

The True Medicine

The Nihue Rao Guidebook to
Ayahuasca and Master Plant Diets



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*with wisdom from Maestro Ricardo Amaringo
and reviewed with Mother Ayahuasca herself*

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INTRODUCTION

The spiritual weight

Everything you experience in your life stays with you—spiritually. Traumas, mishaps and addictions alike all remain recorded in your mind and body, manifesting as pains, cluttering your mind and emotions, and blocking your path to the life you desire. This sum of experiences that is the story of your life forms what we call your spiritual weight.

If you have consumed drugs or alcohol, the contamination of those substances is still with you. If you were bullied, or abandoned as a child, or abused, those traumas and blocks are still with you. If you have had many sexual partners, their own traumas and blocks are still with you. If you tend to act angrily, that is within you. These are all energies within your spiritual weight, affecting you in ways you might not be aware of.

Drinking Ayahuasca, dieting master plants and receiving *ícaros* or medicinal songs all help you clean portions of this spiritual weight that you carry. They take from you what you no longer want.

As your weight lightens, your body, mind and soul can begin to open and heal, and you start to feel lighter, more centered and overall healthier. And if you go deep enough, you can even feel a spiritual rebirth—a new start.

The medicinal plants

God sowed the medicinal plants on the Earth to help humanity. The Amazonian master plants, of which Ayahuasca is the center of, are a particularly powerful group of them.

What these plants do for most people is heal them physically, mentally and emotionally, helping them live a happier life. Put in other words, what they do for most people is help them clean their spiritual weight and emerge out of it.

Each plant medicine has its own “specialization”, or its own medicine: there is strength medicine (Shihuahuaco), there is love medicine (Marosa), there is detoxing medicine (Ojé), and so on. Each can bring a particular improvement, or healing, to your life. And then there are medicines that can do a vast amount of things—such as Ayahuasca.

What sets plant medicine apart, is that it is *spiritual* medicine—it works on a spiritual level, acknowledging the fact that, on some level, you are a spirit yourself, and not just your physical body. This allows plant medicine to heal you on every level of your being: physically, but also mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

What’s more, these medicinal plants make you *more spiritual*; more aware of your spirit self and of the spiritual reality you live in. In other words, they connect you to the root of the spiritual world. In that awareness, you can come to interact with the spirits of the medicinal plants themselves, receiving healing and teachings from them.

The shaman and the *ícaros*

The Shipibos and other Amazonian tribes have long-known about this ecosystem of medicinal plants, and have had ample time to learn how to work with it. This accumulated learning spanning generations is the healing tradition that we call shamanism.

Shamans diet for many years to receive knowledge, power and tools (including but not limited to the *ícaros*) from the spirits of the master plants themselves, and use these to work within the spirit world.

This rigorous life-long training makes the shaman exceptionally strong, wise and agile, as it turns them into a spiritual warrior capable of battling the bad energies face to face—and winning.

If they walk their path with integrity, it also makes them caring and kind, moving them to use the powers they receive to do good and work the light—that is, to heal others.

To heal you, the shaman sings *ícaros*, powerful healing songs that clean your spiritual weight quickly and bring order and healing to your body, mind and soul. These songs *are* medicine themselves; spiritual medicine that enters your body through the sounds of the shaman's voice. It is the very spirits of their dieted medicines, male and female alike, that come to sing these songs through them.

Because the *ícaros* carry medicine on their own, it's not even necessary to drink Ayahuasca to receive their benefits. They are, however, significantly more powerful when you're in the Ayahuasca effect.

It is worth noting that the word «shaman» is actually of western origin. The shamans themselves (at least the Shipibos) call themselves *onanya*, meaning wise or sage.

PART I: AYAHUASCA

Ayahuasca is the centerpiece of the Amazon's ecosystem of ancestral plant medicines. Made by brewing together two plants—ayahuasca vine and chacruna leaf—for approximately eight hours, Ayahuasca is a powerful medicine for the body, but also for the mind, the heart and the soul.

