's remarkable evenhandedness that made him one of the few people who could have pulled this off.

DMT is confounding for a number of reasons. Not only is it commonly found in many plants and animals, but DMT is also produced within our brains. DMT is a neurotransmitter manufactured in the pineal gland, which is located right in the center of our brains. The pineal has a long and mysterious history of being considered the "seat of the soul"—if you believe in such a thing. On that, Dr. Strassman has this to say about the possibility of a soul:

Compare life and death: the state of being alive to that of being dead. One moment we are thinking, moving, and feeling. Cells are dividing, replacing dying ones with fresh recruits for the liver, lung, skin, and heart. The next moment we are no longer breathing; our heart has pumped its last beat. What is the difference? What's gone that was just there? There is something that "enlivens" us when joined with our body. When present in matter, it shows itself by way of movement and heat. In the brain, it provides the power to receive, and transform into awareness, our thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. When it is gone, the light is extinguished and the engine stops. Whatever it is, the presence of this enlivening force provides us the opportunity to interact with this time and place.

Dr. Strassman hypothesizes that the pineal gland produces DMT at critical moments in our brains, not least of all, at our time of birth and death. Does DMT usher the soul into and out of the body? DMT might also play a role in naturally occurring mystical and near-death experiences. While Dr. Strassman was expecting to encounter both psychotherapeutic and mystical experiences in his volunteers, he was not prepared for the overwhelmingly high frequency of contact they made with alien entities. The overlap of many DMT experiences with those reported by alien abductees is stunning.

One volunteer had this to say about his alien contact during repeated DMT experiences within the tolerance study (of which there is remarkably no known human tolerance to DMT):

It may not be so simple as that there are alien planets with their own societies. This is too proximal. It's not like some kind of drug. It's more like an experience of a new technology than a drug. You can choose to attend to this or not. It will continue to progress without you paying attention. You return not where you left off, but to where things have gone since you left. It's not a hallucination, but an observation. When I'm there, I'm not intoxicated. I'm lucid and sober.

So what exactly is going on? DMT, a molecule manufactured within each and every one of us, not only separates consciousness from our bodies, but commonly brings people into contact with alien entities. Unlike other psychedelics, such as LSD and psilocybin which suppress the individual ego while under their influence, DMT leaves the ego intact, making the DMT experience all the more shocking and bizarre. The nature of these alien contacts, what these "aliens" actually are, is only one of many questions that arise around DMT.

Since DMT is an intrinsic and inseparable part of our bodies, its mysteries pertain to everyone. And even though DMT's mysteries are so strange that they often prove difficult to accept, let alone understand, we must continue trying to understand them. A better understanding of DMT will hopefully lead to a better understanding of who we are. Since DMT currently raises more questions than answers, more research and attention are obviously needed. That DMT is illegal -- a molecule found inside each and every one of us -- is a ridiculous farce. We are all, in essence, carrying around an illicit substance in our heads.

I am not advocating that everyone rush out and try DMT, far from it. Instead my intention is to bring DMT and its little-understood relation to the body to the attention of those who have not yet heard of it. If I have succeeded in piquing anyone's interest in learning more about DMT, this book is a great place to start. With that I leave you with one last excerpt highlighting Dr. Strassman's hope in future psychedelic research:

In addition to the treatment of clinical disorders, psychedelics could be used to enhance characteristics of our normal state of being, such as creativity, problem-solving abilities, spirituality, and so on. DMT elicited ideas, feelings, thoughts, and images our volunteers said they never could have imagined. Psychedelics stimulate the imagination, and thus they are logical tools to enhance creativity. The problems facing our society and planet require the use of novel ideas as much as new and more powerful technology. It's impossible to overstate the urgent need to improve our imaginative abilities.

David says

Dimethyltryptamine (DMT) is a powerful psychedelic chemical naturally produced by the human brain and is also found in a majority of plants and animals. The nature of its existence, or *raison d'être*, is undetermined. DMT was first chemically synthesized in 1931 and is structurally similar to the neurotransmitter serotonin. Rick Strassman, the author of *DMT: The Spirit Molecule*, conducted biomedical assays on the drug during the early 1990s at the University of New Mexico.

The book is simply marvelous - one of the best I have read on the subject. At first, Strassman's writing style took me by surprise. His ability to turn a phrase is remarkable, especially considering that he is foremost a scientist, not a writer. But the true depth of his writing comes from his conveyance of information that he found during his DMT studies.

