

Shrink Rap Radio #506

12th May, 2016

“Exploring The Medicinal and Spiritual Potential of Marijuana”

Dr. David Van Nuys Ph.D., aka ‘Dr. Dave’ interviews Barbara Harris

(Transcribed from <http://www.shrinkrapradio.com> by Gloria Oelman)

Introduction:

My guest today is author and therapist Barbara Harris and we’ll be speaking about her book *The Secrets of Medicinal Marijuana: A Guide for Patients and Those Who Care for Them*. For more information about Barbara Harris please see our show notes on www.ShrinkRapRadio.com

Dr. Dave: Barbara Harris, welcome to Shrink Rap Radio.

Barbara Harris: Thank you and thank you for inviting me.

Dr. Dave: Well it’s really a pleasure to have you here and in part at least – in large part it’s due to long time listener and transcriber, Gloria Oelman in far away Adelaide Australia. She contacted me and said ‘Here’s somebody I’d really like you to interview and if you do it, I’ll even do the transcription.’ (both laugh) So I’m very grateful to her and to you for being here and we’re going to be discussing your recent book *Secrets of Medicinal Marijuana: A Guide for Patients and Those Who Care for Them*. Maybe you can hold it up, I know you’ve got a copy of the book there. Yes, that’s what it looks like. It’s in paperback and I highly recommend it to people who are interested in this topic. This is actually your tenth book with earlier ones focusing on healing from repeated trauma, the emotional needs of critical care patients and the integration of spiritual experiences. However this book seems to go back to the beginning of your personal journey with trauma and recovery, so let’s go back and begin with the traumatic accident that I believe happened when you were around twenty three years of age.

Barbara Harris: Thirty three.

Dr. Dave: Oh, thirty three years of age.

Barbara Harris: Thirty three – two years of conservative care which – back then and still is – opiates and Valium, for two years.

Dr. Dave: Well, tell us about the accident itself.

Barbara Harris: I got pushed into a swimming pool, which is not a smart thing for anybody to do. I was pushed in and my foot hooked on the side and my back snapped as I hit the water and it felt like a whiplash in my lower spine and the doctors, for two years, gave me Valium and escalating opiates all the time. Finally after two years we realised that the drugs weren’t making me any better and if anything they were just numbing me out, so it was time for surgery. I had what was supposed to be a two hour

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spinal fusion, turned out to be five and a half hours. There was a lot more damage in my spine that they couldn't see on X-ray and right after that I started to die. This was not in the surgical suite, this was back in my bed, which by the way was a Stryker frame circle bed – a very awesome way to wake up from surgery. I couldn't move for a month, the bed moved me. It looks like...

Dr. Dave: It rotates in the air somehow?

Barbara Harris: Yeah, it rotates me up and over onto my face three times a day to drain my lungs and air out my back

Dr. Dave: You were in that for seven months – do I recall that correctly?

Barbara Harris: I was in a body cast for seven months, I was in the circle bed for a month and I couldn't move. I was also an atheist. I was very bitter from a very abusive childhood and somewhere the second night after surgery I woke up out in the hallway and the first thing I thought of was 'If they catch me out here, I'm going to get into trouble. I better get back into that bed.' As I turned around and moved back into the room I saw my body lying in the circle bed and I mean, this atheist, had no idea what was going on. All I knew was I was out of pain and I felt better than I had felt in years.

Dr. Dave: Wow!

Barbara Harris: Yeah and then the next thing I knew, I was moving through a tunnel and I spent, I don't know how long, with my grandmother, who had died fourteen years earlier and I'd never dreamed of her existing beyond her death.

Dr. Dave: So this was a Near Death Experience?

Barbara Harris: Yes.

Dr. Dave: And just before you told us about that, you said that you were dying. Was there some clinical correlation? What was happening in your body that...

Barbara Harris: I was internally bleeding and my blood volume was dropping and my blood pressure was very, very low. I failed to say that a few minutes, or maybe an hour before this happened, people started rushing in and throwing bottles over my head. This was before I became a respiratory therapist – I had no idea what was going on but they were hooking me up to all kinds of equipment and that's the way I was living, until I found myself out in the hall. Then it happened again a week later.

Dr. Dave: Another NDE, or Near Death Experience? Tell us about that one.

Barbara Harris: Well, this is the one that completely changed my life because what I did was I had the classic life review that Ken Ring wrote about. In fact I'm in two of his books *Heading Toward Omega* and *Lessons From the Light*.

Dr. Dave: I didn't catch the name. Who was that?

Barbara Harris: Kenneth Ring from the University of Connecticut.

Dr. Dave: Okay, Yes.

