

Ancient African shrub ibogaine causes psychedelic hallucinations — and can reduce anxiety, depression, and PTSD. Why is it restricted in the US?

After three decades and five combat deployments in Navy Special Operations, Stephen Jones's life spiraled into blackouts, bouts of angry confusion and alcohol-fueled benders. Doctors diagnosed him with traumatic brain injuries inflicted by years of sea dives, parachute jumps, firefights and bomb blasts.

The extract of an ancient African shrub known as ibogaine, he says, helped heal him.

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Jones, 59, was part of a Stanford University [study](#) published in January showing that ibogaine dramatically improved symptoms of anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder in 30 Special Operations veterans diagnosed with traumatic brain injuries.

For advocates, that study offers the latest evidence that patients should have access to the drug in the United States, where it remains illegal despite decades of encouraging findings, principally for use treating addiction.

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Opioids and other addictive drugs rewire the brain by flooding it with dopamine and other chemicals. Ibogaine, which breaks down into the compound noribogaine, promotes growth of neural networks in damaged brains, said Deborah Mash, founder of DemeRx, a company developing addiction treatments derived from ibogaine compounds. "It heals the brain," Mash said.

[**This is an excerpt. Read the full article here**](#)