



The Working Man's Guide to Microdosing

Drugs can help you get ahead. We know because we tried them — in minuscule amounts — right here at the office. **by CLINT CARTER**



THE PROMISE of microdosing is tantalizing: Take a mini-hit of a mind-altering substance, and you can be more creative, less stressed and anxious, and even work harder, all without rendering yourself intoxicated.

If pop culture is any testament, the promise delivers. This winter, bestselling author Ayelet Waldman described how tiny doses of LSD helped alleviate her depression and save her marriage in *A Really Good Day*. Meanwhile, outlets from *Mic* to *Maxim* have covered how microdosing marijuana could boost focus and creativity. And high-profile biohackers, including Bulletproof Coffee mogul Dave Asprey, claim that cognitive-enhancing pills like modafinil can double productivity. Best,

you're not *using*, you're *microdosing*. That linguistic spin aligns you with high-achieving Silicon Valley entrepreneurs instead of jobless couch surfers.

Intriguing, indeed. But how do you get started? Is it safe? How much of which drug should you take? What kind of severance package can you expect after getting busted for being high at work? (Asking for a friend.)

I sifted through the research, spoke to top experts, and tested each of three common microdosing go-tos at the office. The result? This guide. Much of the advice is illegal, of course, so I feel compelled to say: I am not telling you to do drugs. I'm just a curious dude who wanted some answers. Maybe you want some, too.

THE CLASSIC PSYCHEDELIC: LSD

Studies have shown that acid may help treat depression, alcoholism, and PTSD. Some think LSD can be an everyday booster, like a supplement.

The Dose

Start with 10 micrograms, says James Fadiman, a psychologist and author of *The Psychedelic Explorer's Guide*. That's one-tenth of a full hit. Fadiman recommends a three-day cycle. So if you microdose on a Monday, you'd take the next dose Thursday. "The effect lasts two days, and then you take the third day off so that you can tell a difference," he says.

For those of us in the square community, the first hurdle will be to simply find LSD. You have to ask around. Maybe your stoner friend has a pot dealer who can do a special order. Check with everyone you know who followed the Dead. If you're just



not comfortable fishing publicly for a Schedule 1 narcotic, you can turn to the Web. Start by consulting an LSD board like reddit.com/r/LSD/, where you'll get experienced microdosers' advice. You'll probably want to use an encrypted browser like Tor to access a dark-Web marketplace like AlphaBay, an Amazon-esque site that even includes user reviews of drugs.

However you get it, make sure you test the purity. Simple drug-testing kits, like those from TestKitPlus.com, cost around \$25 and come with detailed instructions.

The last hurdle: fine-tuning your dose. If you get blotter tabs that are, say, 100 micrograms each, it's not only impossible to cut them into 10 microdose squares, but the LSD won't be evenly distributed. Instead, measure five ounces of distilled water [I used a cocktail jigger], drop in your 100-microgram tab, and leave it overnight. Now each half-ounce of water will contain one-tenth the original dose.

What to Know

LSD is, of course, illegal, but it isn't particularly dangerous. When researchers asked nearly 300 addiction specialists to rank 19 recreational drugs in terms of self-harm potential, acid was fourth safest — slightly riskier than pot, but a helluva lot safer than alcohol or tobacco. It's also not chemically addictive, and overdose cases are rare. Plus, says Fadiman, "as far as we know, there hasn't been a single death from microdosing LSD. There may have been attempted homicides, however, due to excessively playing Phish."

What It Feels Like

I procured tabs from a friend

who never shuts up about the benefits of LSD. An hour into my first 10-microgram dose, I felt focused and in a good mood, and I experienced waves of pleasant body highs, like I'd just finished hot yoga or a green-juice cleanse. Work was fantastic.

