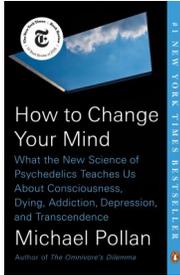


Books by the Stack



How to Change Your Mind by Michael Pollan

The best-selling author presents a groundbreaking investigation into the medial and scientific revolution currently taking place in the field of psychedelic drugs, drawing on a range of experiences to trace the criminalization of such substances as LSD and psychoactive mushrooms and how they may offer treatment options for difficult health challenges.

Why you'll like it: Science writing. Thought-provoking. Engaging.

About the Author: Michael Pollan is a contributing writer for "The New York Times Magazine" as well as a contributing editor at "Harper's" magazine. He is the author of two prize-winning books: "Second Nature: A Gardener's Education" and "A Place of My Own: The Education of an Amateur Builder." Pollan lives in Connecticut with his wife and son. (Publisher Provided)

Questions for Discussion

1. Why are so many of us intent on escaping our own consciousness? Consider author Michael Pollan's statement that "if everyday waking consciousness [is] but one of several possible ways to construct the world, then perhaps there is value in cultivating a great amount of... neural diversity." What does Pollan mean – how does consciousness shape our views of the world around us? And what is neural diversity?
2. *Follow-up to Question 1:* Pollan writes that children approach reality with the wide-eyed "astonishment of an adult on psychedelics." Is he serious? What is he referring to?
3. Other than LSD or mushrooms, Pollan says we can also achieve neural diversity through meditation and prayer. Have you ever had a transcendent experience through either of those means?
4. After psychoactive drugs leave the body and users come off the trip, what kinds of residual effects to many users continue to experience?
5. Have you ever taken psychoactive drugs (LSD, mesc, "shrooms")? If not, do you have an interest in trying them now that you've read Pollan's book?
6. Prior to reading Pollan's account, what were your views on Timothy Leary and the 60s "turn on, tune in, drop out" culture? If you are, say, in your sixties or older, did you consider Leary a boundry-breaking hero ... a self promoter a dangerous pied piper ... a self-indulgent egotist ... a daring experimenter?
7. How did Leary derail scientific study of LSD? Would it be fair to say that had Leary's counter-culture not turned LSD into a bad word, we might already be benefiting – right now – from the drug's ability to offer relief from suffering? Or is that leveling unfair blame at Leary?
8. In terms of LSD's medicinal benefits, what have scientists discovered? What do they see as the drug's potential?
9. Talk about how psychoactive drugs work in the brain. Are you able to grasp Pollan's explanations; is the writing lucid enough to cut through the scientific technicalities? Or were you stumped?

10. The author used himself as a guinea pig. How did he experience the drugs?

11. Your opinion: LSD – good thing ... or bad thing?

(Questions provided by LitLovers)



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