Barbara Harris: Yes, so I became one of his subjects in his books. The life review was so profound and it showed me the abuse I had been through and I could just hear myself saying over and over again, ‘No wonder, no wonder.’ I think what I meant was ‘No wonder you are the way you are’ because I was really neurotic and very insecure – ‘Look at what was done to you when you were a child.’ I could see the abuse and the other thing I saw, which was totally amazing, was myself as a child, in the tunnel. I had not remembered that but after a beating I would go into the tunnel and hang out there feeling really peaceful.

Dr. Dave: Ah!

Barbara Harris: I’d also like to add that while I was going through this life review, which seemed to take thirty two years, I was being held by this energy that for years I couldn’t use the word God but it was some kind of God force holding me and I could see through its eyes and I could feel all this through its heart.

Dr. Dave: In the book you describe a really tangible feeling of being held, as if being held by a very caring mother.

Barbara Harris: Yes, yes. And it wasn’t just around me, it was in me too. Every time I said my ‘no wonders’ it held me tighter and more lovingly and all I could think of at the time was ‘This is pure love, this is pure love.’ And I saw some things that I wasn’t very proud of either and it still loved me. There was no judgment, I was doing the judging but God wasn’t.

Dr. Dave: Hmm, hm. Wow! And so that had a profound rest-of-your-life impact?

Barbara Harris: Well, I tried to put it away because I asked to see a psychiatrist – this was back in 1975 and the psychiatrist had no idea what I was talking about and he gave me anti-depressants. So I brought the anti-depressants home and I looked on my counter in the bathroom and there were twenty six bottles.

Dr. Dave: Oh, my goodness.

Barbara Harris: Oh, it was pathetic for two years and about the same time, one of my wonderful friends who just is a wonderful person, gave me a joint and so I inhaled – I think I inhaled it twice – and by the end of the day I had flushed all the pills down the toilet and threw the bottles away. I never wanted to renew anything. You know it’s pretty hard to stop opiates that suddenly – most people should never do that, you need to be tapered – but for me, having had this spiritual experience and having a good marijuana or Cannabis cigarette, I didn’t need the pills anymore. I was trying to get the pills to lift me out of a thirty five pound cast when I weighed eighty five pounds. The Cannabis did that immediately with no side effects. So I spent the rest of the seven months on Cannabis, not on prescription drugs.

Dr. Dave: Okay, yeah I was going to ask you what the connection was between all of this – the major trauma to your spine and then the near death experiences and then somehow marijuana gets into it. So you moved through that part very quickly, of taking a couple of inhales and then getting rid of all those medicines. Did that take a little time, was there a thought process around that, had you been intending to wean yourself off it? Tell us a little bit more about that.

Dr. Dave: Part of my suffering as a child was my mother was a prescription drug addict. My mother was always taking pain pills and Valium and sleeping pills and then drinking eight cups of coffee a day trying to stay awake and the last thing I saw in my life review is that I was becoming like my mother and that I would be doing the same thing to my children if I didn't stop.

Dr. Dave: Aha.

Barbara Harris: So, when I started lifting out of my drama because I was getting high, I realised that this was the answer I was praying for – that I could get off of all the pills and not be like my mother. What happened after that – I'll just skip a little – was I became a respiratory therapist and I was doing home care for the dying. This was down in South Miami Beach.

Dr. Dave: Okay, tell us what a respiratory therapist is because I don't know.

Barbara Harris: What happened was I went back to the hospital where I had been and I volunteered. I was working in the emergency room and the staff caught on pretty fast that if somebody was dying in the emergency room, or anywhere else in the hospital, they would ask me to go in and sit with them while they died because those of us that have had NDEs aren't afraid of dying any more. In fact to us it's a privilege to help people transition. So from there I started watching in the hospital to see what I would like to become and the respiratory therapists... the nurses are stuck on their floor, the respiratory therapists are all over the hospital and I wanted to get on the crash cart team, you know that's when there's a code?

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Barbara Harris: Okay, so while I was a volunteer and then while I was a student, they knew that if somebody was dying I would go there and I would hold their hand and talk to them. So that's how I got involved in respiratory therapy. What happened was – nobody was talking about this kind of stuff in the late seventies – so I was trying to... I was at Mount Sinai Medical Centre on South Beach and this was during the Mariel boat landing and we were getting all these Cubans in that were suffering because they had lost relatives on the boat trip over and some of them were dying and they were just brought in off the beach but none of us could speak Spanish. Back then there were no Spanish speaking nurses anywhere on South Beach, so I started complaining about the way we were not helping people die – the way we were missing the boat to (make) a pun.

Dr. Dave: Hmm. Hm.

Barbara Harris: And I knew sooner or later I was going to get fired because I was just complaining, I could see what was wrong, so what I did was, I quit and I started doing home care for the dying. This was a wonderful period for me because sometimes both people in the couple were dying, so then you'd become a translator for them and you'd help them to finally get some kind of a conversation going because they're both angry that 'You promised me you were going to help me when I died and now you're dying too, so you're not helping me.'

