

sozo

Handbook

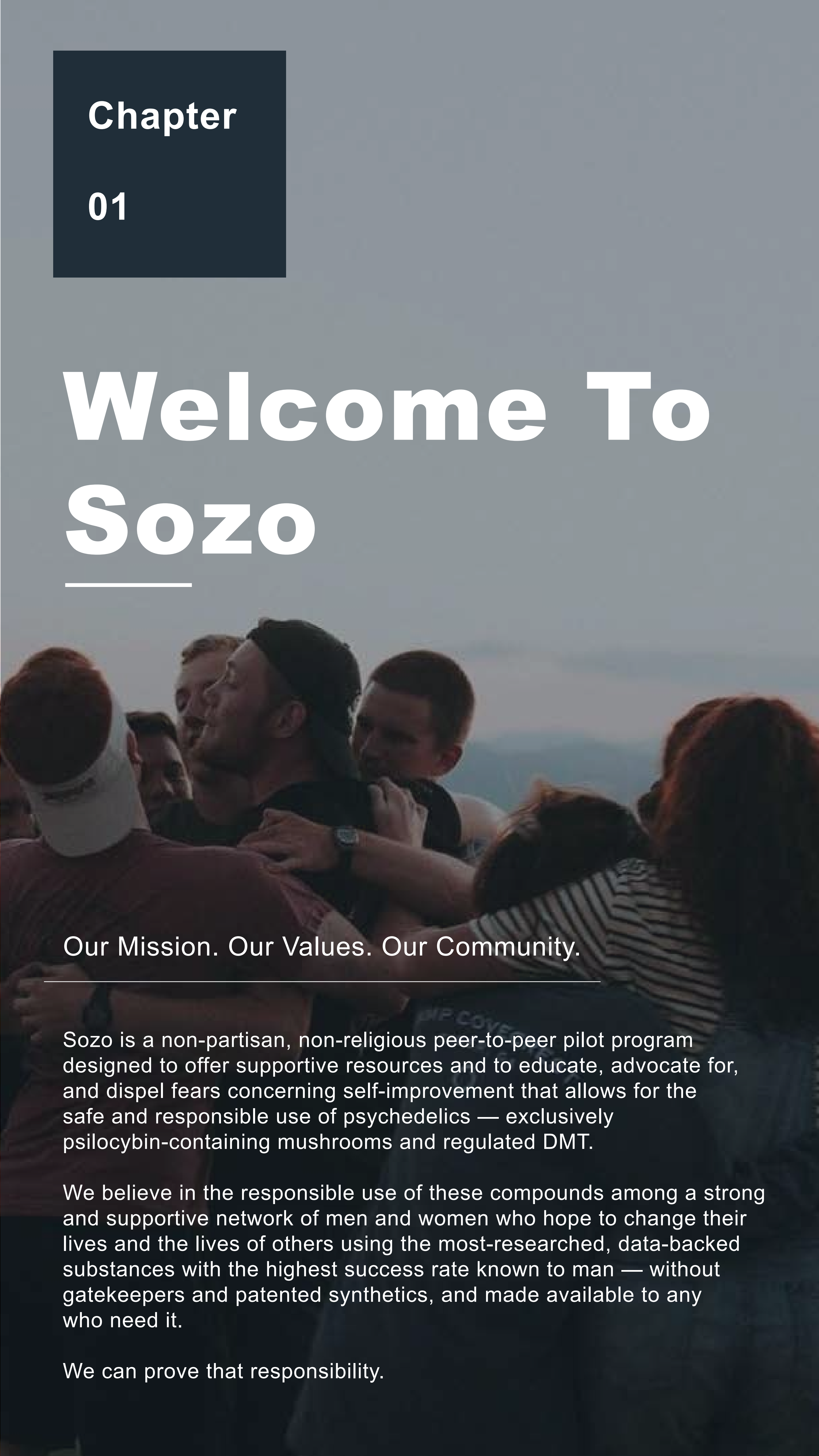
Building Communities.
Cultivating Awareness.
Becoming More Human.

One Trip At A Time.



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Chapter

01

Welcome To Sozo

Our Mission. Our Values. Our Community.

Sozo is a non-partisan, non-religious peer-to-peer pilot program designed to offer supportive resources and to educate, advocate for, and dispel fears concerning self-improvement that allows for the safe and responsible use of psychedelics — exclusively psilocybin-containing mushrooms and regulated DMT.

We believe in the responsible use of these compounds among a strong and supportive network of men and women who hope to change their lives and the lives of others using the most-researched, data-backed substances with the highest success rate known to man — without gatekeepers and patented synthetics, and made available to any who need it.

We can prove that responsibility.

WHY SOZO EXISTS

The medical model isn't accessible enough, modern prescription medicine isn't working, and talk therapy isn't enough. The mental health crisis is worsening, and the attempt to regulate these compounds for profit won't last. It absolutely can't.

Many people feel:



Isolated



Disconnected



Misunderstood



Directionless

The system needs wide access to these resources. People need them to learn to heal, to sit with their emotions and hold more of reality, and to prove in a peer-to-peer model similar to AA and other support groups that these compounds can be used in a system safely and responsibly, with as little gatekeeping as possible and no risks beyond (and results exactly matching) those found in clinical settings.

Sozo exists to provide these resources — down to knowledgeable and experienced support — and create spaces where people can learn, heal, optimize their lives, and better connect to themselves and each other. Our initiative will also record proof that responsible psychedelic use is already occurring, and possible, and safe, and present robust longitudinal tracking data and detailed reports that will demonstrate that the state system that implements or even allows this model will see improvement on par with existing for-profit clinical models at a fraction of the cost — and no additional safety risk.

We will do this by providing these resources to the public at no cost, to any who want it, through a balanced system of intake, education, a sponsor system, support, and data collection — resulting in a self-sustaining, growing, peer-to-peer member movement that will safely utilize self-improvement's strongest tools.

OUR VISION

Sozo was founded on the belief that many of society's greatest challenges are not simply political, economic, or medical. They are human, and are universal and perennial.

Across the world, people are experiencing unprecedented levels of loneliness, disconnection, anxiety, addiction, and emotional suffering. While access to information has never been greater, many people feel increasingly disconnected from themselves, from one another, and from meaningful community.

At the same time, psychedelic research has re-emerged as one of the most promising areas in mental health. Yet for many people, access to these experiences remains financially, socially, and culturally out of reach. Highly medicalized models often place healing behind significant economic and institutional barriers, leaving many individuals without accessible pathways for education, support, and community. It doesn't help those that need it most.

Sozo was created to help bridge that gap.

We believe people deserve access to accurate education, responsible practices, supportive communities, and meaningful conversations surrounding personal growth and healing.

We believe that throughout human history, people have gathered in community to seek understanding, connection, and transformation. While tools and cultures have changed, the human need for belonging, self-discovery, and healing has remained constant.

We know from personal experience. Sozo was founded by 7 troubled people from various painful backgrounds who gathered in an attempt to get better. Without hyperbole, it saved our lives. Two of them became assisted and facilitated therapists, guiding others to the same healing they themselves experienced. We saw the ineffectiveness of traditional talk therapy on people who suffer from Cluster-B personality disorders, and our clients were often those referred to us by psychiatrists and psychologists at the end of their rope.

The results were the same: people got off of alcohol, meth, heroin, picked their lives up, treated themselves like they mattered again, quit their jobs, built new lives, started over, and made peace with tragedies. We were the last-ditch effort for, and specialized in, those whom the system had given up on and would not touch. We saw the people who lied time and again in talk therapy make exponential advancements in one session when confronted with either a higher power, or the deepest part of themselves. Either way, on any level, with something that knew everything about them, was immovable, and helped them see reality clearly, to hold more and more truth, without judgement or the risk of transference, of shame.

