

# Ketamine Integration

## For Clinical Settings

(sample guide)



### THE TREATMENT PROCESS

Different clinics follow different protocols. Most will require an initial consultation with a doctor. Because ketamine is an off-label medication, practitioners have a lot of leeway with their treatment protocols. There are different modes of administering ketamine. Your doctor may prescribe an IM injection, an IV infusion, or a lozenge. The method of administration and dosage will affect the experience. Onset is quick—within a few minutes for IM or IV administration. Some clinics will insist on the first session being in person, where you can be directly supervised by a practitioner, with subsequent sessions being administered via lozenges at home.



The first subjective experience is a heaviness in the body. Typically, you will be wearing eye shades and listening to music. Let your body relax and focus on your breath. The initial



session will last from 30-90 minutes and then will start to fade. The sensation is drifting away from your body and returning. When you return, you may start to regain an awareness of the room. Your vision may be blurred. The visual sensation most often noted is “seeing the world through a funhouse mirror”. This altered vision may cause motion sickness and nausea, and you may feel a little sluggish or drunk. Your motor control will be affected and walking may be difficult (Kolp 2014).

Because of these effects, it is important to be careful and cautious for 6 or more hours after the experience. DO NOT DRIVE or participate in high-impact sports, such as mountain biking, skiing, skateboarding, on the same day. Use the time after the experience for self-care and reflection. Start to practice kindness towards yourself.

Ketamine is extremely effective at achieving remission from depression in the short-term. Most people feel some relief in the hours following their experience. How long the effects last is variable. There is debate among the clinical ketamine community about how often to administer ketamine, but it appears that many different protocols can be effective.

## What Is The Ketamine Experience Like?

Ketamine is what is known as a dissociative anesthetic. Your body will begin to feel numb and heavy. Some people report feeling like they are sinking into the bed. You may feel a hypnagogic effect—the sense that you are falling as you drift to sleep. The experience is dream-like. Many people feel like they are leaving their body.

### Common experiences include:

- Feelings of leaving one’s body/out of body experiences
- Deep feelings of peace and joy
- Ego dissolution/loss of identity
- Experience of reliving one’s life
- Experiencing a birth or death process
- Encounters with otherworldly beings (deceased relative, angels, spirits, Christ, Buddha, Krishna)
- Premonitions of the future
- Transcending times and space
- Feelings of cosmic unity with the universe/God
- Sense of sacredness
- Profound sense of ineffability of the experience (more real than real)
- Intuitive sense that the experience points to an objective truth about the nature of reality



## 4 levels of Non-Ordinary States of Consciousness

Ketamine researchers have quantified four distinct levels of non-ordinary states of consciousness that stem from a ketamine experience. The depth of the experience is loosely linked to dose, with more intense experiences being associated with a higher dose, but there is a tremendous amount of individual variability patient to patient.

### 1) Empathogenic Experience

At low doses, ketamine can be considered an empathogen, a substance that induces the experience of empathy, oneness, and emotional openness. In the empathogenic state, the patient is comfortable, relaxed, and remains aware of their body. The patient may feel warm, dreamy, or euphoric and may experience mild visual effects. Ego defenses are slightly lowered, sometimes leading to increased talkative behavior. Low doses of ketamine are used during ketamine-assisted psychotherapy, in which the patient is prompted to actively process past trauma or inner conflicts.

### 2) Out-of body Experience

At slightly higher doses, the patient becomes more disconnected from reality. The body feels heavy, and visuals are stronger and may be disconcerting. The patient experiences a dream-like state where they feel completely removed from their body. The mind will wander and the patient may experience vivid visions, encounters with perceived beings, and travel to other realms of consciousness.

### 3) Near-Death Experience

A Near-Death Experience (NDE) is a well-studied phenomenon of the human experience that occurs in life or death situations, meditation, and anesthesia. The perceived experience is often marked by personal cultural understandings of spirituality and the afterlife, but similar themes are present. Research has found that ketamine-induced near-death experiences are equivalent to naturally occurring near-death experiences in their ability to promote psycho-spiritual growth.

### 4) Ego-Dissolving Transcendental Experience

Like near-death experiences, ego-dissolving transcendental experiences can occur spontaneously, through meditation, or be induced by psychedelics. They are associated with spontaneous healing from addiction, personality disorders, and other chronic illness. Additionally, they are often associated with rapid psychospiritual growth, expanded worldviews, and long-term changes in behaviors.

