



MIND BEYOND MATTER

## Safety and risks in altered states of consciousness

While exploring altered states through enhanced meditation is completely physically safe, they are often powerful psychological and spiritual experiences and there are potential risks that should be acknowledged. These dangers vary depending on the individual's mental state, preparedness, and the depth of the experience. People with the pre-existing psychological or mental health conditions listed below should consult with a psychiatric health professional before taking this programme:

### High-Risk Conditions

These conditions require extreme caution, and individuals may need professional supervision before engaging in deep altered-state work.

#### 1. Schizophrenia & Psychotic Disorders

✓ Risk:

- Altered states can amplify delusions, hallucinations, or paranoia.
- Meditation can increase detachment from reality, worsening psychosis symptoms.

#### 2. Depersonalization & Dissociative Disorders

✓ Risk:

- Meditation and altered states can worsen feelings of detachment from reality or identity.
- Symptoms like "watching life like a movie" or feeling unreal may increase.

#### 3. Severe PTSD & Trauma Survivors

✓ Risk:

- Can trigger flashbacks or overwhelming emotions.
- Some techniques (especially breathwork, theta states, and guided inner journeys) may bring up suppressed trauma too quickly.

## 4. Bipolar Disorder (Especially During Manic Episodes)

### ✓ Risk:

- Can induce or worsen manic episodes in those with bipolar I or II disorder.
- Meditation during mania or hypomania may intensify racing thoughts or delusions of grandeur.

## Moderate-Risk Conditions (Requires Careful Monitoring)

### 5. Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) & Panic Disorders

### ✓ Risk:

- Some individuals experience intense fear when their perception changes.
- Body sensations (floating, vibration, warmth, paralysis-like effects) can trigger panic attacks.

### 6. Depression & Low Energy States

### ✓ Risk:

- Meditation can sometimes cause emotional numbness or deepen depressive thought patterns.
- Too much introspection can increase rumination, leading to a sense of hopelessness or detachment.

## Low-Risk But Requires Awareness

These conditions are less risky but still require awareness and adaptation to the individual.

### 7. ADHD & Difficulty Focusing

### ✓ Risk:

- Individuals may struggle to stay in meditation long enough to enter altered states.
- Frustration and restlessness can make them give up too soon.

## Final Thoughts: Safety is Key

✓ Altered states can be transformative, but not all states are beneficial for all people.

✓ If someone has a serious mental health condition, they should consult a professional before practicing deep techniques.

✓ Grounding, self-awareness, and structured practice help make altered states safe and beneficial.

---

## General Psychological & Emotional Risks

### Dissociation & Depersonalization

- Some individuals may experience a strong sense of detachment from their body or reality.
- While this is a normal part of deep meditation, for some it can lead to ongoing dissociative episodes (feeling disconnected from the self or surroundings).

✓ **Mitigation:**

- Ensure grounding techniques are in place before and after each session (e.g., touching an object, walking barefoot).
  - Start with shorter sessions and gradually build tolerance.
  - If dissociation becomes distressing, pause practice and re-engage in physical-world activities.
- 

## **Unresolved Trauma & Emotional Surfacing**

- Deep altered states can bring up repressed trauma, fears, or emotions that were previously hidden.
- This can be therapeutic but also overwhelming if not properly integrated.

✓ **Mitigation:**

- Guide participants to set an intention before meditations, ensuring they are mentally prepared.
  - Encourage journaling and integration practices to process emotions safely.
  - If strong emotions arise, return to the breath and disengage from the vision/sensation.
- 

## **Fear & Panic Responses**

- Some people may experience intense visuals, energetic sensations, or perceived entity interactions that trigger fear.
- Fear can amplify the experience, making it harder to control.

✓ **Mitigation:**

- Always use the 'energy forcefield' visualisation as part of the preparatory process (lesson 2).
- Be reminded that nothing in the psycho-spiritual domain can harm you unless they give it power.
- Exit Strategy: If panic occurs, count from 10 to 1, focus on the breath, and physically move the body

## **2. Neurological & Cognitive Risks**

### **Overstimulation & Insomnia**

- Frequent entry into high-energy states (Theta/Gamma) can overstimulate the nervous system, leading to sleep disturbances or agitation.
- Some individuals may feel too 'wired' or 'spaced out' after sessions.

✓ **Mitigation:**

- Use a wind-down practice after deep sessions (soft music, herbal tea, breathing exercises).

- Avoid doing intense altered-state meditations late at night if sleep issues arise.

## Headaches & Physical Discomfort

- Some people sensitive to binaural beats may experience headaches, dizziness, or nausea due to prolonged exposure.

### ✓ Mitigation:

- Use lower volume binaural beats, ensuring headphones are comfortable.
- Allow breaks between sessions to prevent overuse.

## 3. Spiritual & Existential Risks

### Existential Crisis & Ontological shock

- Deep altered states can destabilise a person's sense of reality and profoundly alter belief systems
- Some may feel like they "no longer belong" in normal reality after profound mystical experiences.

### ✓ Mitigation:

- Gradual integration is key - journal experiences to help rationalise and integrate them
- Consider stopping the course if it is having a negative effect on your mental health — this process should enhance daily life, not worsen it.
- Engage with supportive communities who understand the journey. Reddit communities r/spirituality, r/gatewayexperience, r/experiencers are all good places to start.
- The goal is balance—both spiritual transcendence and grounded existence.

### Entity Encounters & Unwanted Psychic Experiences

- Some people report encounters with entities, archetypal beings, spirits, or 'non-human intelligences'.
- While these are usually neutral or positive, some may perceive unsettling or negative entities.
- Some people report feeling the presence of these entities even when returning to normal waking reality.

### ✓ Mitigation:

- Always set clear protective intentions before meditation (e.g., "Only benevolent energies may interact with me").
- Always use the energy force field visualisation before each meditation to filter negative encounters.
- Negative experiences are fuelled by anxiety and fear - relaxing and observing them will prevent them from dominating the experience
- If you have a negative experience, calmly count from 10-1 and return to normal waking state. immediately return to the breath and disengage.