We saw that it wasn't a one-off experience, and needed real attention, further experiences, and learning, as the lie of one single session cannot undo an entire lifetime of programming and patterns. We referenced and compared our results against the much-touted results of trials and saw that clients, when followed up with later, reverted back in trials at higher rates, much sooner. They were pressured to sing the experiment's praises for legislative purposes, similar to the marijuana push of the early 2000s.

OUR VISION

They were safe selections, low risk, avoiding cluster-b sufferers entirely at screening. We tried licensed retreats and saw how little the practitioner was needed, how little they did, how the safety risks in these settings were not reduced at all, how incidents were brushed under the rug and hidden while being just as pervasive in order to push a positive narrative.

We saw results. And then we watched the means to achieve them slip away.

We saw legislation inch back towards the very medical model that wasn't working. The very one it hoped to disrupt and reform. We saw hungry people in the industry aiming to make their fortune in a for-profit industry that was likened to a looming pharmaceutical boom, or the marijuana gold rush of years previous. This was not how we made our fortunes, and this is not how anyone should make their fortunes. We watched the progress and effectiveness of our industry fade. We are watching the system have this seismic wave of reformation and improvement slip away as the old methods and greed reassert to exploit fear to pull this further out of reach. We believe that the system needs to act sooner and see the direction of history, to be on the right side of an inevitability, while the siege engine of it's ship can still simply alter course before it's too late, rather than turn around after legislation and go backwards, as Prohibition did with alcohol. The system has a chance to anticipate and greet the truth rather than fight it. To envision a less bleak future, to integrate and propagate this experience as a right into a society that needs this nuclear option — and the understanding of its safe and responsible use — distributed as widely as possible, as fast as possible, to correct the downward trajectory every available data shows populations are heading. To heal in advance of a systemic tipping point.

Our organization, while never judging the personal lives of its members, pushes for less substances, not more. This is a compound that gets people to do less drugs, not more. To quit. People simply lose interest in drinking, in smoking, in any harmful substance. Without meaning to.

We focused on the ill, the homeless, those on disability, as well as attorneys, veterans, doctors, and business owners, and saw families heal under the ripple effects of a new dynamic.

Sozo's mission is to continue to do this — to educate, connect, and empower individuals through community, self-awareness, and responsible psychedelic education.

Sozo seeks to create environments where people can learn, grow, practice mindfulness, heal, and support one another through local chapters, meaningful conversations, and grassroots leadership similar to support groups such as AA or NA. We hope to be allowed to, to continue this work where we are on the right side of history. Compliant with the law, before it's too late. Easier to guide and change minds now than when it's too late and the system is locked.

There is still time to be on the right side of history. We don't wish to see prohibition as with alcohol for something that can fix the world and reverse a worsening disease that could be the ultimate crisis of humanity.

We believe that healing happens most powerfully when knowledge is paired with community, responsibility, and human connection.

We are building, much less simply meeting, the future mentioned above together.

MISSION STATEMENT

A right that is distinctly human.

“Sozo” as a word means “to save, rescue, deliver, or make whole.” While it often translates simply as "save," the original ancient Greek from which it derives encompasses a much broader scope of wholeness:

- Salvation: Rescuing someone from spiritual death or the consequences of sin
- Physical Healing: Restoring health or curing a physical ailment or disease
- Deliverance: Protecting or freeing someone from physical danger or demonic oppression

The term makes appearances numerous times in the New Testament, and while we are non-religious, we can appreciate the power of that meaning and understand the feeling deeply. We strive to embody this mission for others.

How we achieve our mission:



Education

Providing accurate, accessible, and science-informed information.



Building A Community

Building local factions and supportive peer networks utilizing a peer-to-peer model similar to AA, centered around improvement and service as the only requirement.



Personal Growth

Encouraging self-awareness, healing, and personal evolution. Optimizing mental health through mindfulness and meditation.



Responsible Practice

Promoting safety, informed choice, and responsible use.



Grassroots Leadership

Empowering leaders in the organization to create lasting changes in their communities.



Chapter

02

The Sozo Model

- ✔ Individual Transformation.
- ✔ Strong, Loving Community.
- ✔ Empowered Leadership.

Our membership model is simple: There is the person hoping to have a psychedelic experience, the sponsoring sitters who guide those in need, and the administrative leaders who handle concerns and pass them up to headquarters, handle funding requests, and organize official events with members, etc. We connect trained sponsors to those seeking the sponsorship, to pledge service and guide those in need.

ORIGIN OF SOZO

In the early twentieth century, alcoholism was widely considered hopeless. Many individuals desperately wanted to stop drinking but found themselves trapped in destructive patterns they could not overcome through willpower alone.

One of these individuals was a businessman named Rowland Hazard. Seeking help, he traveled to Switzerland to meet the renowned psychiatrist Carl Jung. After years of treatment, Jung concluded that traditional psychotherapy alone would not save him. Jung believed that some people required a profound spiritual transformation—a complete shift in consciousness and identity—to recover.

This idea eventually influenced a chain of events that led to the creation of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). Founded in 1935 by Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith, AA developed a model centered on personal honesty, moral inventory, community support, service to others, and spiritual growth. For many, the program became a powerful pathway to recovery.

Yet Bill Wilson recognized that not everyone could access the kind of spiritual awakening the program described. Some individuals remained stuck despite their sincere efforts.

During the 1950s, a new possibility emerged. Psychiatrists in Canada and elsewhere began studying lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) as a treatment for alcoholism. Early research suggested that psychedelic experiences could sometimes produce profound insights, emotional breakthroughs, and life-changing shifts in perspective—experiences that resembled the spiritual transformations described in recovery programs.

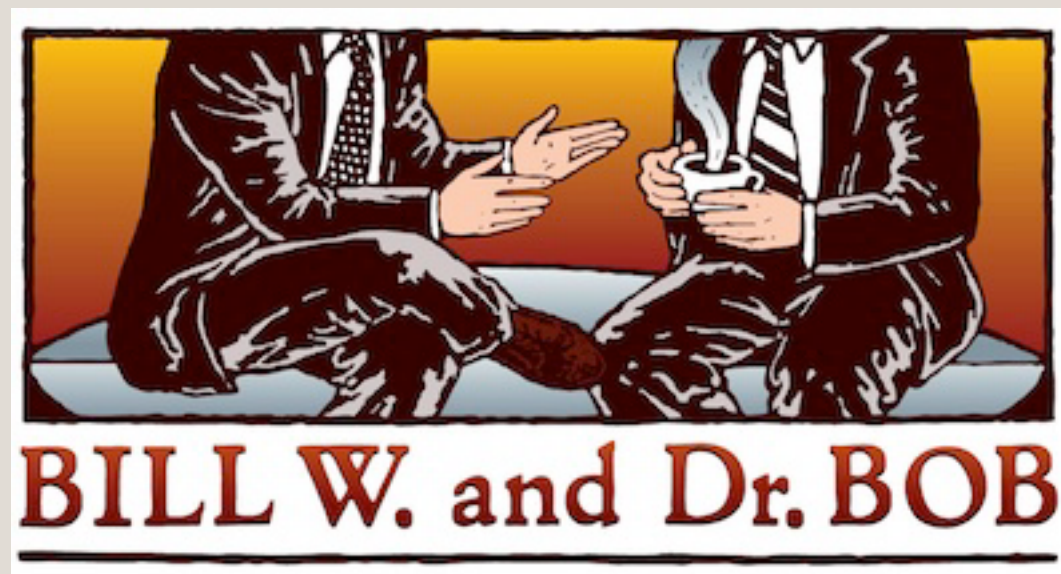
Wilson became deeply interested in this work. After his own carefully supervised experiences with LSD, he believed psychedelics might help certain individuals access the type of transformative experience that AA sought to cultivate. He viewed psychedelics not as a replacement for recovery work, but as a possible catalyst that could help people break through psychological barriers and reconnect with meaning, purpose, and hope.