I was scheduled to meet my wife at our accountant's office and was prepared to flake. But with a touch of the psychedelic flu, taxes sounded too fun to pass up! I rode my bike there and was acutely aware of the air's fluidity, how it parted and flowed around me as I pedaled. I captured some of the fluidity in my lungs — it felt refreshing, nourishing. [Sober people, I am told, call this breathing.]

In his book, Fadiman notes that small doses of LSD can make it easier to access flow states, akin to what an elite athlete experiences when he's "in the zone." Flow can make you lose track of time, and it coincides with feelings of competence and achievement. That's exactly what I felt: lost in my work and simultaneously grateful I had work to do.

I microdosed LSD for two more three-day cycles, and each time I felt creative and productive. I was eager to chat with co-workers, and my wife said I was more affectionate.

VERDICT I still felt like myself — just a better, Zen-er, more appreciative version.

THE CHILL MAKER: MARIJUANA



Cannabis can relieve pain and decrease anxiety and stress. Where better than the office to harness those benefits.

The Dose

You want one to five milligrams of THC. Based on a 2016 study of nearly 39,000 cannabis samples, that susses out to a hit or two. Edibles are more exact and can deliver a more consistent dosage. (When inhaled, THC peaks in 15 minutes. With edibles, the effect builds over time and can last for hours.)

Pot comes in two strains, sativa and indica. In general, sativa is associated with a more energetic high, indica with a mellow one. But don't get too caught up in all that. "Cannabis is so inbred, the strain doesn't necessarily predict what's in it," says cannabis expert Jahan Marcu. The solution? A weed journal. "Experiment with varietals, and write down your reactions," he says. "Exact records help you determine what works best."

What to Know

Microdosers claim that pot curbs anxiety while boosting creativity. But science says results may vary. While studies suggest that low doses of THC have a stress-reducing effect, says Margaret Haney, a professor of neurobiology at

Columbia University Medical Center, "there is also evidence of a genetic difference in this response." Some people speed past anxiety-reduction and go to paranoia and self-consciousness.

As for a brain boost, Marcu says, pot is actually proved to help you focus: "If your job is to throw yourself into a subject and filter out extraneous stuff, a little THC could help you do it."

What It Feels Like

I scored a weed lollipop with an indica-sativa blend that had "2.6-ish milligrams of THC," an estimate at once too specific and too vague. To be safe, I ate half. Still, after a couple of hours, I felt drowsy. Then, suddenly, I was stoned — Cypress Hill-level high. That was no microdose! To be discreet, I stared straight ahead at my computer for the rest of the day. Productivity hit a low and never spiked again.

VERDICT Pot at work is not for me. My job requires personal and verbal skills that fail me under even a small dose of weed. Results, of course, may vary.

THE BRAIN BOOSTER: MODAFINIL



Created as a treatment for narcolepsy, this drug has since been embraced by biohackers for its cognitive-enhancing side effects.

The Dose

Pills come in 100 to 200 milligram doses. You want only 50, so start chopping. Modafinil can be obtained legally with a prescription, but sites like Afinil Express are reliable [I got my pills there], and allow you to buy anonymously.

What to Know

Modafinil is proved to keep the sleep-

deprived alert, and a broad University of Oxford review found it helped boost cognitive performance for nondrowsy folks, too. Exactly how it works, however, is something of a mystery, says Anna-Katharine Brem, co-author of the Oxford study and head of neuropsychology at the Max Planck Institute of Psychiatry. The drug doesn't

appear to be risky, though some users report mild headaches and nausea. Because it has a long half-life, take it first thing — or prepare to be up watching *M*A*S*H* reruns at 3 AM.

What It Feels Like

Ninety minutes after my first dose, man, I was motivated. I didn't eat my egg sandwich, I completed it. It wasn't

like I'd taken a bump; it was more like being highly caffeinated, sans jitters. Multi-tasking came easier, too. I did feel an ever-present tinge of impatience, and by day two, a subtle headache.

VERDICT I'll happily suffer mild side effects to bulldoze through a hard workday.