

## Ketamine Is The Answer To Depression And Suicide, Says Mike 'Zappy' Zapolin

**Benjamin Adams** contributor @ **view**  
*Things I hope on the pulse of cannabis, LGBTQ, health, and politics.*

As the world population becomes more prone to depression and suicidal thoughts amid disruptions caused by the pandemic, psychedelic treatments are becoming increasingly vital for public health.

What if people with those conditions could just push “reset” inside the brain?



Mike "Zappy" Zapolin. PHOTO CREDIT: SHANE KODS (DUBAI & LOS ANGELES)

Mike “Zappy” Zapolin is the go-to psychedelic concierge for a variety of celebrities and thought leaders, helping them transform their consciousness in order to overcome the often impenetrable barriers of depression, suicide, addiction, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Zapolin directed the 2016 documentary, *The Reality of Truth*, which follows host Michelle Rodriguez—with discussions from Marianne Williamson, Dr. Drew, Deepak Chopra, Ram Dass, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, and others—on a quest of discovery through plant medicine and meditation. Psychedelic medicine helped Rodriguez deal with and process the death of her co-star Paul Walker. “I call it Zappy alchemy,” Rodriguez said, after receiving ayahuasca therapy. Zapolin’s film won a **Van Gogh Award** at the Amsterdam Film Festival in 2017.

One of Zapolin’s current focuses is ketamine. His upcoming documentary about Lamar Odom’s mental transformation, *Lamar Odom: Reborn*, covers Odom’s journey to overcome depression and addiction with the help of psychedelic medicine.

“I give him ketamine treatments, to kind of stabilize him,” Zapolin says. “He had never done psychedelic drugs before. Then, after he got comfortable with me and trusted me, I brought him to Mexico for an iboga treatment, like **Hunter Biden did**. And boom, 24 hours later, he was a different human being. As we drove back to LA from Mexico, he said, ‘I feel so good, mentally and physically. I think I can make a comeback in professional basketball.’ About four months later, he actually played in a professional tournament in Dubai despite having 12 strokes and six heart attacks.”

Zapolin’s treatment “made me stop fearing death,” Odom stated. “I’m here and I’m present.”

The federal government recognizes ketamine’s medical benefits, and there are an increasing number of ketamine treatments **approved** by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

“The science is really clear now,” Zapolin asserts. “They say that you have a default mode network in your brain, and in there, there’s a mechanism called your lateral habenula, and your lateral habenula is recording all the stress you’ve had in your whole life. When it becomes too much, the brain goes into burst mode, which is a completely different brain state. When your brain goes into burst mode, it shuts off your dopamine production completely. That means you’re getting no happiness, no motivation to do anything. The first time that you do ketamine, it takes your brain out of burst mode, and you immediately start getting your dopamine back.”

Zapolin is an alumnus of Harvard Business School (HBS), and creator of the HBS elective course eBusiness, given his background in domain development, such as PrescriptionDrugs.com.

Ketamine treatments were 70 percent effective in a group with treatment-resistant depression, Zapolin says, observed in a study that measured the results of an oral antidepressant combined with ketamine.

“It breaks suicidal ideation immediately,” he promises. “We’re going through a suicide/depression epidemic, and now, we’re coming out of a pandemic with PTSD. Almost everybody has some form of PTSD from this experience. The suicide rates are going through the roof. A suicide hotline in Los Angeles reported that calls are up 8,000 percent over last year. A CDC statistic indicated that one in four 18-24-year-olds has contemplated suicide during coronavirus.”

“If you had told me that that was one in 50, I would be scared,” Zapolin warns.

People who are suicidal tend to think they are out of options. When they enter the ketamine experience, Zapolin explained that patients suddenly start to see more solutions to their problems, whatever they may be—something he’s witnessed himself.

Everybody can get behind the cause to support veterans, he says, while not everybody can bring themselves to support drug addicts. And since they’re not getting the treatment they need from the VA, he says, they deserve it.