Wilson wrote to Jung in 1961 thanking him for the role he played in AA's origins. Jung replied with an infamous quote. "Spiritus contra spiritum." The destructive spirit of alcohol can be overcome by a higher spiritual experience.

Wilson wrote Jung back with what was really on his mind: asking what he thought of LSD. And its treatment efficacy for his AA program. Jung's secretary said he wasn't feeling well, but would write back when he recovered.

Jung died later that week.

We now know, sadly, that Jung was an enthusiastic proponent and user of psychedelics, and that they heavily informed his writings to the point where he was terrified news of this would damage his reputation, publishing his "red book" experiences posthumously.



ORIGIN OF SOZO

It was later reported that Jung told Hazard, “Medicine cannot cure your alcoholism. Only a profound spiritual transformation might save you.”

At Sozo, we believe in the importance of rigorous science, responsible research, and evidence-informed practices surrounding psychedelic experiences. We know more than Bill Wilson and the people of the time knew then about psychedelics. We know that psilocybin mushrooms have a shorter duration than LSD and even less risk or negative effects. We know the window of DMT is shorter still, with even less risk.

We wish to pick up and continue the work Jung and Wilson started, and see that world realized.

We believe the best and most reliable transformation ultimately arises from the individual's experience with psychedelics. Healing is not given to someone by a clinician. Rather, the current clinical model relies upon clinicians, researchers, and facilitators to create safe environments in which transformative experiences can occur. In many ways, their role is not unlike that of a guide, mentor, or trusted peer supporter: helping individuals prepare for, navigate, and integrate experiences that ultimately belong to the individual.

While safety, education, and support are essential, the experience itself remains the catalyst. The insights, emotional breakthroughs, and shifts in perspective are not created by the clinician, but emerge from the individual's direct encounter with themselves.

Like Carl Jung and the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, Sozo believes that healing is not simply the reduction of symptoms. It is the transformation of one's relationship to self, others, and life itself. Their “profound spiritual transformation” and “higher power.”

Through community, reflection, accountability, service — and carefully supported transformative experiences — individuals can develop greater self-awareness, discover deeper meaning, and move toward greater wholeness. But we wish to take it further now that we know more, now that the data supports this, and allow for the safe and responsible addition of psychedelics for the people that need it, if they choose.

We believe that wholeness isn't found in isolation. It is cultivated through connections, through shared experiences, and grassroots communities that help individuals integrate their insights into lasting change. We provide a safe environment to complement these existing programs (AA, NA, and others), and partner with assisted facilities if our members need more hands-on help, (and vice versa, for their clients). We are there for therapists to refer, and other organizations to find a friend in a growing network of resources.

2.3

WHY WE MODEL FROM AA

AA understands something fundamental.

People change most effectively when they are supported by other people who are also committed to change.

AA's success rests on two powerful systems:

The Twelve Steps:

12

A framework for personal transformation.

The Twelve Traditions:

12

A framework for community preservation.

Sozo embraces the same foundational principles of recovery. Our only addition is to provide a new space for those who may have internal conflict in existing groups over utilizing psychedelic options to better get sober, and find recovery, without relapse.



THE TWO PILLARS

Safety & Trust. The sponsored and those sponsoring.

The Sozo Model rests upon two pillars



Neither pillar works without the other.



As we heal ourselves, we strengthen our communities. As we strengthen our communities, we support the healing of others.

THE SOZO PATH OF PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

Transformation begins with honesty. Most suffering grows in secrecy.

MANY PEOPLE CARRY:



Shame



Fear



Self-deception



Resentment



Isolation



Self-judgment



The path to transformation requires bringing these experiences to awareness.

The Sozo encourages members to:

- ✓ Practice radical honesty.
- ✓ Examine their beliefs and behaviors.
- ✓ Take responsibility for their actions.
- ✓ Accept support from others.
- ✓ Repair damaged relationships where possible
- ✓ Develop humility.
- ✓ Cultivate gratitude.
- ✓ Live in service.
- ✓ Learn to let go of what cannot be controlled.
- ✓ Recognize that growth is a lifelong process.



At every stage, the goal is not perfection. The goal is progress. Healing happens because we become honest and trustworthy.

THE SOZO TRADITIONS OF GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP

Healthy communities do not happen by accident. They are protected intentionally.

The Sozo Traditions provide guidance for preserving healthy factions.

- ✓ Unity over division.
- ✓ Service over status.
- ✓ Responsibility over entitlement.
- ✓ Humility over ego.
- ✓ Mission over personality.
- ✓ Community over individual recognition.
- ✓ Every member contributes to factions culture.
- ✓ Every leader protects factions culture.
- ✓ Every faction serves the larger mission.



The strength of Sozo depends not on any one leader but on the willingness of ordinary people to serve one another.

When the traditions are honored, communities remain healthy. When they are ignored communities eventually fracture

SERVANT LEADERSHIP: LEADERS DO NOT GOVERN

One of the most important principles adopted from AA is the concept of servant leadership for the more experienced.

Whether a member is currently seeking to be one of the sponsored experiencers, the sponsoring sitters and stewards, or one of their groups administrative organizers, their leadership and service to others is valuable as their own recorded experience grows.

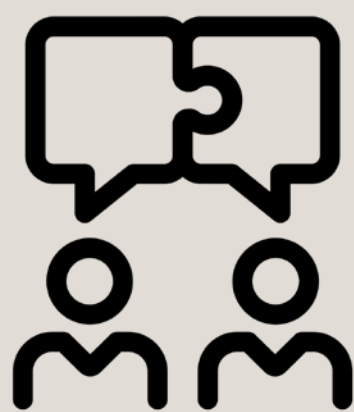


In many organizations, leadership becomes associated with authority.

At Sozo, leadership comes from experience and is associated with responsibility.

Leaders are not elevated above members. Leaders serve members.

A leader’s role is to:



Facilitate discussions



Support growth



Protect culture



Develop future leaders



Resolve conflict



Model accountability



Maintain mission alignment



The best leaders are often the least concerned with recognition. Their focus remains on helping others succeed.

A background image showing three hikers on a mountain trail. One hiker in a red jacket is in the foreground, another in a blue jacket is slightly behind, and a third in an orange jacket is further back. They are walking on a rocky path with a steep, forested mountain in the background.

Chapter

03

The Sozo Meeting Framework

Sozo meetings are the heart of our community.

Creating a consistent space for healing, growth, and connection.

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So long as there is the slightest interest in sobriety, the most unmoral, the most anti-social, the most critical alcoholic may gather about him a few kindred spirits and announce to us that a new Alcoholics Anonymous Group has been formed.

