

## Do you think substance abuse plays a role in catatonia?

**Dr. Northoff:**

In the history of catatonia that has been discussed, definitely yes. Again, now you know, all the psychedelics are back in fashion. I'm sure Max Fink vividly remembers the time in the '70s when everybody took them. And now we are back to that in a more controlled way, admittedly. Really, really be careful.

So here in Canada, we have complete liberalization of cannabis, and you have cannabis shops everywhere. When you're in the downtown of Ottawa, you smell it everywhere. And cannabis can induce psychosis, can induce depression and catatonia. Why? Because these drugs lead you to extreme psychological spaces. They map the whole continuum of what is possible in your psyche to the very extreme. And if you don't have the right, proper psychological context, you might experience these psychological adventures as anxious and fearsome. Then you get out of control — you develop a catatonic syndrome. And I've seen, actually, quite a number of patients with exactly that. Very sad.

Also, I work here with the post-traumatic stress disorder clinic with the veterans. And you probably may know that for PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder, cannabis is used a lot. Many of them are completely addicted, completely closed. We need to basically work on one year of just withdrawing the cannabis. It doesn't mean that I'm against cannabis, but in a careful way and in a controlled way under expert guidance.