Dr. Dave: Oh, wow, yeah!

Barbara Harris: Yeah, I became a translator and then if I could see that their prescription drugs were not helping them at all – this was the first time I did this – I just asked a grandson that was there who was home from college, I said 'Is there any way that you could get grandma some Cannabis? I don't want to put you in a bad position but do you know anybody?' He just looked at me and he said 'I'll go to my car.'

Dr. Dave: Right! (both laugh)

Barbara Harris: Every time I asked after that, people – especially young people – always had a way to get quickly.

Dr. Dave: Now, were you worried about making that kind of recommendation that you might find yourself in some kind of legal trouble?

Barbara Harris: Well, I was very careful to never give it to them myself. I was always careful to recommend it and then just kind of... this was South Miami Beach in the late seventies and early eighties. There was marijuana everywhere. I remember an article in the local magazine on the Bee Gees and the author of the article saying that there were little containers of joints everywhere, to help yourself when you went to visit the Bee Gees. That was the mood back then, so I wasn't worried about it then, I'd certainly be worried about it now.

Dr. Dave: That's interesting (both laugh).

Barbara Harris: (unclear) ...make up their mind.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah, so you're much more careful now in terms of what you would do, even though there seems to be a movement – a really changing environment in terms of the whole legal environment in the US and just yesterday you sent me a link to – I guess it's a new organization of? Tell us about it – Physicians Against the Criminalization of Marijuana – something like that?

Barbara Harris: Physicians for Cannabis Reform and it's a very, very prestigious list of three and a half pages of physicians from some of the most prominent medical schools in the country and my husband and I quickly joined because we're part of this movement. We want... see the thing is we're being stopped by the pharmaceutical industry. They're the ones that are lobbying in congress, they're the ones that want to stop this because they're making billions of dollars and once Cannabis is approved all over, people don't need to take these heavy duty pills that give them side effects.

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Cannabis doesn't have many side effects and Cannabis, if used properly – that's why I wrote this book – if used properly, does not have any side effects at all. So, yeah, we got involved right away when we heard about it.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah. You make a distinction between recreational marijuana and medicinal marijuana, were you a recreational user before those two puffs that caused you to throw away all your medicines?

Barbara Harris: I would say I dabbled a little bit in the sixties but didn't stick with it because I was raising babies.

Dr. Dave: Okay, that makes a lot of sense.

Barbara Harris: Yeah but I was just in Colorado because one of our daughters was there with her family and I mean we walked into a dispensary and I couldn't believe it, it was like walking into Mecca, you know (both laugh) and they separate the recreational from the medicinal. So we were very, very interested in the difference and there isn't much except the cost. You pay less if you have a license for marijuana from a doctor, okay? I just lectured on a college campus some young people sponsored me in and what we decided was that the word recreational should not be used anymore; the word 'wellness' should be used. And this is a lot of what my book is about too. Instead of getting goofy, or inhaling yourself into a stupor, what we've learned is, very little is better. If you look at a bell curve, you know, here's the first two hits and you're up here and you're able to really perceive what's going. You continue and you're just going to go way down into a stupor. Just like alcohol, just like any drug.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense to me and that was the thing that was really most striking to me someone as someone who in the sixties, the middle sixties to the middle seventies... and again, you know, recreational, a little bit but also it was part of a spiritual quest I would say...

Barbara Harris: Absolutely.

Dr. Dave: ...among the people that I hung out with but it was also a very social thing and as time has moved on, the people that I hang out with, they're not doing it anymore. The whole social thing seems to have moved on somewhere else for a certain segment of us. But the small dosage thing, that really kind of struck me. I had a little bit of an Aha! because back then it was kind of smoke 'til you drop, so to speak.

Barbara Harris: And the kids at this University were so excited to hear that a little bit is better. And I explained to them what mindfulness is – mindfulness meditation?

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Barbara Harris: And that doing it with just one or two inhales can really show them an expanded level of consciousness – that they can keep. They don't have to be smoking all the time to be there – here. We can do it now, you know and there was something else I wanted to say about that and it just went right through.

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Dr. Dave: It'll probably come back, that happens to me all the time. Now you used the word 'medicinal' throughout and kind of what popular parlance, I think, has been is a lot of talk about 'medical marijuana' and so I'm wondering if there is a shade of difference between the term 'medical marijuana' and medicinal marijuana?

Barbara Harris: No, I don't think there's any difference at all. The graphic artist who did the cover of the book liked the way that flowed. I would have gone with Cannabis because that's the scientific name and the word 'marijuana' comes from Mexico but we wanted that MM in there and it could have been 'medical' or it could have been 'medicinal.' But I want the world to know that – that's another reason that I wrote this book – that it can help us to stop being asleep. This is a wake up – this is a wake up medication and I think this is one of the reasons why the government does not us want us to have the ability to use it because they want to keep us asleep and this is definitely a wake up call and now I remember what I was going to say about it being a wake up call. I met Sasha Shulgin at Esalen Institute in the early eighties. I was there for a small group that was discussing psychedelics being used for therapy. Do you know who Sasha Shulgin was?