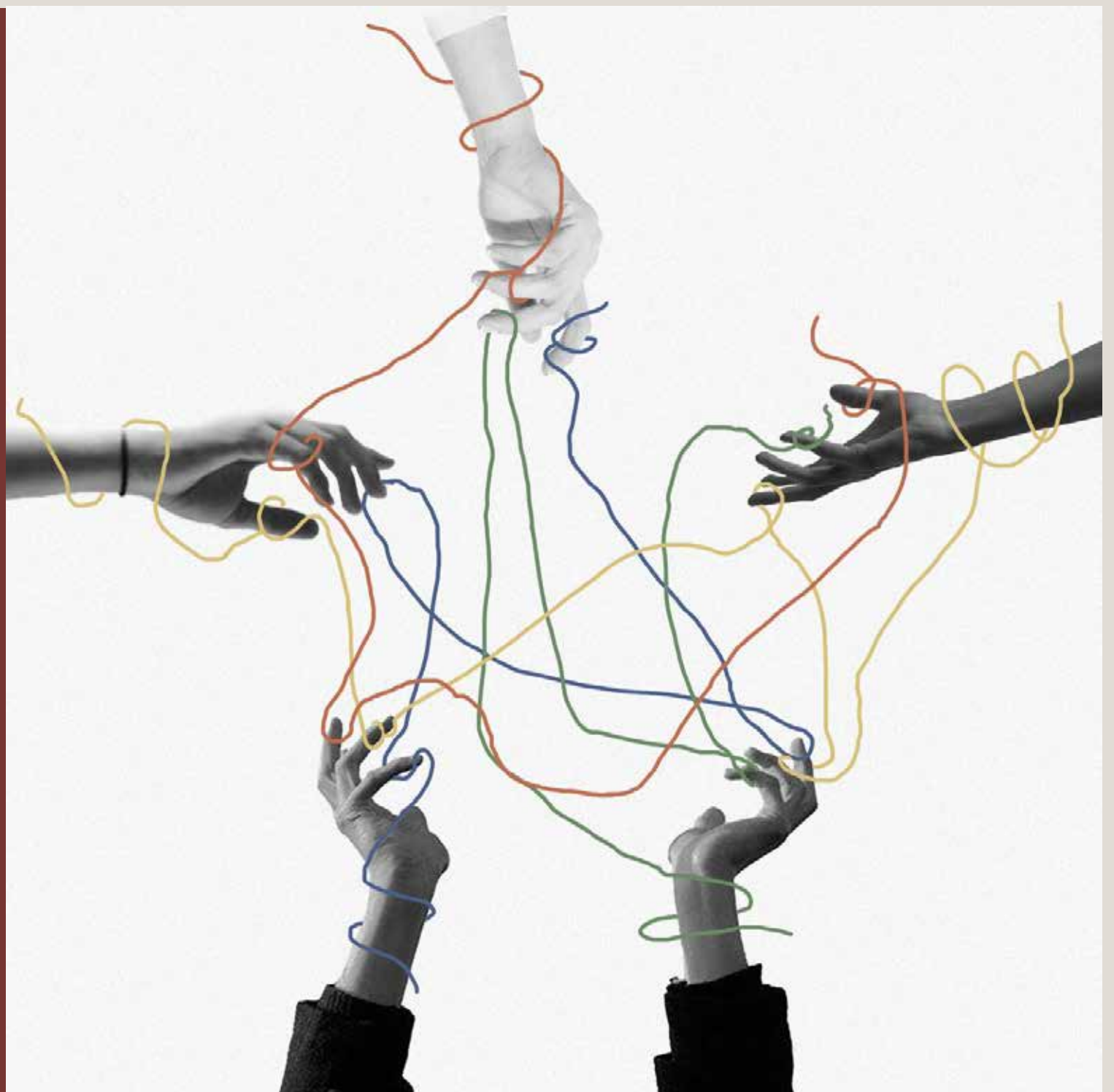
Sozo honors this principle.

PURPOSE OF A SOZO MEETING

Our goal is not to provide answers.

Our goal is to create an environment where people discover answers for themselves supported by community.

- ✓ Provide a safe and supportive space for honest sharing.
- ✓ Encourage self-awareness and personal growth.
- ✓ Build meaningful connections and reduce isolation.
- ✓ Practice accountability, empathy, and active listening
- ✓ Learn from shared experience, not from advice.
- ✓ Strengthen our community through service.



Meeting roles:

Roles are acts of service, not positions of authority. Everyone rotates leading and serving.



Facilitator

Guides the meeting, talks to those who've had an experience about current problems and connects members together and to resources, in order to better process, etc. keeps the discussion on track, and ensures everyone is heard.



Timekeeper

Helps the group stay on time and maintain the flow. Collects and ensures data processing for the state.



Host

Welcomes members, processes donations, helps with setup, creates a warm environment. Prepares new members for experiences alongside new member guides.



New Member Guide

Welcomes and supports newcomers before, during, and after the meeting processing new people and intake forms for experience requests, collecting those who vouch and vow to sit (sponsors).



Community Leader/ Administrative Organizer

Oversees the health of the meeting and ensures community standards, safety, and state compliance is upheld. Works with Facilitators to unpack and process previous experiences during sharing. Passes up concerns to main office.

MEETING STRUCTURE & DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

Sozo meeting's are not therapy, a lecture, or a debate. It is a structured gathering where we reflect, listen, learn, and support one another.



Opening

Welcome members, review community guidelines, and establish the tone for the meeting.



Check-In

Members briefly share how they are doing and what is present for them.



Topic Discussion

Explore a selected topic, question, reading, experience, or reflection prompt.



Group Reflection

Discuss insights, observations, lessons learned, and practical applications.



Service & Announcements

Share service opportunities, upcoming events, and community updates.



Closing

Close with gratitude, reflection, and intentions for the coming week.

Discussion Guidelines:

We come together not to fix each other, but to walk alongside one another.

- ✓ Speak from personal experience using "I" statements.
- ✓ Share honestly without fear of judgment.
- ✓ Listen to understand, not to respond.
- ✓ Avoid fixing, rescuing, or diagnosing others.
- ✓ Respect diverse perspectives and backgrounds.
- ✓ Allow silence. Reflection is part of the process.
- ✓ Honor confidentiality.
- ✓ Keep discussions growth-oriented and solution-aware.

3.3

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY & CONFIDENTIALITY

Our stories are confidential. They are our own, or else we will never feel safe. Data is always anonymous unless voluntarily offered for testimony for legislative purposes.

- ✓ What is shared in the meeting stays in the meeting.
- ✓ Respect each person's right to pass or remain silent.
- ✓ Do not share names, stories, or identifying details outside the group.
- ✓ Be mindful of body language, tone, and presence.
- ✓ Assume positive intent whenever possible.
- ✓ Create space for vulnerability without pressure.



Confidentiality builds trust. Trust builds community. Protect the space so everyone can show up fully.

Difficult Situations & Conflict Management

Conflict is a normal part of every community. When challenges arise:

- ✓ Redirect dominating participants respectfully.
- ✓ De-escalate emotionally charged conversations.
- ✓ Avoid personal attacks, shaming, or hostile behavior.
- ✓ Protect the dignity of all participants.
- ✓ Prioritize safety when concerns arise.
- ✓ Seek support from facilitators or stewards when necessary.
- ✓ Follow up after meetings when appropriate.



We do not avoid conflict. We work through it with respect, accountability, and care.

SERVICE & PARTICIPATION EXPECTATIONS

Healthy communities are built through participation. Every member has something valuable to contribute.

- ✓ Attend consistently.
- ✓ Participate respectfully.
- ✓ Help create a welcoming environment.
- ✓ Support newcomers.
- ✓ Volunteer when able.
- ✓ Contribute ideas, skills, and resources.
- ✓ Practice accountability and follow-through.



We are all here to contribute, not just to consume. Your presence makes the community stronger.

Closing the Meeting

The closing provides space for reflection and integration.