Physically, once ingested, the Ayahuasca liquid enters and purifies every bit of your body from the tip of the head to the tip of the toes: the brain, the heart and all organs, the nerves, and even the blood.

Ayahuasca also energetically enters the compartments of your mind, namely the mental psychology, emotional function, memory, five senses and sleep and dream space. There, the medicine removes traumas, blocks and other negative energies and brings strength and opening as needed.

With help from experienced shamans, Ayahuasca can heal all kinds of diseases: thyroid issues, drug addictions, diabetes, schizophrenia, depression and even cancer, just to mention a few.

Spiritually, Ayahuasca is a doorway into the spirit world. The psychedelic trance or *mareación* that she provides takes you into the spirit world, where the roots of your ailments lie as energies. There, Mother Ayahuasca, the main spirit of the Ayahuasca medicine, guides you, heals you and even empowers you to heal yourself.

Through visions and messages, the Mother brings up things from your spiritual weight and gives you opportunities to work through and let go of what you no longer want: emotions, traumas, pains, negative thoughts, blockages, behaviors and so on. In this way, she works with you to help you heal yourself.

Aside from healing you, she also teaches you about yourself, about the world and about your place in it, all through a spiritual lens. And, when you are clean enough, about God, His beautiful energies, and the Cosmos.



Only light

“Ayahuasca is one hundred percent light.”

— Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

Spiritually, Ayahuasca is 100% light—there is no dark side to her; no *shitana*, as the Shipibos say.

This means that **she only works in your benefit**; she is *all* medicine, and all she does for you has a motive of the light. It also means that there is no negative residue, energetic or physical, lingering in the body from drinking Ayahuasca.

This purity, combined with her range of healing ability that spans the physical, the mental and the spiritual, is why we call Ayahuasca *The True Medicine*.

Furthermore, Mother Ayahuasca is an immensely loving and caring spirit—there is a reason she is called *Mother*! Her own spiritual world, which you can see when you drink her medicine, is full of light, love and peace, as well as beautiful geometries and motifs.

Because she only works the light, you can trust that she has your best interest at heart and that you are in good, kind hands as you drink her medicine—this is true even if the lesson she has for you is a tougher one!

Learn more: The spirit of Mother Ayahuasca is an indigenous *curandera* (healer) older lady. Though you might see her in this way in ceremony, she also often takes the form of a serpent, a hummingbird, a butterfly and other jungle animals, as well as the flower and vine of her plant.

For your journey: The true medicine is made strictly with ayahuasca vine and chacruna leaves, as the ancient shamans prepared it and as the medicine herself wants to be prepared. This purity is key to the medicine's safety, so don't settle for anything less. Novel modifications made by adding other ingredients (such as master plants, sugar, *agua de florida*, etc.) with the pretext of intensifying the visions or enhancing the effect produce a brew that can no longer be called safe medicine, or even medicine—other centers may do this.



The Ayahuasca effect

The Ayahuasca effect (or *mareación*, as called in local Spanish) generally has three stages.

The first is the stage of the World of Ayahuasca, and it comes with beautiful visuals, geometric patterns, lights, motifs, colors and other visual Ayahuasca compositions. It's where you'll likely find yourself as the effect first opens and the strength is at its peak.

In this stage, there may be no dialogue yet; it's a time to stay calm, look at the visions and let the medicine work on you.

At some point, the spiritual weight you carry shows up and interferes with the first stage's flow of beauty and pure medicine, interrupting it and giving way to the second stage: the stage of your life's history.

Here, Ayahuasca helps you gain awareness of the energies you're carrying in your spiritual weight, and educates you on how you picked them up and how they are affecting you.

The second stage is where you can work on yourself: as the Mother shows you elements of your spiritual weight, she also gives you a chance to clean them and leave them behind. This is also a good time to ask the Mother any questions you may have.