DMT: The Spirit Molecule is broken up into six sections. The first section focuses on the history of psychedelic drugs, their usefulness and potential for harm, and an explanation of DMT and the pineal gland which creates DMT in the human brain. I really enjoyed this section. As someone who spends a lot of effort learning about psychedelics, I expected to know most of the information in this section, but was surprised by how much more Strassman was able to throw at me. The second section explains the "birth" of Strassman's DMT studies in New Mexico. His explanation of the hoops that have to be jumped through to obtain federal approval for psychedelic research were very thorough and enlightening. Parts three and four of the book focus on finding volunteers for the study and a synopsis of their experiences. These experiences ranged from supreme ecstasy to parallel universes, from contact with alien beings to death and re-birth experiences, and from mystical states to feelings of pain or fear. One passage that really stuck with me is found in the pain and fear chapter. After taking 0.4 mg/kg of IV DMT, which is a full psychedelic dose, the patient recalls his experience:

There were two crocodiles. On my chest. Crushing me, raping me anally. I didn't know if I would survive. At first I thought I was dreaming, having a nightmare. Then I realized it was really happening.

The volunteer was entirely serious about his experience, and dropped out of the study shortly after his

encounter with the crocodiles. Strassman speaks of how, at first, he dismissed these stories of otherworldly contact, but soon he realized that their occurrence was happening with too many of his patients to be merely coincidence. For me, this passage serves as a reminder to not take psychedelics lightly, but to approach them with respect and humility. The fifth section of the book gives a qualitative review of how DMT changed each patient's life after the study concluded and the negative reaction from Strassman's Buddhist community concerning his involvement in the studies. The final section of the book describes the possibility of future scientific research of psychedelic drugs and the application of that research.

In the end, Strassman had to conclude his studies prematurely, but the data he gathered is incredibly valuable. At least, it was to me! I highly recommend this book for anyone interested in psychedelics, DMT or spirituality.

5/5 Stars. 358 pages. Published in 2001.

Marjan says

Despite very new-age cover this book is far from being detached from our reality. In fact; it is a very hard core medical description (for wider audience, of course) of a very curious experiment that took place in a hospital in New Mexico, with all the milligrams per kilogram, seconds and Latin names you'd expect from such report. Again; for public audience, but nothing seems to be sacrificed in the pursuit of intelligibility.

The first part will take you into the process of preparations from neuro-anatomy-chemistry (especially in regard of the pineal gland) to legal labyrinth that Strassman had to navigate to get the approvals and grants.

Then you are taken right into the heart of the experiment with medical descriptions and 1st hand reports of the volunteers. These stories are something!

The last third features authors monologue on the future and value of this research. What does it all mean for our understanding of consciousness, spiritual experience and its role in society...

What certainly came unexpected to Strassman and might surprise a reader is once more this incredible consistency of reports, not just from volunteers, but also across the geography and time, on one end with prehistoric shamanic rituals, then to Dante or Swedenborg and ending with alien abduction report in the 20th century. There is just something to it that cannot be denied and we can only hope for more of controlled experiments that might shed some light on this phenomena.

Sally says

In describing his scientific study of DMT (the hallucinogen prominent in many Amazonian psychedelics) in a university hospital in the 1990s, the author discusses its chemical properties, the process by which the study was approved, how the study was run in detail, the psychological effects and experiences, and concludes that in itself the drug is not beneficial, but that all depends upon the context in which it is taken and what the person involved brings to the experience. To me it was especially interesting that animals, including humans, naturally produce DMT in their bodies (some plants do also). Does it have a role in facilitating in the way we naturally perceive the world? Also, that people given the drug experienced not only "psychedelic" and near-death-like experiences, but also "alien contact" experiences indistinguishable from those reported by people claiming alien abduction, surprised and disturbed the author. I would have

preferred to focus on just the drug's properties and effects, and the author's conclusions, instead of having so much information about his setting up and running the study.

Travis says

It's good when it's about the science, bad when it's about how DMT gives you an antenna to perceive dark

No says

DMT Notes:

Written by Rick Strassman, M.D., a Jew turned Buddhist.

"Dimethyltryptamine, an extremely short-acting and powerful psychedelic."

"Pineal gland, a tiny organ situated in the center of our brains."

Well written and easy to read.

"Everything in the brain is paired, meaning that they have left and right counterparts. The only unpaired organ deep within the brain is the pineal gland."

"The human pineal gland becomes visible in the developing fetus at seven weeks, or forty-nine days, after conception."

Pg54 - good paragraph

"When our individual life force enters our fetal body, the moment in which we become truly human, it passes through the pineal and triggers the first primordial flood of DMT.

Later, at birth, the pineal releases more DMT.

As we die, the life-force leaves the body through the pineal gland, releasing another flood of this psychedelic spirit molecule."

Pg73 DMT & dreaming

"Pineal DMT production could underlie mystical or spiritual experiences."