A meeting may conclude with:

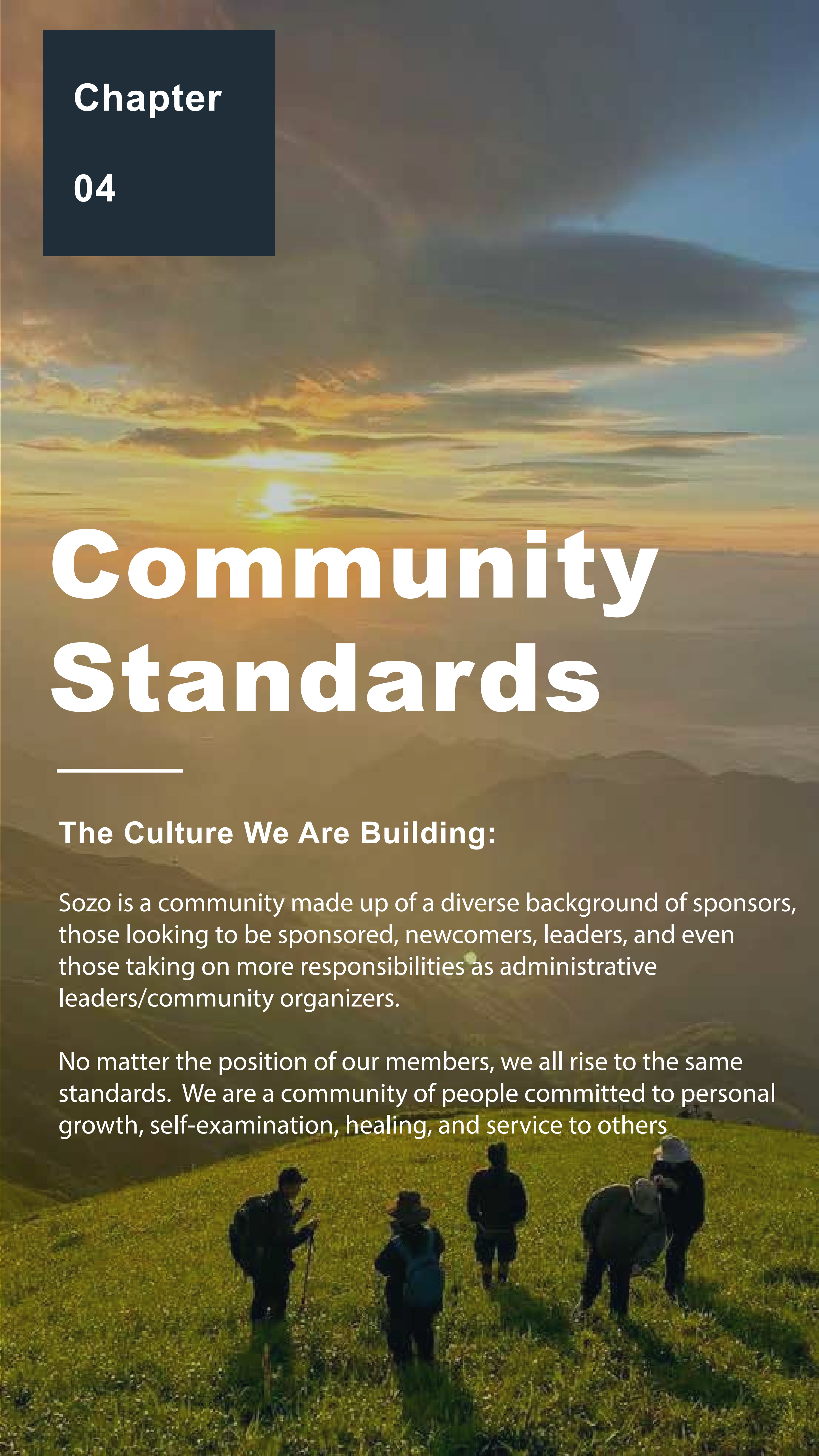
- ✓ Final reflections
- ✓ Gratitude round
- ✓ Key takeaways
- ✓ Service opportunities
- ✓ Community announcements
- ✓ Intentions for the coming week



The goal of every meeting is not perfection. The goal is honesty and a judgement free zone for self-awareness to emerge and a community who meets the imperfect parts of you with empathy, compassion, and love.

Sozo is a space where people can discover themselves with a community who accepts one another.

Being seen and accepted is the quinessential backbone to preparing for your psychedelic experience.



Chapter

04

Community Standards

The Culture We Are Building:

Sozo is a community made up of a diverse background of sponsors, those looking to be sponsored, newcomers, leaders, and even those taking on more responsibilities as administrative leaders/community organizers.

No matter the position of our members, we all rise to the same standards. We are a community of people committed to personal growth, self-examination, healing, and service to others

4.1

THE CULTURE AT SOZO

We're here to create environments where people can learn how to understand themselves more honestly, connect with others more authentically, and contribute more meaningfully to the communities around them.

1. WE PRACTICE RADICAL HONESTY

Growth begins when people become willing to tell the truth.

We encourage members to speak honestly about their experiences, struggles, beliefs, mistakes, and uncertainties.

Honesty does not require perfection.

Honesty requires courage.

Members are encouraged to speak from personal experience rather than authority, ideology, or certainty.

We seek understanding before judgment.

4.2

THE CULTURE AT SOZO

The health of Sozo depends on the character of the people who participate in it.

2. WE RESPECT HUMAN DIGNITY

Every person who enters Sozo deserves to be treated with respect.

People arrive from different backgrounds, belief systems, cultures, political views, life experiences, and levels of personal development.

Disagreement is welcome.

Disrespect is not.

Members are expected to challenge ideas without attacking people.

Curiosity should always take precedence over condemnation.

3. WE TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR OURSELVES

Sozo exists to help people grow.

Growth requires ownership.

Members are encouraged to examine their own thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and patterns before blaming others for their circumstances.

While compassion is essential, personal responsibility remains a core principle of transformation.

We cannot change what we refuse to acknowledge.



4.3

THE CULTURE AT SOZO

4. WE PROTECT PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

People cannot be vulnerable where they feel unsafe.

Members are expected to create environments where others can share honestly without fear of ridicule, humiliation, gossip, manipulation, or exploitation.

Confidentiality is an act of respect.

Stories shared within the community should remain within the community unless explicit permission is given.

Trust is earned slowly and lost quickly.

5. WE SERVE RATHER THAN CONTROL

Leadership within Sozo is based on service, not status.

No individual possesses special authority, spiritual superiority, or personal ownership over others.

Facilitators, stewards, and leaders exist to support the growth of the community, not to direct the lives of its members.

Influence should always be earned through integrity, humility, and service.

THE CULTURE AT SOZO

6. WE REJECT EXPLOITATION

The Sozo community must never be used to exploit others.

This includes:

- financial exploitation
- sexual exploitation
- emotional manipulation
- coercive influence
- verbal or physical violence
- no use of cult like language - sozo is non-denominational
- recruitment into outside organizations
- misuse of leadership positions for personal gain

Members should never feel pressured into relationships, purchases, donations, beliefs, or activities.

Healthy communities empower choice.

Unhealthy communities demand compliance.



REPORTING CONCERNS

Community member are encouraged to report:

- Safety concerns
- Abuse of authority
- Harassment
- Manipulative behavior
- Boundary violations
- Ethical concerns

Protecting the community is everyone's responsibility.

Speak with leader for concerns and for further assistance contact Sozo headquarters.

THE CULTURE AT SOZO

7. WE ENCOURAGE OPEN EXPLORATION

The psychedelic experience is deeply personal and often difficult to fully explain, define, or understand.

No single person, tradition, philosophy, scientific framework, or spiritual belief system possesses a complete understanding of human consciousness.

For this reason, Sozo encourages curiosity, exploration, questioning, and thoughtful dialogue.

Members are free to share perspectives, experiences, insights, doubts, and interpretations without fear of ridicule or ideological conformity.

Questions are welcomed.

Disagreement is welcomed.

Exploration is welcomed.

We believe growth occurs when people are allowed to think critically, challenge assumptions, and engage with ideas openly and respectfully.