As you progress in your healing and your spiritual load gets smaller by dieting, receiving *ícaros* and doing the work, you'll see your first stage naturally extend—you'll see more medicine and less of your weight. That is the goal.

If you drink a higher dose, you'll reach stage three. There, you will no longer see your history, but the world's history—that is, the world's sins and unfortunate happenings. While this can be educational, it's not what is most productive to your healing as focus inward becomes difficult, so you'll want to find a dose that keeps you in the first two stages.



Communication with the Mother

“Mother Ayahuasca is *in* you when you drink her medicine, you don't need to call for her [to come].”

— Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

Ayahuasca communicates with you in a variety of ways while in ceremony, and this **communication is not always verbal**—don't necessarily expect to always hear a “voice”.

The most commonly known way is through visions. Whether Ayahuasca decides to show you something of her own initiative or she is answering a question you've asked her, she will often communicate with you with visual scenes. Sometimes they'll be direct and literal, other times they'll be symbolic, requiring some interpretation.

She may also bring your attention to parts of your body with physical sensations, to signal that work is needed there. Presence of sounds and smells is also possible.

Beyond these, Ayahuasca also guides you “silently”, giving you ideas and guiding your intuition.

And of course, Ayahuasca might *speak* to you through a combination of these things. For example, she might show you a vision and at the same time give you the intuition that it relates to a particular time in your life.

“You must converse with the Mother so she becomes your friend.” — Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

These all are ways in which Mother Ayahuasca may communicate with you, but **it's just as important that you speak to her** throughout the ceremony too. In speaking with her, you'll show your trust in her and become her friend.

She's there with you, and she's ready to help you however you need, but you do need to ask for her help. If you just drink her medicine, hold silence and don't engage with her, she will not do as much for you as she could.

To speak to the Mother, address her in your mind as if praying. Because her spirit is in your chest for the duration of the ceremony,

it is not necessary to call for her to come, even if you can't see her—she's right there!



Common symptoms

“Because it is boiled over fire, Ayahuasca is a warm medicine. It is with this heat that she cleans our spiritual weight.”

— Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

As Ayahuasca gathers and expels the bad energies in the body, a variety of symptoms can arise, including: heat, yawns, burps, gas, tears, sighs, shivers, tremors, nausea and vomiting. You might also need to visit the restroom. These all are perfectly normal.

And so is feeling weak, sleepy or tired, as the medicine works intensely within the body, during ceremony and even into the next day.

Because Ayahuasca has psychedelic properties, your senses might also feel heightened and the passing of time might feel slower or faster.

All these symptoms are unnoteworthy.

Good to know: Vomiting does not necessarily mean the medicine left your body, even if the flavor seems to indicate so. In fact, as Ayahuasca cleaned some block in your digestive system, your effect could come in stronger afterwards.

Good to know: Yawning often in the effect is a way to avoid nausea building up, as nausea occurs when the strong airs of chacruna and ayahuasca stay within the body without release.

“Other symptoms let us know what we need to clean.”

— Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

Aside from the common symptoms, **there are symptoms that can inform where more healing is needed.** Pain and pressure are such symptoms.

Pains, either preexisting or new, can appear or flare up during the effect, pointing out an area that needs your attention. This happens when the force of the medicine clashes with some blockage in the place of the pain. Stomach pain, for example, can indicate a block in the digestive system.

Similarly, a headache can indicate blockages within the mind, a racing heart can reveal emotional blockages, a persistent cough can point out contamination in the lungs, and so on.

These local symptoms are noteworthy, as they can inform the intentions for your next *icaro*—share them at integration.

Ayahuasca can also bring your attention to thought patterns (such as self-criticism) or negative emotions (such as anger), and those too are worthy of note.



Why we drink Ayahuasca

“You are drinking Ayahuasca so that you too can work on your bodies.” — Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

In the days of the *merayas*, the ancient shamans, patients did not drink Ayahuasca, only shamans did. Their patients would just sit soberly in front of them and receive their healing songs.

