

A GUIDE TO KAP

# Ketamine *Curious.*

*Understanding the basics about  
ketamine-assisted psychotherapy.  
Written to dispel myths, allay fears,  
and create safety to explore this realm  
of healing and transformation.*

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MIND BODY PIVOT · FIRST EDITION

Ketamine,  
*briefly*  
*explained.*

*Co-authored by Dr. Lisa Gold  
and Danna Skoy*

# Nine chapters *for the curious.*

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# Ketamine Curious

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## INTRODUCTION

What is ketamine and what is ketamine-assisted psychotherapy? How can it help? The answer will be different depending on who you ask.

Thank you for being curious!

We've written this brief guide to share the basics of this powerful new treatment. We hope to dispel myths, allay fears, create safety to explore this realm of healing and transformation, and peak your interest to learn more.

## A New Era in Psychotherapy

We have officially entered a new era where mental and emotional health is more easily attainable than ever before. Ketamine is a game changer. It is the new generation of mental health treatment. It provides profound positive change more quickly and easily than established treatment modalities. It far exceeds what is possible with psychotherapy alone or commonly prescribed medications. Finally, people who have been unable to find relief from conventional treatment now have a highly effective treatment option. I want EVERYONE to know about this!

## "The Anti-Medication" Game Changer

Dr. John Krystal, chief psychiatrist at Yale Medicine, describes ketamine as a "game changer" and an "anti-medication" because of how differently it works from other medications prescribed for depression, anxiety, and PTSD. He explains,

*"With most medications, like valium, the anti-anxiety effect you get only lasts when it is in your system. When the valium goes away, you can get rebound anxiety. When you take ketamine, it triggers reactions in your cortex that enable brain connections to regrow. It's the reaction to ketamine, not the presence of ketamine in the body, that constitutes its effects."*

DR. JOHN KRYSTAL, YALE MEDICINE

# What Is Ketamine?

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Ketamine is a quick-onset, short-duration, dissociative anesthetic. It has been used globally for over half a century as a safe and reliable anesthetic for surgeries and pain management. It is on the World Health Organization's list of "essential medicines," meaning that the WHO recommends it be available in every medical setting worldwide due to its efficacy and low risk of side effects (Wolfson, P.E., 2014).

Once solely known for its anesthetic properties (used in surgeries as anesthesia and by responders for treating pain), ketamine has evolved into a powerful mental health resource. Research over the past two decades has unveiled its rapid antidepressant effects, making it an effective option for treating mental health issues. Substantial empirical evidence supports the use of ketamine for depression, anxiety, PTSD, suicidal ideation, addiction, and eating disorders.

## What Can Ketamine Treat?

Ketamine effectively treats the following conditions. In order to qualify to receive ketamine treatments, you must meet the diagnostic criteria for at least one of these diagnoses. Even if you do not identify as having one of these diagnoses, you may fit the qualifying criteria.

Depression

PTSD and Complex PTSD

OCD

Suicidal thoughts

Eating disorders (specialist required)

Addiction (specialist required)

Developmental & Relational Trauma

Sexual trauma and pain

Chronic pain Neuropathy

Unfortunately, ketamine treatments are not covered by insurance. However, this does mean that the medical provider prescribing or administering the ketamine will not need to report your diagnosis to your insurance company, and your confidentiality regarding any diagnosis will be maintained between you, your medical provider, and your therapist. If your therapist accepts your insurance coverage, you will be able to use your insurance benefits for your preparation, facilitation, and integration sessions. If your insurance does not cover your therapy sessions but provides out-of-network benefits, your ketamine therapy sessions (not the medical administration portion of your bill) should also qualify for reimbursement from your insurance.

## Contraindications of Ketamine

### **KETAMINE IS NOT A TREATMENT OPTION FOR PEOPLE WITH ANY OF THE FOLLOWING**

- Poorly Controlled Hypertension (due to increased blood pressure)
- Significant Heart Disease (due to increased heart rate)
- Seizure Disorders
- Schizophrenia or Other Psychosis History
- Interstitial Cystitis (due to activation of the urinary tract and risk of increasing inflammation)
- Liver Disease (ketamine is processed through the liver)
- Pregnancy
- Breastfeeding (unless specific protocols are followed)

# Versatility & Affordability

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Ketamine serves as a versatile tool. There are a wide range of dosing and types of administration according to your treatment goals and specific needs. The types of administration used in ketamine-assisted psychotherapy include:

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**Compounded lozenges** **≈ \$65 / 8 doses**

Approximately \$65 for 8 doses when obtained from a compounding pharmacy.  
Mail order service costs are significantly higher.

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**Compounded nasal spray (*NOT Spravato*)** **≈ \$65 / 8 doses**

Approximately \$65 for 8 doses when obtained from a compounding pharmacy.

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**Intramuscular (IM)** **\$200 – \$500 / dose**

Depending on the medical provider and market price for services in your area.