At the same time, freedom of inquiry carries a responsibility to engage others with honesty, humility, and respect.

Our goal is not consensus, nor censorship.

Our goal is understanding and acceptance.

THE CULTURE AT SOZO

No handbook can create a healthy community.

Only people can.

These standards exist to help us protect the culture we are building together.

8. WE LEAVE THE COMMUNITY BETTER THAN WE FOUND IT

Every member contributes to the culture of Sozo.

Whether through participation, service, leadership, mentorship, or simple kindness, each person helps shape the experience of those who come after them.

The question is not:

"What can I get from this community?"

The question is:

"What kind of community am I helping create?"

This responsibility belongs to all of us.

Chapter

05

Grassroot Leaders

The purpose of leadership is not to gain influence.

The purpose of leadership is to help others grow.



HOW SOZO GROUP DEVELOPS GRASSROOT LEADERS

Most people do not join Sozo to become leaders. They join seeking understanding, healing, connection, and growth.

Leadership emerges through service and the responsibility that comes from the wisdom experience brings.

As individuals grow in self-awareness and become active members of the community through their own experiences, they begin taking responsibility for helping others do the same. Over time, their record helps them develop the skills, character, and trust necessary to steward groups and support new members.



THE SOZO MODEL FOLLOWS A SIMPLE PRINCIPLE:
Those who have benefited from the community help create that opportunity for others.

THE SOZO LEADERSHIP PATH:



Participant

- Attends meetings
- Learns the principles
- Engages in self-reflection



Member

- Participates consistently
- Contributes to discussions
- Supports fellow members



Service Volunteer

- Assists with logistics
- Welcomes newcomers
- Helps create a healthy group culture



Peer Guide

- Models the Sozo principles
- Supports newer members
- Encourages accountability and growth



Facilitator

- Leads meetings
- Guides discussions
- Maintains group safety and structure.



Chapter Steward

- Trains facilitators
- Develops future leaders
- Oversees chapter health and continuity



**Community Leader/
Administrative Organizer**

- Creates new groups
- Mentors chapter stewards
- Helps create a healthy group culture
- Expands the Sozo mission through service

SOZO LEADERSHIP REQUIREMENTS & PRINCIPLES

To serve in a leadership role, members should demonstrate:



PERSONAL GROWTH

Commitment to self-reflection, ability to receive feedback, emotional maturity, consistent participation.



SERVICE

Regular contribution to the community, willingness to help others, reliability and follow-through.



CHARACTER

Integrity, humility, accountability, and respect for others.



COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP

Ability to facilitate discussions, manage conflict, maintain group safety, and respect confidentiality.



The goal is not to create followers. The goal is to create people capable of helping others heal, grow, and lead.

1. LEADERS SERVE

Leadership is an act of service, not authority.

2. LEADERS LISTEN

Understanding others come before directing others.

3. LEADERS MODEL GROWTH

Leaders are not expected to be perfect. They are expected to continue growing.

4. LEADERS CREATE MORE LEADERS

The health of a chapter is measured by its ability to develop new leaders.

5. THE COMMUNITY COMES FIRST

No leader is more important than the mission or the wellbeing of the community.

LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION PLANNING

No chapter should depend upon one person.

Every leader should actively prepare future leaders to replace them.

Succession planning protects the long-term health of the community and ensures continuity when leaders move on.

A healthy chapter is measured not by the strength of one leader, but by its ability to continually develop new leaders.

Leadership is temporary.

Service is ongoing.

Recruiting Future Leaders

Healthy chapters continuously identify and develop future leaders.

Potential leaders often demonstrate:

- Consistent attendance
- Positive participation
- Service-minded attitudes
- Reliability
- Emotional maturity
- Genuine care for others

Leadership should be invited, not imposed.

The best leaders often begin by quietly serving others.



Chapter

06

Trip Sponsor Responsibility

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In our culture we've been trained to make individual differences to stand out. You look at each person and think, 'Brighter, dumber, older, younger, richer, poorer' and we make all these dimensional distinctions, put them in categories and treat people that way. And we only see others as separate from ourselves. One of the dramatic characteristics of the psychedelic experience is being with another person and suddenly seeing the ways in which they are like you – not different from you.

-RAM DASS

6.1

WHAT IS A Sponsor?

A sponsor is a trusted individual who vows to sponsor a participant and provide support before, during, and after a psychedelic experience.

Sponsors help create conditions that allow participants to explore their experience in safety and with the confidence they need.

A sponsor provides:

- Physical safety
- Emotional support
- Environmental stability
- Calm presence
- Practical assistance when necessary

A sponsor does not provide the experience.

The participant does.



6.2

THE ROLE OF A SPONSOR

The role of a sponsor is one of service, responsibility, and care.

A sponsor is responsible for:



PHYSICAL SAFETY

- Monitoring participant wellbeing
- Maintaining a safe environment
- Responding appropriately to emergencies
- Reducing and eliminating preventable risks



EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

- Remaining calm and present when needed
- Offering reassurance when appropriate
- Supporting emotional expression
- Helping participants feel safe and unashamed



ENVIRONMENTAL STABILITY

- Managing distractions
- Maintaining a comfortable setting
- Protecting privacy
- Supporting the agreed-upon plan



A SITTER IS NOT

- A therapist
- A spiritual authority
- A decision maker
- An interpreter of another person's experience
- A healer
- A guru
- A shaman



The most effective sponsor understands simple principle:

- ✓ The experience belongs to the participant.
- ✓ The sponsor's role is to support the process, not to lead it.

CORE RESPONSIBILITIES

Before the Experience

The sponsor should:

- Have submitted their request with written plan, and completed their educational quizzes, to be signed off by a member
- Ensure everyone has filled in onboarding questionnaires on Ikiguide App.
- Review expectations and intentions
- Confirm emergency contacts through Ikiguide App.
- Understand relevant medical concerns on Ikiguide App to hand over to first responders, in case of an emergency.
- Review safety plans
- Ensure the environment is prepared and on-call pledge member notified
- Establish communication expectations with participant

Preparation reduces unnecessary risk.

After the Experience

The sponsor should:

- Ensure safe recovery
- Encourage hydration, nutrition, and rest
- Help coordinate transportation if necessary
- Support immediate integration discussions
- Remind participants to take Post-Session Reflection on Ikiguide App while the experience is fresh and immediate

The experience does not end when the effects subside. Integration begins afterward.

During the Experience

The sponsor should:

- Remain attentive and present
- Avoid unnecessary interference
- Monitor participant wellbeing
- Provide reassurance when needed
- Protect physical safety
- Follow agreed-upon safety plans
- Record anything of significance for participant's processing for later meetings at participants request

Most experiences require less intervention than people expect.

Calm presence is often the most valuable support.

Safety both for the participant and for you are the absolute net. Above that, provide comfort as much as possible. As long as no one comes to harm, anything else is perfectly acceptable as part of the process.

ETHICAL BOUNDARIES

Trust is the foundation of the sponsor-participant relationship. Sponsors must never use their position for personal benefit.

The following are prohibited:

- Sexual contact
- Romantic pursuit
- Coercion
- Manipulation
- Financial exploitation
- Abuse of authority
- Pressuring participants toward specific beliefs or worldviews
- Directing experiences toward personal political, religious, or ideological agendas
- Violating agreed-upon physical or emotional boundaries

The participant's autonomy must always be respected. Healthy boundaries protect both the participant and the sitter.

GROUP SAFETY:

To help ensure participant safety and accountability, Sozo has a sponsor-to-participant ratio of at least 2 sponsors for every participant, with both sponsors present at location. For larger groups, Sozo recommends that group experiences be supported by multiple peer guided sitters.