So why do *we* drink the medicine today? There are two main reasons.

First, modern shamans give Ayahuasca to their patients so they can see the shaman's work, and in this way, believe in it more easily, which helps them in their process.

But more importantly, we drink Ayahuasca so that we too can work on our bodies and bring our healing even further.

This is an important aspect of working with Ayahuasca: to get the most out of it, **we need to actively participate in our healing.** Drinking the medicine, laying back and watching the visions is not enough.

To get the most out of it, we need to enter ceremony with the right mindset, intentions and questions for Mother Ayahuasca, and to be ready to respond well to what she presents to us.



Spiritually seated

“When I drink Ayahuasca, it's no longer [flesh-and-bone]

Ricardo you see seated here, but a spirit.”

— Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

When we drink Ayahuasca, we become spiritually seated. Though we are still aware of and can use our physical bodies, in that state we are “spirits first”; we function first as our spiritual self.

As spirits, our thoughts work differently: what we think of, happens, and it happens instantly, so **it's important to think good, positive, productive thoughts when drinking the medicine.**

If we think about negative energies, those may immediately appear. Equally, if we think of God, his light or his Angels, those may appear as well.

If we think “this is scary”, we will feel the effects of this fear on our state of being, just like if we think “I am strong” we will feel uplifted (and actually *become* stronger).

Furthermore, what we think of while spiritually seated, we become connected to, as it becomes part of our spiritual history. This gives us an opportunity to connect to the kind of energies we all desire to be connected to, such as peace, light and love.

As spirits, it also becomes easier to communicate with other spirits. This starts with Mother Ayahuasca, but there are many other spirits within her medicine, as well as within the master plants.

Because God is a spirit too, **connecting with God and praying to God is very powerful when you drink the medicine.** As we will see, it is key to your healing.



Different night, different lesson

“Ayahuasca is like university. One day is easier, another day is harder. That’s where the learning is.”

— Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

No two Ayahuasca ceremonies are the same. On one side, the strength and freshness of the medicine can vary, making for a different kind of effect (generally, the fresher the chacruna, the stronger the medicine). On the other, Mother Ayahuasca herself may have different plans and lessons for you on different nights.

Some nights are more difficult, some are easier. Some nights can be filled with peace and beautiful visions, and others can be more challenging. That's where the learning is: if ceremony was always easy, there would be no chance to learn about what you need to leave behind, and how to do it.

In the shamans' terms, if Ayahuasca was always about seeing the beautiful, they would've never learned how to clean a *pasajero's* body.

Given this, it's good to remember that Ayahuasca has your best interest at heart, as she is all light, and to **embrace with equal openness and gratitude the range of lessons she has in store** for you.

PART II: CEREMONY

To treat the medicine with the respect it deserves, we drink Ayahuasca in a ceremonial setting, and to see the visions properly, we drink it at night and in the dark. If we're new to the medicine, we also drink it in the presence of an experienced shaman.

An Ayahuasca ceremony generally has three parts: the set up, the work, and the wind-down.

To begin, every *pasajero*, one by one, goes up to receive and drink their Ayahuasca brew. The shamans then drink too, the lights are turned off and everyone waits in silence for the effect to arrive.

Once the shamans' effect has opened (30 to 45 minutes in), they take turns to sing their opening songs, to connect to their medicines and prepare for the work ahead. After this, the *pasajeros* that have no effect are given a chance to drink an optional second dose, helped by a facilitator.

Here begins the work of the shamans, and facilitators take *pasajeros* to sit in front of their respective shamans for their healing song. The facilitator reads the *pasajero's* intentions quietly to the shaman, and the shaman begins to sing. Once their 8 to 12 minute *ícaro* is done, the *pasajero* is guided back to their mat.

This repeats until every *pasajero* has received their song (or songs, if anyone is also opening or closing a diet).

