אוניברסיטת חיפה
UNIVERSITY OF HAIFA
جامعة حيفا

Photo: Yossi Aloni

MARCH 2025

Supporting Research

The Israeli Center for Trauma and Psychedelics

Healing After Horror: Psychedelics and Trauma Research Following the Nova Music Festival

On October 7, 2023, Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists launched a horrific terror attack against 4,000 attendees of the Nova Music Festival. Over 360 people were brutally murdered, many were sexually assaulted and dozens were kidnapped to Gaza as hostages. The attack left survivors deeply traumatized. Compounding the trauma, many attendees were under the influence of psychedelic drugs during the attack.

While traumatic experiences are known to cause psychopathologies like depression and PTSD, the effects of trauma experienced under the influence of psychedelics remain unknown. To address this gap, the Israeli Center for Trauma (I-TAP) at the University of Haifa is conducting innovative, collaborative research on trauma and psychedelics. This research will be immediately disseminated to clinicians to improve treatment. Moreover, the center will provide scientific approaches to evidence-based psychedelic-assisted treatments for trauma-related psychopathologies.

Uncharted Territory

"In the immediate aftermath, we realized we needed more research knowledge. I looked for articles about trauma experienced under psychedelics – and there aren't any. To the best of our knowledge, no large-scale traumatic event involving individuals under the influence of psychoactive substances has been documented in history."

Prof. Roy Salomon
Director, The Israeli Center for Trauma and Psychedelics

Following the October 7th Hamas attack, over 2,000 survivors sought assistance from our partner SafeHeart - an NGO co-founded by Dr. Salomon that connects survivors with therapists specializing in treating extreme trauma under the influence of psychedelic drugs.

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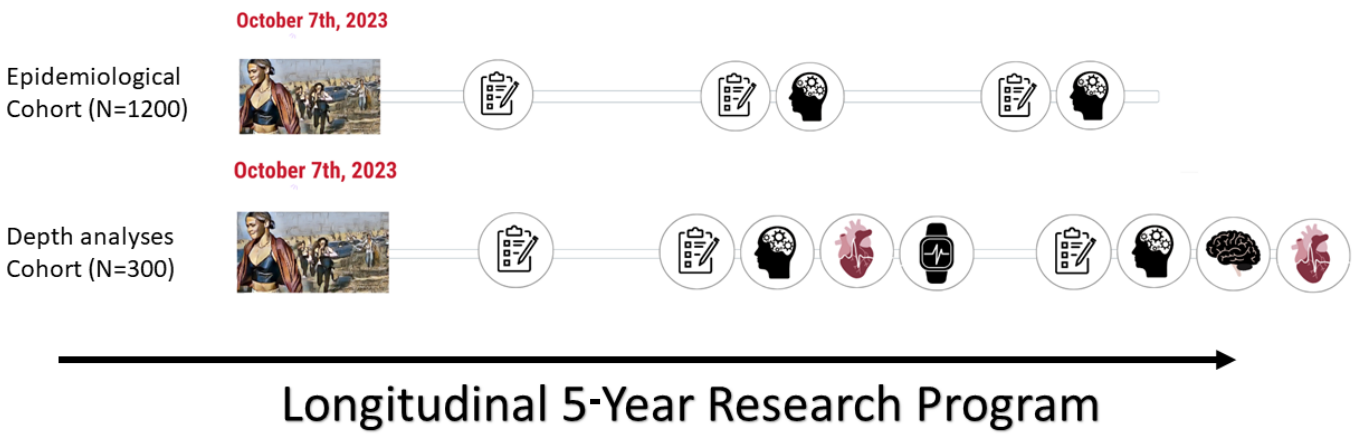
Our Unique Research Agenda

SafeHeart
You are not alone

I-TAP's multidisciplinary approach sets it apart from traditional research facilities. By integrating psychology, neuroscience, and neuroimaging techniques (EEG, fNIRS, fMRI), the center is uniquely positioned to explore the intricate workings of the human mind and its relationship with trauma during altered states of consciousness. Our research focuses on three key questions regarding psychedelics and trauma: 1) How does the experience of trauma change when processed under the influence of psychedelics? 2) How does past or present substance use and abuse impact long-term outcomes for those with trauma? 3) Can psychedelic-assisted therapies help reduce trauma-related mental health conditions?

The results of this research will be shared immediately with clinicians to help them improve treatment for trauma-related mental health conditions. The project will also develop scientific methods for psychedelic-assisted therapies based on strong evidence.

In addition, our synergistic relationship with SafeHeart gives us long-term access to over 2,000 survivors. As the single largest research study focused on this type of mass trauma event, we are exceptionally well-placed to help address the complex needs of the survivors while paving the way for future breakthroughs in neuroscience and mental health.



This groundbreaking longitudinal study investigates the behavioral, cognitive, and neural aspects of this unique participant group. We are excited to be collaborating with leading experts from research and treatment centers across Israel, including the Weizmann Institute of Science, Hebrew University, Tel-HaShomer Medical Center and the Israeli Center for Addiction.

From Research to Practice: Integrating Insights into Student Training

Our research findings will offer valuable insights for educating student-clinicians at the University's department of psychology. By examining the unique psychological and physiological responses induced by psychedelics, we will be able to develop specialized therapeutic approaches that address the distinctive needs of these patients.

Integrating this research into our classrooms and internships can enhance our students' understanding of trauma-informed care, improve their ability to recognize and manage psychedelic-related psychological phenomena, and ultimately contribute to more effective and empathetic treatment strategies in clinical practice.