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**Intravenous (IV)** **\$250 – \$750 / dose**

Depending on the medical provider and market price for services in your area.

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The compounded self-administered forms of ketamine provide a less intense experience than the IM and IV medical administration. Different providers work with different forms of administration. All forms are effective. The IV and IM forms of ketamine must be administered by a medical provider in a medical setting. Compounded lozenges and nasal spray can be self-administered at home, in your therapist's office, or at another safe location of your choice, provided you have someone to support you through your experience. People with chronic severe depression, anxiety, PTSD, and physical pain may benefit more from the deeper neuromuscular reset provided by the IM and IV administrations. Please explore these options with your medical provider.

# How Does Ketamine Work?

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**K**etamine works differently than traditional medications for depression, anxiety, and PTSD. The prescriptions conventionally prescribed merely mask symptoms: ketamine gets to the root of the issue. Ketamine triggers chemical reactions in your brain that promote the growth of new neural pathways and repair neural damage caused by trauma. These new pathways provide long-lasting symptom relief. They also create a softening of reactivity and enhance the ability to pivot out of old patterns and reroute into new patterns of resilience. These gains are sustained and built upon long after the ketamine has left your system.

## Is Ketamine a Psychedelic?

Fifty percent of the researchers studying psychedelic medicine consider ketamine to be a psychedelic. They base their classification upon the many similarities it shares with the classic psychedelics in terms of patient experiences and outcomes. The other fifty percent feel strongly that ketamine is not a psychedelic due to one strong difference between ketamine and the other psychedelics: ketamine is a dissociative anesthetic.

# Similarities to Classic Psychedelics

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Similar Effects on the Brain

Similar Diagnosis Treated with Similar Outcomes

Similar Patient Experiences

Ketamine, MDMA, psilocybin, and ayahuasca are effective treatments for depression, anxiety, and PTSD. Ketamine and other psychedelic medicines all have a similar effect on the brain. The research on psychedelic medicine has concluded that all of these medicines are effective at treating these diagnoses due to the fact that they effectively heal insecure attachment and trauma. All these medicines seem to heal insecure attachment and trauma by providing an experience of feeling emotional and existential connection.

Research participants repeatedly report feeling a sense of belonging to something existentially bigger than themselves. Most participants also report experiencing the phenomenon, often described as "ego death" – the death of the stranglehold of defensiveness and reactivity.

Defensiveness and reactivity do not completely disappear, but transform into an awareness rather than an automatic default reaction. They report the birth of greater compassion for self and others and the ability to take an observing, nonjudgmental view of the past, present, and future.

## The Ketamine Difference

None of the classic psychedelic medicines offer this unique property of providing dissociative anesthetic effects. This unique property can actually serve to reset the nervous system out of the autonomic neuromuscular patterns of fight, flight, freeze, and fawn patterns in a qualitatively different way than classic psychedelic medicines. A ketamine-assisted psychotherapist who understands how to work effectively with this property can help clients exit these neuromuscular patterns of fear, tension, and pain experienced in the body.

## Healing the Heart: Working with Emotions and Developing Secure Attachment

The softening of neuromuscular defenses also has a softening effect on emotional defenses. A skilled KAP therapist will know how to work with ketamine to soften emotional defenses, This emotional softening allows people to hear, feel and begin to trust the sincere, compassionate support offered to them by their therapist and loved ones present in the session. Because of this, ketamine can serve to facilitate incredibly profound corrective emotional experiences for healing insecure attachment.

A Rose By  
Any Other  
Name Smells  
Just As Sweet

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We personally do not care how we label this medicine as long as we create the awareness necessary for people to get the help they need. This medicine is legal and widely available right now. There are cost-effective options available. So many people in need could be benefiting from this incredible resource. The number one problem with ketamine is the lack of awareness of what ketamine-assisted psychotherapy is and how it can help. We are hoping to change that.

## Why Are We Not Hearing More About Ketamine?

With the many benefits offered by ketamine treatment, the degree of success, and the wide availability, why are we not hearing more? The reality is that no one is able to make money selling ketamine. The patent on ketamine has long since expired. Ketamine is generic and very inexpensive.

What you are paying for when you pay for ketamine treatment is the time and expertise of the medical provider prescribing and/or administering the ketamine and the psychotherapist's time and expertise. The costs of MDMA and psilocybin-assisted psychotherapy are likely to be significantly more expensive than ketamine-assisted psychotherapy due to the fact that the medicines themselves will be costly. Even if insurance pays for these treatments, your co-pay will likely be higher for them than for the compounded ketamine lozenges or nasal spray. You will never see any pharmaceutical commercials for it on the evening news or your social media for a generic medication that costs less than an insurance co-pay.