Once everyone has received their *ícaro*, the ceremony continues in silence until the Maestro announces its closing. This is the wind-down time, and the remaining strength of the medicine should allow for rest.

Once the Maestro closes the ceremony, a candle is lit, and everyone is welcome to stay in the *maloca* for as long as they like,

and to converse quietly, sing or play instruments—always respectfully, as Mother Ayahuasca is still in the room and fellow *pasajeros* might still have a strong effect. Shortly after, the shamans will leave the *maloca*.

More healing: Although you get one personal cleaning *ícaro* per ceremony, you also benefit from the added force of the *ícaros* being sung in the room to other *pasajeros*.

A long ceremony: If you still have a strong effect at the end of ceremony, staying in the *maloca* is safer than going to your tambo. If you want the *mareación* to come to an end faster, eating some simple food (like oats) and drinking water (for example, in an anise tea) can help as well—but only if the effect is not too strong, or it might make you nauseous! A shower will also help “disarm” the strength of the medicine.

Multiple shamans: You will likely rotate through all the shamans during your retreat, depending on your intentions and needs every night. They each have their style and expertise!



Your working dose

“More Ayahuasca, more healing. Less Ayahuasca, less healing.
More Ayahuasca, more visions. Less Ayahuasca, less visions.”

— Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

On one side, it’s true that the more medicine you drink, the more healing you will receive from Ayahuasca. On the other, since you will be doing a lot of your own healing, **it’s important for you to be able to work comfortably during the effect**, and this means

staying centered and able to think with clarity while you are in the second stage of the medicine.

So, generally, you'll want to **drink the most medicine you comfortably can**—*that* is your working dose; you have a good effect, but you can still make decisions. Your working dose also makes it easier for you to understand the visions.

“It is your responsibility to find your working dose, the dose that is good for your mind and your body.”

— Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

You find your working dose through experience. As you sit for your first ceremony, the shaman will give you a cautious intro dose based on your body build. At the end of the night you should have a feel for how that dose was.

If you were underwhelmed or bored, or had too short of an effect or none at all, up your dose a bit the next time. If the effect was overwhelming, too fast or it was generally hard to keep up with Ayahuasca, lower your dose. If it felt just right and you could think clearly, stay calm and converse with Ayahuasca, you found your working dose.

Finding your working dose might take a couple of ceremonies and possibly additional guidance from the shaman at integration.

Once you have your working dose, you have something safe to default to. If you ever want to drink more it'll be a conscious choice, and you'll go in prepared accordingly. Likewise if you want to drink less to rest.

Remember: Take your time when you are handed your cup of Ayahuasca to feel if the amount is right for you and to make any

necessary adjustments, asking for more or pouring some back.

Second dose: If the dose you drank is not enough to produce *any* effects for you, you have the option of drinking a second, smaller dose approximately one hour after the ceremony starts. Always be careful, though, as this can be unpredictable and prolong your effect until very late. In general, finding your reliable working dose and sticking with it is preferred to drinking a second dose.



Mindset

“To drink the medicine we must bring two thoughts, no more: *I’m going to drink Ayahuasca*, and *I’m going to heal*.”

— Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

Mother Ayahuasca wants us to drink her medicine with faith and trust in her. How much she opens her world to us and what she decides to show us is dependent on this.

Remember, you are entering the Mother’s house (or world) when you drink the medicine—if you enter with fear and doubts, or boredom and disinterest, she might feel disrespected and give you a harder time.

So drink with faith: faith that she will get you through the journey, faith that she knows what is best for you, and faith that she can help you. You will be rewarded for it.

“When you drink the medicine with faith, with love, and with affection [for her], she opens; beautifully, she opens. ”

— Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

What’s more, drink with love and affection towards the Mother! Being all light as she is, Ayahuasca (and the spirits of the medicine in general) likes to receive your appreciation and affection, and respond to it with more medicine and beauty.