Dr. Dave: That is a name that I've run across quite a bit in the whole hallucinogenic, psychedelic movement. Is that the husband or the wife?

Barbara Harris: This is the husband but she was there too and I got to know both of them.

Dr. Dave: Okay and he passed away recently, is that right?

Barbara Harris: Yes, he did and the small group that got together were mainly therapists of varying degrees that wanted to use MDMA in therapy and I mean, early eighties, MDMA was all over the place. It hadn't hit the raves yet with the kids. It was being used in the psychological community. For a wonderful session you could get to buried things without the pain. You could bring them up and then later you could continue the therapy on what had happened in that session. So Sasha Shulgin and I were talking about that and I asked him about Cannabis and he was the one – and this is in my book – he was the one who said you hold the Cannabis in your hand and you ask it, if it can be MDMA, if you can do a session and it will let you know almost immediately, if it will. And then use that, you don't have to use the MDMA. Well what a mind-blowing explanation he gave me. I went running back – I was at the university of Connecticut and I started telling the other researchers – try it like MDMA, we don't have to go into all those heavy side effects – and it worked.

Dr. Dave: Fascinating. This kind of verges into the discussion of set and setting because you're talking about coming to it with a certain mindset and in the book you even talk about some fairly prayerful approach to it, communicating to the marijuana as much as to your own unconscious and so on, 'I come to this in a respectful way and this is what I need and this is what I hope for.'

Barbara Harris: Yes, yes and to pray over it before you use it. You hold it in your hand and you ask it what it can be and you thank it and you name it – you give it a

new name. It's not Cannabis any more, when it's prayed over, it's Santa Maria. It's the energy of Mary.

Dr. Dave: Ah. Okay.

Barbara Harris: It's the Holy mother. I mean this is what *I've* gained from it. The way it started for me was, I'm Jewish and on Friday night I light my Sabbath candles and there was one time we were in Colorado I lit my candles and I inhaled and I realized something was going on, so I asked it to be Santa Maria and I declared that the next twenty four hours – because that's our Sabbath from sundown on Friday 'til sundown on Saturday – I asked to have a shaman's Sabbath.

Dr. Dave: A shaman's?

Barbara Harris: Sabbath. Or if you're Jewish, Shabbat. For the next twenty four hours I was in a beautiful spiritual space and I didn't have to continue smoking by the way – I had just made the hook up. You know it was like when I was a teenager and I worked in the office of the high school, I was on the phones and we used to have the wires and we would stick them in the holes to put (unclear) – that 's what it felt like.

Dr. Dave: Lily Tomlin on the switchboard (both laugh).

Barbara Harris: So that's how I started to realize the spirituality of it and then I was using it with some more dying people and just between you and me and I won't say where I was living at the time, a couple of them smoked at the very end of their life, like in the last twenty four hours and asked the people who they felt safe with – not the whole family but the safe ones – to come in and they did a ceremony around it. They passed it around and they sat there, surrounding the bed with laughter and tears and memories and well wishes and I thought 'This is just amazing.'

Dr. Dave: It sounds beautiful.

Barbara Harris: And when the person finally – the one I'm thinking of now – passed away and the hospice nurse came to sign the papers, she said to me 'What has happened here?' She said, 'I've been visiting this woman for months and I've never seen the family this cohesive.' Well, I wound up writing a book around that story and thirteen other stories of people I've helped die and that's called *Final Passage*, okay? In many of these instances – I did not write it in the book because I was afraid obviously – but there was Cannabis used between the dying person and the family and every one of those scenes was beautiful.

Dr. Dave: Well, it makes me want to look ahead a bit into the future and to imagine if the legal climate keeps changing, that maybe it could evolve to the place where Cannabis shaman people such as yourself, could help to facilitate that transition.

Barbara Harris: Yes.

Dr. Dave: And that's become kind of a major part of what you do now, hasn't it – helping people with the transition?

Barbara Harris: Well, no.

Dr. Dave: No, okay.

Barbara Harris: I'm seeing individual patients my husband and I have groups – psych groups – and our groups are members who have had repeated abuse in childhood, like I did and most of them have a diagnosis of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and the way we're using it here, 'cause it's legal, is CBD drops. Have you heard about CBDs?

Dr. Dave: I have heard but go ahead maybe not everybody has. Cannabidiol? Is that...?

Barbara Harris: Cannabidiol does not have enough THC in it to get you high, so the government has approved it. I think it went through the FDA. You can order it online.

Dr. Dave: Really?