“We put together a program to treat veterans, and a lot of them were in Salt Lake City, Utah,” Zapolin says. “There’s a doctor there, **Dr. Robert C. Hiemstra, MD** who was already doing a number of veteran [ketamine] treatments. We promoted the community and brought veterans in to do their treatments. We filmed a number of testimonials that were incredible. One veteran was on 22 medications from the VA. He said he felt like a zombie. He said the first time he tried ketamine, he felt like he had hope for the first time. He went home and hugged his kids. He felt love for the first time in 10 years. He’s now off all of those medications. He’s just doing his booster treatments with ketamine on a regular basis.”

Esketamine is sold under names such as Spravato CII nasal spray—which was approved by the FDA in an August 3 announcement, and in earlier versions.

“Johnson & Johnson is using a molecule called esketamine,” says Zapolin. “It’s a mirror molecule. In typical drug company fashion—instead of charging \$500 for treatment—or \$150 like we do—the esketamine costs around \$3-4,000 per treatment, but it’s billed to the insurance company. The worst part about it is that we give it in an either intramuscular shot, or a lozenge that dissolves in your mouth.”



Mike "Zappy" Zapolin. PHOTO CREDIT: SHANE KODS

Janssen Pharmaceuticals, a Johnson & Johnson division, provides nasal delivery, but Zapolin says that it’s a poor delivery system as it goes through your nasal passages, and it hits a number of opiate receptors. Patients rarely get the effect they’re looking for.

“The maximum dose of esketamine is 26mg of ketamine in one nostril, and 26mg of ketamine in the other nostril,” Zapolin explains. “So you’re getting 52mg. Nasally, you’ll only absorb about 25 percent of that. That means you’re only getting about 15mg of ketamine, which is not enough to dissociate. You need something around 75mg to do that dissociation, which is the goal of ketamine. You want to metabolize as much ketamine as possible.”

Zapolin also launched a social movement called the Mind Army—and they’re asking the sitting President to write an executive order to legalize psychedelic compounds during this time of exploding drug, depression, and suicide epidemics. Zapolin thinks both Trump and Biden could benefit from listening. “We’re calling it the SAD epidemic, which is suicide, addiction and depression,” he says. “We’re coming out of a pandemic, and suicide rates are off the charts. We have to triage the situation. Mind Army is not going to sit here—54 years after these things were made illegal—millions of people have taken these compounds with great benefit. We’re not going to sit and be told that alcohol is good, tobacco is good, but not psilocybin mushrooms is bad, and you can’t even use it if you are suicidal or have an addiction or depression.”

“We have been doing something called ketatations—a ketamine-enhanced meditation—and we’ve been doing them with groups. We started doing them for corporations and executive teams. What we’ve been doing is kind of like a modern day plant medicine ceremony. We all get our prescription from the doctor; it’s totally legal, and we have a ketamine lozenge that melts in the mouth, and we socially distance on yoga mats. We put a group in two tents, and what we’re trying to do is they all take the medicine at the same time, we listen to the same frequency music, and we have a 45-min incredible experience.”

At the end of the experience, attendees end up having a personal breakthrough, as well as an incredible group effect. After treatment, they are all of a sudden more cohesive, and they have much more empathy for each other.

Zapolin says that he’s begun to talk to some big Silicon Valley companies. Within a single hour, they have the cohesiveness “equal to being shipwrecked on an island with your executive team for a month. That’s impossible to duplicate.”

Zapolin started a for-profit company called **KetaMD**, something he’s putting together before the his new film comes out. There is a virtual network where doctors clear patients for treatment, and they send patients one ketamine lozenge—overnight—and they do a guided session with a nurse for one hour over Telemed.

With all the team members that are working virtually, productivity is at zero, and sometimes even goes into the negative.

Zapolin mentioned that a current forward-thinking goal is to develop ketamine-infused transdermal patches. These types of patches have already been observed by a team of Japanese scientists, and in early trials with some companies. Zapolin also stated that the future of medicine lies with frequency therapy, which eliminates the entire need to consume substances.

Zapolin’s Mind Army will be featured in a free PsyTech Virtual Summit on October 27.