As a general guideline, groups should have a minimum of two sitters present and scale accordingly, with additional support personnel added as group size increases. For example, for a group of 8, Sozo recommends 4 to 5 sitters and an additional pledged member on-call if needed. (Depending on experience of the sponsors, this additional on-call member can be the 5th). The ratio of sitter to participant in a large group never goes below 1:2 and is crucial for even coverage and ensured safety, for both sponsors and participants, so that all members on both sides feel safe. Sozo does not recommend a participant number larger than 8, the size of our original founding, for group experiences, as individual attention begins to suffer. This can of course change depending on the experience level of both the participants and the sponsors, and is up to the the discretion of those requesting the event.

No sponsor should be placed in a position where they are solely responsible for managing a large group without adequate support.

The presence of multiple sitters helps provide:

- Additional safety oversight
- Reduced risk of misconduct
- Greater participant support
- Better response capability during emergencies
- Increased accountability among facilitators

SAFETY & PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

Before any session begins, participants and sitters must openly discuss physical, emotional, and safety boundaries.

Each participant has the right to determine what forms of support are acceptable during moments of distress.

For example:

- A participant may agree that holding their hand is acceptable.
- A participant may prefer verbal reassurance only.
- A participant may not wish to be touched under any circumstances.
- A participant may be comfortable receiving a supportive hug only if explicitly requested.

These preferences must be clearly communicated before the session begins.

All agreed-upon safety plans and boundary expectations should be disclosed to and understood by everyone involved in the group.

Consent may be withdrawn at any time and must always be respected.

Same-Gender and Group Considerations:

Sozo groups may organize all-male groups, all-female groups, or mixed-gender groups depending on the needs of participants and local community leadership.

Regardless of group composition, the same standards apply:

- Respect for personal boundaries
- Respect for participant autonomy
- Clear communication of safety expectations
- Accountability among sitters
- Protection from coercion, exploitation, or misconduct

The goal is to create an environment where participants feel safe, respected, and free to engage in their experience without fear of judgment, pressure, or violation of trust.

SAFETY PROTOCOLS

Every sponsor should understand:

Emergency Contacts

- Who to call
- Where emergency information is located
- Transportation plans

Medical Considerations

- Relevant health concerns
- Medication considerations
- Known risks

Escalation Procedures

Seek additional support when:

- Physical safety is compromised
- Medical concerns arise
- A participant becomes a danger to themselves or others
- A situation exceeds the sitter's capabilities

Safety always takes priority over philosophy.

Difficult Situations

Most difficult situations can be improved through calmness, patience, and reassurance.

Common challenges include:



Panic

- Encourage breathing
- Offer reassurance
- Reduce stimulation



Fear

- Normalize the experience
- Remain present
- Avoid arguing with emotions



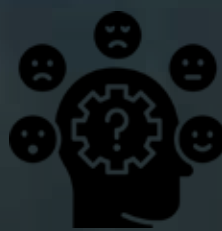
Paranoia

- Maintain a calm tone
- Avoid confrontation
- Focus on safety



Dissociation

- Encourage grounding
- Orient attention to the environment
- Provide gentle support



Emotional Flooding

- Allow expression
- Avoid interrupting
- Create emotional safety

The goal is not to eliminate difficult experiences.
The goal is to help participants move through them safely.

INTEGRATION SUPPORT

Healing often occurs through integration.

Following an experience, sponsors can support participants by:

Listening

- Allow participants to share freely.

Meaning Making

- Encourage personal exploration rather than providing interpretations.

Reflection

- Ask open-ended questions.

Resource Referrals

- Recommend appropriate educational, community, or professional resources when needed.

The participant remains the ultimate authority on the meaning of their experience.

Remind participants to take Ikiguide post-trip questionnaires.

The Sponsors Oath

As a Sozo Sponsor, I commit to serving with humility, integrity, and care.

I recognize that the experience belongs to the participant, not to me.

I will prioritize safety, respect autonomy, maintain confidentiality, and uphold healthy boundaries.

I will not seek control, influence, admiration, or personal gain through my role.

I will remain present, compassionate, and responsible throughout the journey.

I understand that my responsibility is not to lead another person's experience, but to help create the conditions in which they may safely explore it for themselves.

I serve as a steward of safety, dignity, and care.

A person with curly hair, wearing a white floral shirt and green pants, is lying on their back in a lush field of wildflowers. The field is filled with yellow daisies, blue cornflowers, and several red roses. The person's eyes are closed, and their hands are clasped over their chest. The background is a dense field of these flowers stretching towards the horizon.

Chapter

07

Participant Responsibilities

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We mask our suffering in our culture, so we must look beyond the masks we wear. We have learned to show a lack of vulnerability. Our vulnerability is the gateway or the door. We are called upon to communicate with others from that authentic place. We see that we are capable of suffering with our world. Out of our interdependence, compassion arises. We turn to addictions to avoid our compassionate hearts. We fear other peoples' suffering because we fear our own suffering. It is a matter of coming to terms with our own suffering. When you suffer with the grain, it is like birthing pains, something is being born. We need to be able to grieve for each other.

-RAM DASS

7.1

CORE RESPONSIBILITIES

Psychedelic experiences can provide powerful opportunities for insight, self-reflection, healing, and personal growth.

However, meaningful transformation requires more than the experience itself.

It requires preparation, responsibility, honesty, and integration.

While sitters, facilitators, and community members can provide support, no one can do the work on behalf of another person.

The participant remains responsible for their own decisions, actions, and growth.

The experience belongs to the participant.

So does the responsibility.

Personal Responsibility

Every participant is responsible for:

- Their own decisions
- Their own preparation
- Their own safety
- Their own integration
- Their own growth

Support can be provided by others.

Responsibility cannot.

Personal transformation begins when individuals accept ownership of their lives and choices.

PREPARATION

Preparation helps reduce unnecessary risks and creates conditions for meaningful experiences.

Participants are encouraged to:

Prepare Physically

- Get adequate rest
- Stay hydrated over 1 hour before
- Consider nutritional needs
- Consider sex with your partner or masturbation before the experience.
 - Yes. We know. Sexual desire can pull you away from the experience and is an unnecessary and easily-avoidable distraction, and a desire to eliminate in a space where any can throw you. We have seen that getting this need met before will ensure a better outcome. In a program for those 21 and older, we are all adults, there's no shame in it, it's good advice and helpful.

Emotionally Prepare

- Reflect on intentions
- Identify concerns or fears
- Clarify expectations
- Approach the experience with openness
- Meditate — become practiced, 5 minutes, to focus on breathing through thoughts and emotions as they arise. The single most valuable skill for those good at navigating this space.

Prepare Practically

- Create a safe environment — phones off, no plans, etc.
- Arrange transportation when necessary
- Communicate plans with trusted individuals
- Review safety procedures

Preparation does not guarantee a particular experience. But it does create a stable and strong foundation for navigating whatever arises.

DURING & AFTER THE EXPERIENCE

During

Participants are encouraged to:

- Remain open to the experience
- Practice curiosity rather than resistance
- Communicate needs when appropriate
- Respect agreed-upon safety plans
- Trust the process without forcing outcomes

Difficult emotions, thoughts, and memories may emerge. These experiences are not necessarily signs that something is wrong. Often, they are part of the process of exploration and growth.

Integration

The experience is only one part of the journey. Integration is the process of applying insights and lessons to everyday life.

Participants are encouraged to:

- Journal and reflect
- Discuss experiences with trusted individuals
- Participate in community discussions
- Identify practical changes they wish to make
- Practice patience with the integration process

Insight without action rarely produces lasting change. Integration transforms experience into growth.

Safety & Disclosure

Participants should:

- Disclose relevant health concerns when appropriate
- Communicate safety needs
- Seek professional support when necessary
- Understand their personal limits

Asking for help is a sign of responsibility, not weakness. Safety should always take priority over pride.