Barbara Harris: I mean I get mine from the Stanley Brothers who did Charlotte's Web – without THC for states where it's not legal and with THC for states where it is legal – for children who were having repeated seizures.

Dr. Dave: I've seen major television specials on treatment for kids with seizures.

Barbara Harris: Yeah, yeah but for the ones who have PTSD like me, listen, psychologically I had been washed and ironed over and over again... I had been in and out of therapy my whole life, plus going to all kinds of workshops trying to get rid of this angst from childhood.

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Barbara Harris: I think that mentally and emotionally I got it but physically – my body, my autonomous nervous system – still gets triggered, easily, easily. Then I'm walking around with all this adrenaline and cortisol. Well those CBD drops, like three drops under my tongue in the morning and then again in the evening just before I go to sleep, mellows that out because we have something inside of our body called the endocannabinoid system. Remember a while ago when Candace Pert discovered the Valium receptor?

Dr. Dave: Sure – that's another name I've heard of.

Barbara Harris: She wrote a book called *The Emotional Molecule* (transcriber's note: the title of the book is *The Molecules of Emotion*) but we have something very similar that accepts cannabinoids – it's like a lock and a key...

Dr. Dave: Lock and key, yep.

Barbara Harris: ...in our brain, in our central nervous system more so but then in other organs in our body and what these cannabinoids do – and they don't have to

have THC – what they do is they unlock the lock and what's produced has been named anandamide. Ananda meaning bliss, okay?

Dr. Dave: Aha!

Barbara Harris: Where Valium turns off our emotion, CBDs turn on the bliss. That's why people get hooked on smoking – because they love the bliss.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, so you're saying that with those drops, you experience some degree of bliss but not feeling high?

Barbara Harris: I think if you did it with THC, you would get more of the bliss. What I'm getting is a leveling out or a disappearance of the angst that came from the PTSD and this is going on now with Vets. The Vets that have been diagnosed with PTSD, where it is legal, they are getting marijuana – Cannabis. Where it's not, they're getting the CBD drops. Look let me give you one example – Charlie and I last fall were in Findhorn in Scotland.

Dr. Dave: Charlie is your husband?

Barbara Harris: Yes, Charles Whitfield M.D.

Dr. Dave: Okay.

Barbara Harris: ...and who wrote *Healing the Child Within*. So he's been working with PTSD his whole career. Anyway, we're in Findhorn, Scotland and I'm teaching at a conference and I'm going to do a workshop after my original talk and I am asked by the powers that be, that in the second half of the workshop I bring out this book and tell people about how to use Cannabis. In Europe it's easier to get if you're sick. Well, there was standing room only for my workshop because they let everybody know I was going to be talking about medicinal marijuana and Cannabis and more than half the people in this standing room only – there were close to a hundred people – had terminal illnesses and I started talking about how to use it and some of them already had it. They were given it but they didn't know how to use it right. Meanwhile a Vet came up to me after – who has suffered horribly from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder – and told me that the VA is about do a catheterization on his heart and actually cauterize a couple of valves because his resting heart rate is up between a hundred and twenty and a hundred and thirty.

Dr. Dave: I have a friend who's in that process.

Barbara Harris: Well, we hooked him up with somebody who had CBDs and we sat at a table with him and he took his heart rate and it was a hundred and thirty and he took two inhalations of the CBD drops in a vaporizer – this wasn't the drops, this was inhale. I'll talk about vaporizers in a minute because that's important – anyway his heart rate went down to sixty five and he's emailed us a few times since that it has not gone back, that he's using the CBD drops. So I got in touch with Roger Martin in Colorado who has an organization called Grow for Vets and what he's doing is, the farmers that are growing the Cannabis in Colorado donate a certain amount of there take – whatever you call it – for him to then give to Vietnam... all kinds of Vets and

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it's spread. He has spread now from Colorado to Washington State and the states down the Pacific line, where it's legal. Anyway, I donated a box of my books and he's giving them to the Vets that can understand what my book's about because it's getting technical. So I'm just so thrilled to see how this works with the Vets. We don't have to make them wait months and months and months for care and we don't have to give them those harsh psychoactive drugs.

Dr. Dave: I hope somebody's doing some studies on some of these things that you're taking about.

Barbara Harris: Dr. Sisley.

Dr. Dave: Dr. Sisley.

Barbara Harris: Yeah, I forgot her first name (transcriber's note Dr. Sue Sisley), she's an MD and she's working with MAPS – do you know about the organization MAPS?