# The Overlooked, Underappreciated Child in the Psychedelic Family



In our opinion, ketamine is similar to an overlooked middle child in a big family of louder, flashier, seemingly more attractive, and enjoyable siblings. It is often the quiet child that has the most to share if people will just take the time to shine a spotlight on her and see what she has to offer.

Ketamine could also be seen as the one and only step-child in a blended family: some of the members of the family consider her to belong, while others dismiss her as "not really a part of the family."

## Recreational vs. Psychotherapeutic

Another reason some people are reluctant to explore ketamine is because they associate it with its recreational use as a club drug. Some people cite their fear of the dreaded "k-hole," where they feel lost, alone, confused, and afraid. It is important to understand that ketamine is a dissociative with possible hallucinogenic effects. It, therefore, requires preparation, as well as intentionality and adequate emotional support during the experience in order for the experience to be positive.

As with all psychedelics, the mindset or intention with which you approach your experience and the setting in which you experience the medicine will determine your overall outcome. That is what is meant when you hear people talk about "set and setting" being essential to a positive psychedelic experience.

Every client I have worked with who has experienced recreational ketamine prior to their ketamine-assisted psychotherapy has shared that their ketamine-assisted psychotherapy experience was a stark contrast to their recreational experiences. Unlike their recreational use, they describe their ketamine-assisted psychotherapy as feeling supportive, growth-promoting, and even transformative. The truth is that people can be at risk for experiencing a "k-hole" without sufficient preparation from a psychotherapist and without sufficient support during their experience from an psychotherapist and/or medical provider. Preparation, facilitation, and integration are key.

## The Importance of a Skilled KAP Therapist

Finding a skilled therapist is paramount. Ideally, find a trauma therapist who is also trained to provide ketamine-assisted psychotherapy. If you are already participating in therapy, invite your therapist to explore this process with you.

## Soul Surfing KAP

Soul Surfing is the model of ketamine-assisted psychotherapy Lisa Gold PhD developed, based on Dr. Sue Johnson's model of psychotherapy, Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT). It is a trauma-informed, attachment-based hybrid of Eye-Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR) and EFT. Soul Surfing is designed to choreograph and facilitate a reset and remodel of your default patterns of shame and fear. It supports the development of new resilient patterns, and reinforces them, enabling you to create the changes you desire.

# Finding a Ketamine- Assisted Psychotherapist

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There are many organizations providing training and referral lists of therapists who have completed their training. Dr. Gold received her formal training from The California Institute of Integral Studies. There are many accomplished alumni and educators from this and other programs providing high quality KAP. Danna Skoy MS, CMHC mentored exclusively with Dr. Gold in addition to affiliating with Taramind. She completed her master's capstone researching Ketamine-Assisted Psychotherapy KAP.

## Consultation for You and/or Your Therapist

We are happy to consult with you and your therapist to assist with your healing journey.

## Primary Therapist & Ketamine Therapist

We work collaboratively with clients and their primary therapist. We prefer clients to already be participating in therapy with a therapist they trust. Ketamine is not a magic bullet. It is a highly effective treatment to support you achieving your desired results more easily and quickly than with therapy alone. However, ketamine treatments are most effective when integrated as a part of your ongoing therapy.

Continuity of care with your primary therapist is paramount. Ideally, your ketamine treatments would serve as part of the overall treatment plan you've established with your therapist. The ketamine serves as an integrative treatment to facilitate breakthroughs and expedite your healing and growth. Once the ketamine-assisted psychotherapy sessions are completed, you and your therapist continue your therapy until your treatment goals have been fulfilled. You are likely to see results more rapidly and experience transformative change more easily than you or your therapist could ever have imagined.

## If You Do Not Already Have a Therapist

If you are not already in therapy, we are happy to consult with you and explore working with you. We can support your initial exploration, answer your questions or concerns, and also guide you through all phases of your ketamine-assisted psychotherapy.

If you need long-term psychotherapy support, Danna Skoy is available. Contact Danna at **MINDBODYPIVOT.COM**.

Dr. Gold is no longer accepting clients for long-term psychotherapy but she will work with you to find appropriate long term support as needed. Except for in-person ketamine facilitation, Dr. Gold is virtual only. You can contact Dr. Gold at **DrLisaGold.com**.

Facilitation of ketamine administration sessions is conducted in person. If indicated, we also offer maintenance sessions for clients who have completed the foundational six KAP sessions with us or with another provider.

# In Summary

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**K**etamine isn't just a medication; it's a beacon of hope for those navigating trauma, insecure attachment, and mental health issues. With its unique ability to facilitate lasting change where other treatment options have failed, ketamine is making possible a brighter, more resilient future for people who are willing to experience this innovative healing modality.

Thank you for your interest. We wish you the very best on your journey of healing and transformation.

Warmest regards,

*Lisa and Danna*

# About the Authors

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*Thank you for being curious.  
We wish you the very best on your  
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*— Lisa & Danna*

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