In The Media

The New York Times

What a Terror Attack in Israel Might Reveal About Psychedelics and Trauma

Thousands of Israelis were using mind-altering substances when Hamas-led fighters attacked a desert festival on Oct. 7. Now, scientists are studying the ravers to determine the effects of such drugs at a moment of extreme trauma.

The New York Times

Terror Attack in Israel Offers Window Into Psychedelics and Trauma

Survivors From Rave Said Drugs Helped Them Escape Massacre

This article is by ***Natan Odenheimer, Aaron Boxerman*** *and* ***Gal Koplewitz.***

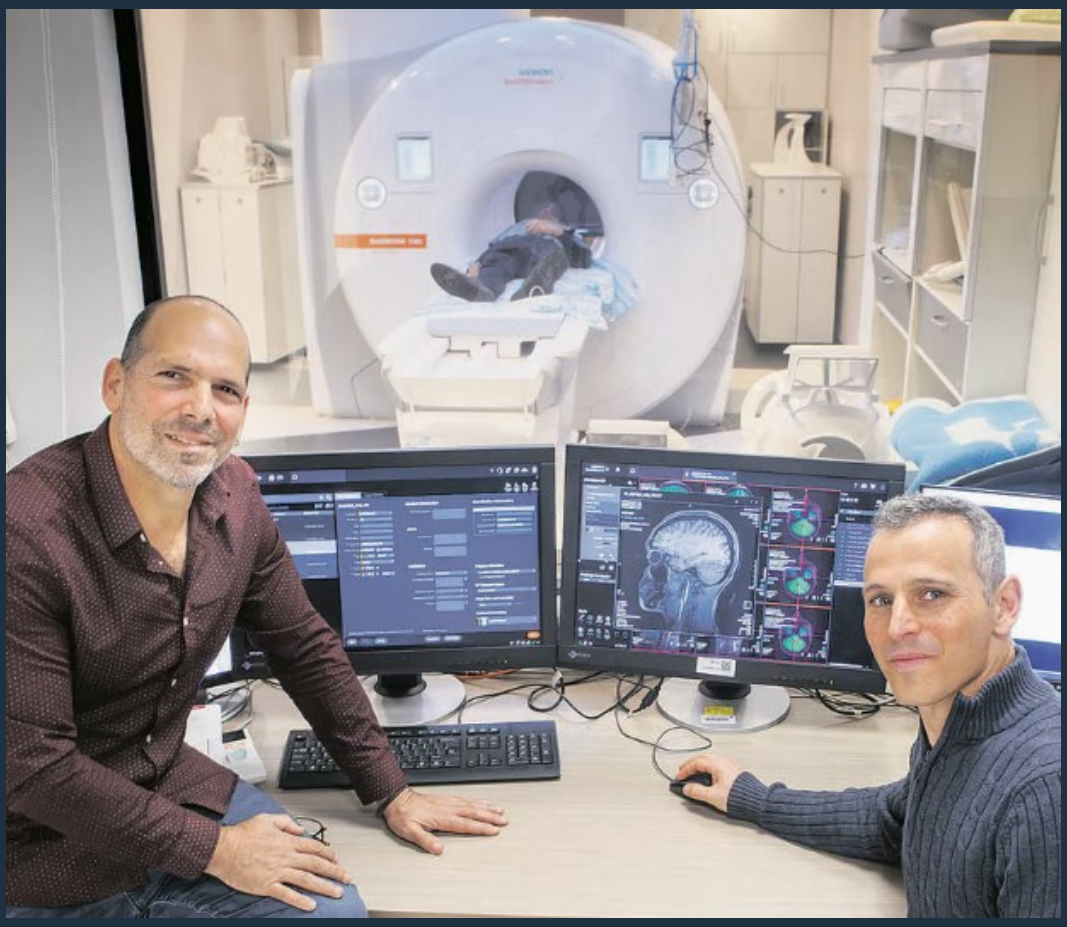
One Israeli said that being high on LSD during the Hamas-led attack on Oct. 7 prompted a spiritual revelation that helped him escape the carnage at a desert rave. Another is certain the drug MDMA made him more decisive and gave him the strength to carry his girlfriend as they fled the scene. A third said that experiencing the assault during a psychedelic trip has helped him more fully process the trauma.

to let loose. Many view the raves — often held in forests and deserts, with pounding electronic beats and mind-altering substances — as spiritual journeys amid a like-minded community.

"The love I felt on the dance floor, the raves, the psychedelics — they helped me cope with my mother's death," said Yuval Tapuhi, a 27-year-old Nova survivor from Tel Aviv.

Around 6:30 a.m. on Oct. 7, as the sky turned pink and many revelers were beginning the most intense part of their trips, rockets from Gaza suddenly streaked through the sky. Air-raid sirens and loud explosions cut through the music.

Some people fell to the ground and burst out crying, multiple survivors said. Some attendees scrambled to evade the terrorists by hiding in bushes, behind



Academic Leadership

Prof. Roy Salomon
Director
Department of Cognitive Science &
Department of Psychology

Prof. Salomon co-founded SafeHeart, an NGO aimed at assisting the survivors of the music festival. Prof. Salomon is an expert on the cognitive and neural processes of altered states of consciousness in humans and has vast experience in psychedelics and psychiatry.

Prof. Roee Admon
Co-Director
Head of Trauma and Psychopathology
Department of Psychology

Prof. Admon is a world renown researcher of stress and trauma. He is an expert on the behavioral, physiological, endocrinological and neural processing of stress and trauma in healthy and psychopathological populations.

Request for Support

A $2.6 million gift will allow us to complete this groundbreaking research project.
Your investment is essential to making a difference.

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