HUMILITY & GROWTH

Growth often requires humility

Participants are encouraged to:

- Remain open to learning
- Accept uncertainty
- Avoid placing themselves above others
- Recognize that healing is an ongoing process

No experience makes a person enlightened, superior, or complete. Growth is not a destination. It is a lifelong practice.

And of course, if participants found their lives changed, they are never required but always encouraged to choose to pay it forward.

The Participant Commitment

As a participant, I accept responsibility for my own decisions, actions, and growth.

I recognize that no one can heal, change, or transform my life on my behalf.

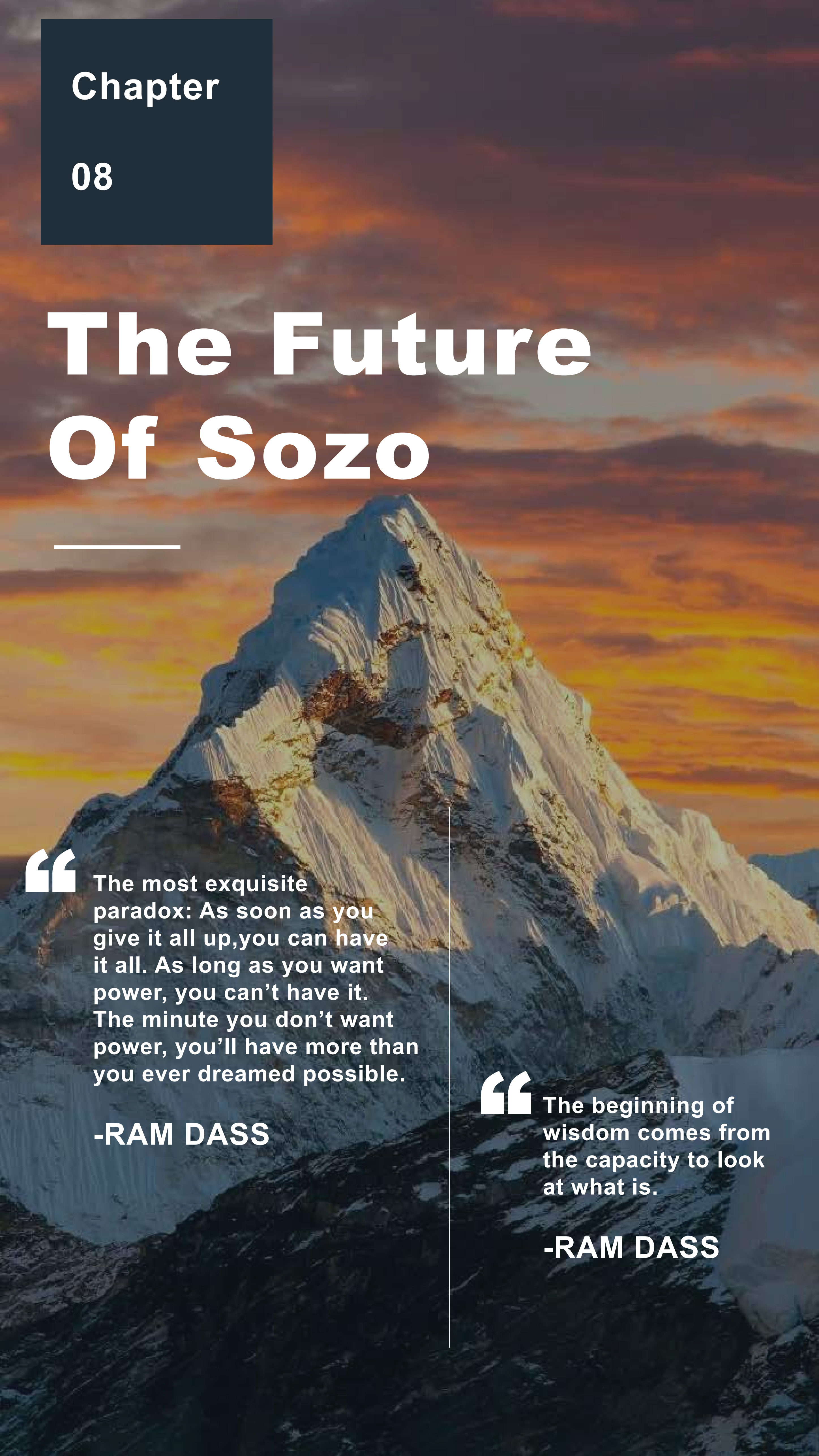
I commit to approaching experiences with honesty, humility, courage, and respect.

I will take responsibility for my preparation, my integration, and my participation within the community.

I will respect the autonomy and dignity of others.

I understand that meaningful transformation requires effort, reflection, and action.

I accept responsibility for my own journey.



Chapter

08

The Future Of Sozo

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The most exquisite paradox: As soon as you give it all up, you can have it all. As long as you want power, you can't have it. The minute you don't want power, you'll have more than you ever dreamed possible.

-RAM DASS

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The beginning of wisdom comes from the capacity to look at what is.

-RAM DASS

THE DESTINATION

We envision a future where people make this a part of their lives, integrating it seamlessly into a world that learns to be more present, more mindful, more empathetic, less greedy, less narcissistic, and more collaborative. A world where people meditate and it saves their lives. Where they can better sit with their thoughts, with their emotions, their pain — breathing, feeling, realizing nothing can hurt them — and hold more and more truth, more and more of reality, however hard. Where people can heal and learn how to weather a storm again. Facing this pain until it rolls over them and passes. Where people can have a personal relationship with a higher power, complementary to their existing belief system, without any gatekeeper.

We plan on a future where our groups grow, both in number of members per group and in number of new groups being created. We plan on a future where we need to reform our leadership strata, where we are forced to create new administrative titles — from “group leader” to “state administrator” — that pass up a chain to headquarters, starting with this very first chapter and its members here, in Colorado.

We hope to draft a bill to reform the law, with a built-in voting base that proves the safety of our claim in every action, every day. We will push for legalization, a social movement with political influence that remains non-partisan — as this is an issue of freedom, safety, and responsibility, and appeals to both sides of the aisle.

1,000 people die from riding bicycles every year. 4,000 from drowning, 6,000 from motorcycles. People die from running marathons, rock climbing, skiing — none of those are failsafe. Everything we do carries some amount of risk. We will not mention guns.

We don't ban those things; we trust adults to make informed decisions.

We trust the system to recognize this is an inevitable direction with what we know of these substances, and their effect. To recognize this benefits any system that adopts it.

THE DESTINATION

We will create an organization focused on helping those the system has given up on as equally as executives seeking optimization in their lives. One focused on restoring the poorest of the poor, the lowest of the low, the sickest of the sick to exceptional, emblematic citizens and human beings. Not just a mental health movement, but a mental fitness movement achieving an impossible standard. Not just restored humans but humans held in the highest possible regard. This is an empathy movement.

Our goal is enough real mental strength to stop consuming and to be able to afford to want to give to others. To be full and have enough, finally, to afford empathy. To serve and give. The honor of that.

Beyond just treatment, beyond just maintenance, beyond even cure and restoration.

Improvement upon improvement by degrees to the point of impossible. Evolving and improving ourselves and humanity.

People will want to be a part of this — enlightened beings, strong and service-minded. Stories that are always popular at parties. A pro. A black belt.

Our goal is to educate the world, and propagate this fail-safe compound and its safe and responsible use as widely as possible, as fast as possible, as the last-ditch effort to save the world before the greatest existential threat of our time reaches it's peak, before it reaches it's tipping point, and the disease becomes terminal and cannot be cured.