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Barbara Harris: She was fired from, I think, the University of... I'm not sure because of her wanting to research marijuana and now she has gotten FDA approval and she's working with PTSD and using Cannabis. So, yeah it's being done. You know in Israel, they've been doing it for forty years and in Israel, it's totally legal. There is a one hour You Tube documentary on this about the doctor who's been the lead for forty years named Raphael Mechoulam. If you go to You Tube and you just type in 'The Scientists' it will come up. There's one scene that I absolutely love, where we're in a old folk's home, or a senior facility and you see people on walkers and with canes and in wheelchairs going into a central room where they have a huge vaporizer and each person has a balloon and they put the balloon over the top of the vaporizer and it fills with marijuana smoke and they take it back with them and they've got it all day. So instead of their insurance paying a thousand dollars a month for all these pills that give them all kinds of horrible effects, they're all high and they're all happy.

Dr. Dave: (laughs) I'm not surprised.

Barbara Harris: You gotta see this!

Dr. Dave: 'The Scientist' did you say? Just the word 'The Scientist' on You Tube? I would think that would bring up tons of stuff.

(Link to video referenced)

<https://youtu.be/oQDJi6Jb8d4?list=PL-j8DfzPFwK04Fp980VJW6f6g1aC1nIURL>

Barbara Harris: Yeah, it does. I mean watch it, it's worth it, everybody should watch it because everything we're trying to do here has already been done in Israel. Raphael Mechoulam (translator's note: Barbara gives incorrect spelling).

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Now I gotta get back to vaporizers 'cause I mentioned them.

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Barbara Harris: The people that want to use it the way I'm talking about to expand their consciousness, or for pain reduction, or PTSD, you don't have to smoke it with a flame, that is going to hurt your throat eventually and your lungs. They've come out with... it started with the e-cigarettes, you know how people are walking around with their nicotine...

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Barbara Harris: Well they've adapted it now for herbs and they even have it for oils because oils have become the really big thing – they last longer and when you use a vaporizer, which looks like an e-cigarette, it doesn't get half as hot as burning it. Marijuana will burn at a much lower temperature, so if you use a vaporizer, you're saving your throat and your lungs because you're not burning it into your body, you're inhaling it into your body.

Dr. Dave: What about dosage and I know there are so many complicated variables here because there are the different varieties of Cannabis and the different modes of taking it in and for example, I know from my own experience and others, when it was cooked in brownies you could get a very high dose and a very strong effect that you might not be prepared for, so if you can – and I know you've got a page or two of kind of steps and recipes and effects and so on – take us through some of that, if you can, the highlights.

Barbara Harris: First of all if you get it and it's manufactured and sold in a dispensary, I would not eat the whole thing right away. I would break it into quarters, or even in eighths and eat a little bit, wait an hour. When you eat it, it takes an hour to two hours to take effect. So if you eat a quarter of a cookie, let's say and after twenty minutes you're not getting anything, so you eat another quarter, you may, an hour after, really hate that you did that.

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Barbara Harris: You go slow and when you eat it, it will last up to eight hours. So when we were in Colorado – and I was in an excellent dispensary – the bud keeper there, who really knew a lot and I would highly recommend if it's legal in your state and you're going to go to a dispensary, interview the bud keeper and if you feel like this person really knows what they're talking about, stay with them. If you don't, move on because there are some people that are just salespeople and then there are some people that really know their stuff.

Dr. Dave: Hm, hmm.

Barbara Harris: So I was really lucky to get somebody really good and I told him I needed it for sleep and I had Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and he sold me these little tiny cookies that were mainly made out of seeds and nuts, compressed, with the dosage appropriate and he told me – this was really cute – he said 'Take it two hours

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before bedtime. It will take an hour for it to work and then you'll have fun for an hour, you'll get to know it and then you'll sleep for seven hours straight.' And I did.

Dr. Dave: Back in the day, I had friends who would get sleepy and then they'd go off and go to bed and I guess they would sleep. I would get wired, I would just get so activated that I couldn't turn my brain off and sometimes that was a... you know, I couldn't get to sleep.

Barbara Harris: There are two kinds – there are sativas, which are uppers – and this is all in my book – and there are indicas, which are downers. Indicas are for sleep, sativa is for energy. So people who are getting chemotherapy, let's say, who can't eat and who are lethargic, the sativa will help them to want to eat and will help them to get some energy. But let's say it's bedtime and they can't sleep, that's when they use the indica.

Dr. Dave: Okay, that's a good tip.

Barbara Harris: Then there are the hybrids too and what it is, is it's all experimentation. I think what I love the most about plant medicine is that instead of the doctor dictating to us what we're supposed to do because he's the authority, or she's the authority and we're the one who just has to listen and leave, with this kind of medicine you have to determine it for yourself. It's all experimentation and after a few days, something that worked really well on the first day, may not work on the fifth day and then you have to go to another strain, do that one for a while until it's not working and then maybe go back to the first one. So what's happening is we're taking control of our healing.

Dr. Dave: You even suggest keeping a journal, much as a lab scientist would of, 'Okay this is what I did, these were the conditions, here was my mental set' and kind of learning... Because we're each different and we react to medicines, both legal medicines and these plant substances, in unique ways, matching our own biological and mental uniqueness.