Try also to enter ceremony without too many ideas on how the night should go. Ultimately, Ayahuasca is in charge of your ceremony, and she will decide what kind of night you need. You can bring questions and personal intentions, but leave expectations outside of the *maloca*.



Drinking

After you’ve received your cup of Ayahuasca and sorted your dose, it’s a good time to speak briefly to Mother Ayahuasca.

Pause for a moment holding your glass and say a few words to her, mentally. For example: “Ayahuasca, I come to you with faith to ask for your help. Please show me what I need to work on and help me work on it.” You could also tell her your goals for the night.

If you want, finish by blowing gently into your glass to put your intention in your medicine (shamans call this a *soplo*), then drink it.

The flavor of the medicine is generally bitter, rich and earthy, with slight variations from batch to batch, and though it is pretty strong at first, it only lasts in the mouth for about two minutes. Out

of respect to the Mother, resist spitting or washing your mouth after drinking.

Before drinking: To prepare your body to receive the medicine well by 8pm, stop eating around 2pm and drinking water around 4pm (drink a good amount at this time!). With your digestive system emptier, and without too much water in your body (which “disarms” Ayahuasca’s strength), your medicine will open more easily and fully.

Menstruation: Ayahuasca does not like menstruation and she can clash with this energy, causing you an unpleasant ceremony. If you are menstruating, let a facilitator know and drink a smaller dose to be safe. You will have to sit by the door in ceremony.



Concentration and the onset

Maintaining concentration in ceremony is important and will make your time in the medicine easier.

First, sit up and **don’t lay back until you feel that at least 80% of the strength of the medicine has passed**—only then should you sit back and rest. If you don’t sit up while the effect is still strong, you might find that your visions get unpleasant and you experience nausea and physical discomfort.

Concentrating once the effect is open and the medicine is at full strength can be difficult. For this reason, you’ll want to work on establishing your concentration before that point, so the peak of strength of the medicine finds you centered and ready to do work.

As soon as you’ve drunk your cup and you’re back at your mat, **start conversing with Ayahuasca, and keep doing so for as long**

as the effect takes to open. Don't stop even as you start feeling the medicine coming on. By keeping your mind focused on your dialogue with Ayahuasca, you'll be able to enter the effect with concentration, and the opening won't take you by surprise.

This conversation is also the perfect occasion for you to establish and reestablish a good relationship with Mother Ayahuasca, to lay out your goals and ask for her help.

An example of how to converse with Ayahuasca: “Mother Ayahuasca, with faith in you I have drank your medicine [once more]. I give you my mind, my body and my soul, Mother, and I ask you to clean me and heal me. Please open a beautiful world for me, an easy world where I can do the work I need to do calmly. Show me your medicinal world. Give me the light of your visions, Mother. Open your medicine for me, and show me what I need to see for my healing and learning. Heal me, Ayahuasca, take out all that's bad in my body and purify me. Clean my body, clean my mind, Mother. I love you and your medicine, Mother, and I am grateful for all you do for me. (...)” Of course, also add what is specific to your personal goals: “Ayahuasca, show me why my back hurts and what is the reason for my respiratory issues”. And if you are about to drink the medicine for the first time, make sure to introduce yourself to the Mother!

In fact, talking to Ayahuasca alone will help your medicine open, as you're connecting with it more. Because of this, we can say that the Ayahuasca effect is not something to wait for, but something to work on opening.

What you should not do is drink your medicine and let your mind wander as you wait for the effect to open. Finding focus later on may not be as easy.

Don't let boredom or impatience stop your conversation with Ayahuasca, and take care also to not "pressure" the medicine to open, as Mother Ayahuasca does not like this.

Pay attention: Before singing to *pasajeros*, the shamans will take turns to sing their solo opening songs. In these, they center and strengthen themselves and their medicines, and they connect further to Ayahuasca, Chacrana and God's energies. Pay close attention to these songs—as their medicine opens more, so will yours.



