



Before the Journey

Preparation • Presence • Integration

A grounded guide to preparing your mind, body and environment for a meaningful non-ordinary experience.

This guide is about preparation, not prediction.

The quality of an experience is shaped by many things: your state of mind, your surroundings, your physical wellbeing, the people around you and what you do afterwards. Thoughtful preparation cannot guarantee a particular outcome, but it can create better conditions for safety, openness and reflection.

01 Start with your why

Set an intention, not an expectation

An intention gives you a direction without demanding that the experience unfold in a particular way. Try to hold it lightly. A useful intention is often simple, personal and open-ended.

Questions to sit with

- What is drawing me toward this experience now?
- What am I hoping to understand, feel, release or reconnect with?
- What would I be willing to meet with curiosity rather than control?
- What support might I need if something difficult arises?

A useful sentence stem

"I am open to seeing what I need to see, while staying connected to safety, compassion and choice."

Avoid turning an intention into a performance target. "I must heal X today" or "I need a breakthrough" can create pressure. Meaning sometimes arrives quietly, and sometimes only becomes clear later.

02 Prepare the body

Arrive resourced, not depleted

In the days beforehand, favour ordinary foundations over complicated protocols: regular sleep, adequate hydration, nutritious meals, gentle movement and enough downtime. Avoid deliberately exhausting, dehydrating or fasting yourself unless a qualified clinician has specifically advised otherwise.

A simple preparation checklist

- Prioritise consistent sleep for several nights beforehand.
- Eat normally and choose foods that you know sit well with you.
- Hydrate normally; avoid both dehydration and excessive water intake.
- Keep exercise restorative rather than punishing immediately beforehand.
- Digital detox: consider reducing unnecessary screen time, social media and notifications so there is more space for rest, reflection and presence.
- Avoid alcohol and recreational drug mixing.
- Do not abruptly stop prescribed medicines in order to have an experience.

Medication and health matter

Some medicines, supplements and health conditions can change the physical or psychological risk of altered states. If a psychoactive substance is involved, discuss medication interactions and relevant medical or psychiatric history with an appropriately qualified clinician. This is especially important with cardiovascular problems, seizure disorders, pregnancy, or a personal or close family history of psychosis or mania.

03 Set and setting

Make the environment do some of the work

Your surroundings can influence whether you feel guarded or able to soften. Aim for a space that feels private, familiar, comfortable and low in unnecessary demands.

Environment

- A calm, physically safe space with comfortable temperature and lighting.
- Water, tissues, a blanket and easy access to a bathroom.
- Phones and notifications reduced unless needed for safety.
- No driving, swimming, heights, traffic or other hazardous activities while impaired.
- A plan to avoid unexpected visitors or responsibilities.

People

If another person is present, choose someone trustworthy, sober and capable of staying calm. Agree beforehand on boundaries, touch, privacy, music, conversation and when outside help should be sought. Consent remains important even in altered states.

The aim is not to engineer a perfect atmosphere. It is to remove avoidable friction and create enough safety for attention to turn inward.

04 When intensity rises

Work with the experience, not against it

Strong emotion, unusual thoughts, bodily sensations or a temporary loss of your usual sense of control can feel overwhelming. When it is safe to do so, simple grounding can help.

Try

- Slow your exhale and feel the support of the floor, bed or chair.
- Name a few things you can see, hear and physically feel.
- Remind yourself that altered states change and pass.
- Reduce stimulation: quieter music, softer light, fewer people talking.
- Ask for calm reassurance rather than analysis.

Know when grounding is not enough

Seek urgent medical help for chest pain, severe breathing difficulty, seizure, loss of consciousness, dangerous overheating, serious injury, severe confusion that creates immediate danger, or behaviour that cannot be kept safely contained. If someone may harm themselves or another person, treat that as an emergency.

05 The day after

Leave room for the landing

The period after an intense experience can feel clear and connected, emotionally raw, confusing, ordinary - or all of these at different times. Avoid forcing a conclusion immediately.

For the first 24-72 hours

- Sleep, eat and hydrate.
- Write down images, feelings and insights before interpreting them.
- Spend time in nature or take an easy walk if that feels supportive.
- Talk with someone trustworthy who can listen without imposing a meaning.
- Delay major life decisions while emotions are unusually amplified.

Three integration questions

- What felt important?
- What might this be asking me to practise in ordinary life?
- What is one small, realistic action I can take this week?

06 Integration

Insight becomes useful through practice

A powerful experience can show you something. Integration is the slower process of discovering whether that insight can be lived. The goal is not to preserve an extraordinary state; it is to bring something worthwhile into ordinary life.

Keep it small

Rather than redesigning your entire life, choose one behaviour that expresses what mattered. That could be a conversation, a boundary, ten minutes of meditation, returning to therapy, more time outdoors, a change in how you rest, or asking for help.

A seven-day reflection

- One thing I want to remember:

- One pattern I noticed:

- One action I will take:

- One person or practice that can support me:

"The experience is a chapter. Integration is how the next pages are written."

A final note

Preparation is an act of care

You do not need to arrive fearless, perfectly calm or certain of what will happen. You can arrive informed, supported and willing to listen.

Corners of Your Mind offers preparation and integration support around non-ordinary and expanded states of consciousness, with an emphasis on grounded reflection, personal meaning and translating insight into everyday life.

If something here resonates, you don't need to know exactly what you need before getting in touch.

Visit cornersofyourmind.com and choose Start a conversation.

Important: This guide is educational and is not medical advice, diagnosis, treatment, or an endorsement of illegal drug use. Laws vary by location. If psychoactive substances are involved, use legal and appropriately supervised routes where available. People with medical or psychiatric risk factors should seek qualified clinical advice before participating in an altered-state practice.

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Preparation • Integration • Grounded support