Barbara Harris: At the back of the book I have an empty chart where you can make a copy of it, or you can write in the book, to keep an eye on which one is helping you more than another. There's also ratios and you learn about the ratios – I talk about it in the book – there's a lot of things... I want to get to set and setting before we're finished.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, go ahead.

Barbara Harris: Because that's really important. Remember the picture on TV of two sunny side up eggs in a frying pan?

Dr. Dave: Yeah. This is your brain on drugs, yeah? (both laugh)

Barbara Harris: Well, perhaps on marijuana, this is your brain because you're going to be sunny side up. It's going to give you the oomph that you need to get out of your drama and fight the disease, or give in to the disease, or whatever it is and at least have some happy times, okay? So this is your brain on marijuana – it is *not* a gateway

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drug, you will *not* want to go into heavier drugs. What you will want to do is find some other happy people because you're feeling good for a change.

Dr. Dave: Okay this is a point where Gloria Oelman primed me with a question and so I want to slip it in here. She asked 'What about people who have an addictive personality?' In other words, they have a history of just overdoing whatever it is they get into.

Barbara Harris: Yeah. Guess what? Marijuana will take them away from their harder drugs. We have seen this over and over again with opiate addicts. Opiate addicts who turned to methadone to get off, or – what's the other one – suboxone. Those are the two drugs that get them off the opiates – they'll slip back, they'll slip back because they want that high and they're not getting the high from those two other drugs. Bring in Cannabis – they've already done research on this – and they will not go back to their opiates. They'll take an occasional hit off of a marijuana cigarette.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, you describe it as an exit drug, rather than a gateway drug – an exit.

Barbara Harris: Exit - yes. The doctors that are researching it are calling it the gateway to health because going back to this endocannabinoid system, our body does produce a little bit of cannabinoids, or we wouldn't have those keys and locks, okay? We don't get enough. Why? Because this is the modern era and we're not eating natural foods like we should be and we're not getting beef that's been grass fed and all these different reasons of the way the modern world has dried us up when it comes to what we really need. So the cannabinoids can be added because we don't get enough and that's when we feel better. However, back to the two eggs (cross talk)... if we can get past that, in the way a sitter can sit with somebody that starts to get anxiety, you know, they're thinking back of what what's her name – (Nancy) Reagan – told us about saying no to drugs. This is not a hard drug – it should have never have been a schedule one, that's all political. What you need is somebody, for the first time, if you're going to try it, who is aware of it, who knows about it, who's probably tried it themselves and if you start to get scared, they can tell you 'It's okay, there's nothing to be scared of.' This is what we call a 'safe other.' Plus the fact we need to be either at home or somewhere where we feel really safe. So the setting is a safe place and the set is also having some kind of a person with you where you have a healthy enough relationship, that if you start to wander back into 'This is your brain on drugs' they can pull you out of that. Because it really is a very blissful experience if you've got the right set and setting.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah and it's possible to get really frightened when you take a psychedelic and I would include Cannabis in this – it's much milder than some of the other possibilities that are out there – and you start to realize 'Ooh, this is against the law. There are people who, if they knew I was doing this now they would throw me in prison, or they would abuse me in various ways.' That can get to be a real scary thought.

Barbara Harris: Right.

Dr. Dave: So I think, you know, there's some scary things about our culture (laughs) and that's reality.

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Barbara Harris: Yes, you're absolutely right. The government wants to control us, that's what scares me. I mean we all know that this election that's coming up is huge, absolutely huge and I know that the forefathers are turning over in their graves, over what's going on right now but part of it is becoming an individual, independent of what we're being told and I think that learning how to use Cannabis – in a state where it's legal – is an appropriate way to get away from the prescription drugs that are really hurting us. People are dying every day from prescription drugs, people are dying every day from alcohol consumption. There are no actual deaths from Cannabis. Maybe a few where somebody was driving when they shouldn't have been because they were high but there's no deaths from Cannabis absorption into the body.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, a publisher just approached me to interview the author of a book that is diametrically opposed to everything that you are saying (laughs).

Barbara Harris: Oh, okay, yeah there's a lot of that too.

Dr. Dave: It was full of – and it was by a physician – I actually don't want to do that interview because I just don't believe it, you know, as somebody who's had some experience with these things. But it was like, talk about... the whole thing was just a big scare thing, so yeah.

Barbara Harris: Yeah and a lot of these are being ghost written by people who are being hired by the pharmaceutical industry, including the research. Many times – and they've caught them already, there is proof – that the pharmaceutical industry has a group that write their research, twist it around to what they want and then actually pay physicians to put their names on those papers.

Dr. Dave: I do believe that. I mean, there's enough things have come to light now that it's quite believable that that's the case. I wonder what we have not touched on here. We've definitely covered a lot of ground, just looking at some of my notes here...