"Pineal tissue in the dying or recently dead may produce DMT for a few hours, and perhaps longer, and could affect our lingering consciousness. While our "dead" brain wave readings are "flat," who knows about our inner mental state at this time?"

Pg77 fire analogy

Tibetan Buddhist - book of the dead teaches that it takes forty-nine days for the soul of the recently dead to "reincarnate."

"A feeling that the mind had separated from the body, and overpowering emotions."

"He wasn't sure if DMT had any beneficial effects, either. It's not as useful as LSD or psilocybin. It's too much too fast. You can't really work with it. You're totally out of control. It wasn't a spiritual experience. There was very little emotional flavor to it at all."

"Is it a dream? A hallucination? Or is it real? Where are these places? Inside or out?"

"Aaron was one of the few Jewish volunteers in our study, and I felt a certain kinship with him at that level."
-Rick Strassman

The patients all have similar stories when under DMT, seeing DNA, unknown alphabets and numbers, carnivals, pov of a child or in a child's room, and different worlds.

If death is like this, there's nothing to worry about.

Only with DMT do people meet up with "them," with other beings in a nonmaterial world.

Waking dream

"How could their imagination generate a scenario that felt more real than waking consciousness? If it were "real," how does one now live his or her life, knowing that existing right now are multiple invisible realms inhabited by intelligent life-forms?"

"my proposition that the alien abduction experience is made possible by excessive brain levels of DMT."

"One of our volunteers likes to say 'You can still be an atheist until 0.04.'"

"Being raised a Jew in southern California in the 1950s and 1960s, my religious training emphasized learning the Hebrew language and Jewish festivals, history, and culture. We also remembered the Holocaust and supported the newly formed Jewish state of Israel." -Rick Strassman

TV Analogy: these cases suggest that, rather than merely adjusting the brightness, contrast, and color of the previous program, we have changed the channel. No longer is the show we are watching everyday reality, channel normal.

Huntie says

I'm reading this book right now, and it's fascinating. As a psychology student (sort of), I'm particularly interested in how psychedelics work with our brains to help facilitate better therapy as well as to treat some medical problems. DMT is probably the most interesting of these chemicals, because it's something that is found in our own bodies (and also practically everywhere if you've read any Shulgin) yet its benefits have been downplayed like crazy. What I liked best about this book were all the case studies. It's too bad that it's currently illegal to conduct psychedelic research on consenting human subjects in the US; there's a lot that could be learned from this substance. What I found most fascinating was the recurring "theme" in a lot of the recorded experiences that seemed to involve what were described as alien encounters (Rick Strassman has a new book that talks about this aspect of the DMT and other psychedelic experiences a little more in-depth). Part of this is because I love anything to do with alien/UFO encounters; part of it is because it's interesting to me that so many people (who didn't know each other at all so there was little chance of collaborating on a story) described similar experiences. I highly recommend this book if you've got an open mind; this book

will blow your mind!

Nathan says

Let down by my "high" expectations. HEY-OH.

OK. Here's the problem: Strassman simply does not give enough to the scientists. Maybe his intention was to collect a bunch of case studies to show the reoccurring themes induced in the minds of those under the influence of DMT, but I walked away from a rather long book with only a handful of facts. No, I wasn't looking for a full description about what it's like to take the drug; I realize that explaining the experience of seeing a color requires a poet and to simply have experienced it yourself. But given his medical and scientific background, I did expect a deeper and more rigorous treatise of the chemical. The experiments he ran were only alluded to and referenced. What were some of the major findings? What impact did these findings have? And in particular, what are the neuroscientific and physiological consequences of the drug? Strassman presented more speculation and theories than data.

I found the most interesting chapters to be the introduction and general scientific background of psychedelics, and a chapter where Strassman laboriously goes through how he got permission to perform sanctioned research on psychedelics. Surprise: you just need contacts in the right places and to be at the right place at the right time.

I also enjoyed musing on the interesting "coincidence?" that most people experience similar themes during their adventures in the DMT realms. Nevertheless, I squirmed as a scientist with Strassmans' willingness to make speculative claims about how the vague similarities in stories told between different users was perhaps a sign of parallel dimensions, alien encounters, alternative quantum states, etc. Note: though these unfounded claims were presented as speculation, but they still took up too much of the book and outweighed any scientific content.

Finally, I believe the book finishes on a tone that precisely mirrors what it feels like to read the book. Strassman mentions that the medical and scientific models are intrinsically orthogonal to the experience, insight, and enjoyment of psychedelic trips, and implicates this as the major obstacle to his (or future) psychedelic research. Keeping stride, he backs up and essentially says: "I'm not really sure what I learned from my DMT studies. The results were inconclusive. DMT remains a mystery." This final ambiguity shines through in the book: as a reader, the text felt inconclusive and mysterious in its message.
