

The Early History of Psychedelics in Recovery

(January 2022)

Psychedelics in Recovery (PIR) was founded in New York City in 2015, after Kevin F approached Dimitri M and Steve S, the organizers of its predecessor group, Plant Medicines in Recovery, which had folded, to renew the idea of gathering people in recovery using psychedelics. Many members from the first cohort of PIR shared an interest in 12-step recovery, and came from active participation primarily in AA, NA, and SLAA.

Initially, attendance to PIR served as a supplemental fellowship for those members, a place where they could talk freely and openly about their interest in psychedelics without alienating themselves or disrespecting the precepts of those traditional fellowships. These members ultimately decided to align PIR's approach to recovery under the lineage of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. A preamble was adapted from AA (later modified), and an original document entitled "PIR's Guiding Principles" was drafted by these early members (later modified).

In the winter of 2017, a public event was held in NYC that explored "the fascinating connection between psychedelics and the origins of the Twelve Steps, contemporary indigenous ceremony using plant-medicines for addiction treatment, and the use of psychedelics by people in recovery."

(<https://psychedelicsandthe12stepprogra.splashthat.com/>) The well-attended event brought great interest and enthusiasm for the topic.

But by the spring of 2017, the NYC group was faltering due to inconsistent meeting attendance and an overly conservative approach to attracting new members. Kevin F attended the Psychedelic Science 2017 conference in Oakland, where he held a "Psychedelics in Recovery" Community Forum

(<https://2017.psychedelicscience.org/conference/community-forums/community-forum-psychedelics-in-recovery>), a quasi PIR meeting and informational discussion group. The attendees to this forum, many of whom had been quietly incorporating psychedelic use with 12-step recovery on their own for years, suggested that the fellowship bring its meetings online.

Between 2017-2019, PIR maintained a twice monthly online meeting via a video chat platform, but continued to struggle with inconsistent meeting attendance and an even greater hesitation around online promotion to attract new members. In spring 2019, Jon D created PIR's website (<https://psychedelicsinrecovery.org>), and in the winter of 2019, Yadim C started a new PIR in person meeting in San Diego.

Although still a fledgling group, PIR had assembled enough basic infrastructure to meet the massive influx of demand for online recovery meetings during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. By that summer, PIR grew to have at least one online meeting every day, and an organizing "Intergroup" body was established to

support the further development of the fellowship. With this exponential increase in membership, PIR twice reaffirmed its recovery ethos to the 12-step lineage, although continues to strive towards serving as "a bridge to 12-step recovery" for members whom do not come from a traditional 12-step fellowship, or those who've had negative experiences with them in the past.

As different regions approach a "post-pandemic" return to in person gatherings, additional PIR meetings have popped up in Austin, Texas, Los Angeles, Denver, Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Madison, Wisconsin.