Barbara Harris: Well, while you're looking, if anybody's in the Vancouver, British Columbia area, or wants to take a vacation there, I'm going to be speaking at a conference there July 9th and 10th at the Westin Bayshore Hotel. The name of the conference is 'Cannabis Hemp Conference.' You know hemp, there's a big movement for hemp, which is separate from Cannabis – Cannabis is a drug. Hemp becomes cloth, rope, oil, I mean, you name it. Hemp has a lot of different uses. Our declaration of independence in the Constitution is written on hemp. Back with our founding fathers all the ropes, all the sails were hemp – for the boats. Hemp has a lot of wonderful uses and is much cheaper to make than the plastic industry would like us to know about. So there's a conference, as I said Cannabis Hemp Conference July 9th and 10th.

Dr. Dave: I should keep that in mind, Vancouver is a delightful place to go and I think I may have even stayed at that hotel once at a different professional conference, so it's a lovely area.

Barbara Harris: We're going three days early so we can sight see in Vancouver.

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Dr. Dave: Yeah, good for you, that's definitely the thing to do. Well, I think you've given us a really good representation of what's in the book. Any other closing thoughts that come to mind?

Barbara Harris: Ah, gee, where do I begin? (both laugh) At the end of the book, I talk about fourteen different triggers for having a spiritual experience.

Dr. Dave: Fourteen different?

Barbara Harris: Triggers.

Dr. Dave: Triggers.

Barbara Harris: Triggers to move into an alternate reality, or just feel like you're connected to something bigger than we are. I mean it's childbirth and reading spiritual literature, hearing a spiritual talk, doing the twelve steps, psychedelics, close to death, helping somebody die. We've had spiritual experiences around the deathbed that can last a couple of days. What I want to say is, if you use this as a wellness, the way I'm suggesting, if you use it to expand your mind, if you use it with the intention, with prayer, to ask it to help you to open up, this can be a spiritual connection that has nothing to do with religion. Religion can still be there, I have nothing against religion, I love gathering with my kids and doing some kind of religious thing but it can also be a direct connection spiritually, so honor that and try it. But don't try it if it's illegal in your state, I will say that. But open up to what God has planted on this planet.

Dr. Dave: Well that's a good wrap up line, right there. So Barbara Harris I want to thank you for being my guest today on Shrink Rap Radio.

Barbara Harris: Thank you.

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WRAP UP:

I probably should say at the outset that neither Barbara Harris nor myself believe that marijuana is good for children or adolescents and I need to be clear for myself, that I'm not advocating marijuana for any medical or psychological condition. However I do agree with Barbara that in states that allow medical marijuana it's something that might be worth looking into and carefully experimenting with for one's own health.

As you heard, I really agree with Barbara's suggestion that just a very small dose once or twice a day might be sufficient to meet one's needs, whatever they might be. Just that suggestion alone is enough to make me consider getting a Californian medical and marijuana card. The situation here in California continues to be fairly paradoxical, I believe. People can legally consult with a physician to get a permission card to obtain medical marijuana from a dispensary. At the same time, however, the legality issue is not completely resolved vis-à-vis the Federal Government and in the not too distant past, some dispensaries have been raided and closed down. I don't follow the Shrink Rap Radio #506

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situation closely but I have the impression that there's still a certain amount of vagueness around the legal situation here.

I've been open about the fact that from the mid-sixties through the mid-seventies I smoked marijuana in social settings with friends and also experimented personally with other psychedelic substances. In part it was a social, cultural current that I was swimming in, along with many other members of my generation. I also felt that as someone who was becoming a psychologist that it was incumbent on me to explore these substances that were widely reported to open us up to new dimensions of consciousness, which indeed they did. I don't think I would be nearly so open to the broad range of psychologies and personal reports that I explore today on this podcast, had I not had those experiences.

In relation to her discussion on set and setting, Barbara Harris cites the work of Charles Tart. Tart is a few years older than I am and his book on altered states of consciousness came out while I was still in my doctoral program at the University of Michigan. It had a profound impact on my thinking and I reference his book liberally in my own dissertation on the altered states of meditation and hypnosis. It was my pleasure, many years later, to interview him here on Shrink Rap Radio and I would invite you to listen to episode #34 *Forty Years of Consciousness Research* with Dr. Charles Tart. I'd also recommend other listening on this topic in episodes #439 *Psychedelics and Their Power to Heal* with journalist, author, Tom Shroder and episode #283 *An Update on the Positive Potential of Psychedelics* with James Fadiman PhD.

You heard Barbara mention the acronym MAPS. She was referring to the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, which can be found at <http://www.maps.org> where they state that they were founded in 1986. The Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies is a 501C non-profit research and educational organization that develops medical, legal and cultural contexts for people to benefit from the careful uses of psychedelics and marijuana. Obviously this site is a key resource for any of you who wish to learn more about this topic.