Focus on your body

“When you drink Ayahuasca, you must focus on your bodies.
(*gestures*) How is my heart? How is my stomach?”

— Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

To figure out what you need to work on, you must place your focus on your own body while in the Ayahuasca effect.

You see spiritual visions with your third eye, so if your third eye is facing your body, you'll see what's in your body, spiritually. That's where your spiritual weight is, and that's what you'll want to pay attention to.

If you also mentally bring your attention to a specific part of your body, say, your heart, you'll again see what's in it, and therefore what might need to be cleaned from it.

If you look out into the room, you'll start to see external visions. External visions are not of interest—they might make you feel confused and lead you to think you need to clean things that are not

actually part of your spiritual weight. Those things might just be floating in the room.

Seeing external energies might also make you accidentally connect to them, and then they *will* become something you need to clean.

So sit in a position in which you'll face your body as much as possible and **keep your focus within throughout the ceremony**, and you will see what's most relevant to your personal process.

As you focus on your body, you can scan its different parts to see how they are—do you see light, or do you see something to clean within?

A tip: If you don't understand something you see, you can always ask the Mother, "Ayahuasca, what is that?".



Healing yourself

“If you see something you don't like, you can clean it yourselves. You don't need to wait for the shaman, and you don't need to know how to sing.”

— Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

Ayahuasca shows you what's in your spiritual weight so you can do something about it: so you can clean it. Aside from the cleaning *ícaro* you'll receive from a shaman, you can work on cleaning your own body as well.

Remember: you are spiritually seated when in the effect, so your thoughts have an amplified effect. What you set out to do, you'll succeed at.

“When drinking the medicine, be curious and work with your mind.” — Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

So if you see something you don't like, and think “I clean it”, clean it you will. If you think “I put medicine on it”, it will leave. If you think “I give it to God”, God will take it.

Furthermore, if you think “I strengthen my body” or “I center my body”, that will happen. The same can work for the mind, the heart, a specific organ, your nervous system, your self-esteem, etc.

You could also connect to good energies, for example thinking: “I connect to God's peace”, “I connect my heart to God's love”. Or you can ask for them: “God, give me your light”.

And you can do multiple-step things too, such as filling your body with light: “God, give me your light”, followed by “I put God's light inside my whole body and connect it well”. This light will also heal you.

These all are things you yourself can do to heal, every time you drink the medicine. They add up!

They're just examples, and you're encouraged to flex your curiosity and creativity as you drink the medicine.

Learn more: Using your mind in ceremony goes beyond healing your body. For example, you could ask God to give you His light and then put it all around your mat. This will serve you as protection.

Beyond working with your mind, you can also work your body with your hands, as **Ayahuasca is in your hands** too. If you feel a

pain or discomfort somewhere, massage that area to release the energies in it. If you feel pressure around your head, rub it. If you see something bad in your body, try to pull it out. Since you're spiritually seated, and effectively a spirit, you can interact with the spirit world in this way.



The power of forgiveness

“No shaman has sung to me—I have healed with pure forgiveness.” — Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

You can do much to heal yourself using your mind, but **the fastest and easiest way to heal yourself is forgiveness.**

Ayahuasca lifts you higher so you are closer to God, and in that closeness your prayer is immensely powerful. Because God says “Ask, and it shall be given”, it's that simple: ask God to forgive you what's in your spiritual weight, and he will take care of it.

If you know of a trauma you want to clean or Ayahuasca shows you one, ask God to forgive you: “God, forgive me my abandonment trauma”, or “God, forgive me my traumas of bullying”.

To make it better yet and heal it fully, participate in the forgiveness as well: “God, forgive me the trauma of abuse that my parents did to me; I forgive them, God, so forgive them too”.

If you have a pain, ask God “God, forgive me my hip pain”. Or ask God to forgive that part of you: “God, forgive my lungs”.

Of course, you can elaborate further. If you have consumed drugs, you can ask God: “God, forgive me all the drugs I've

consumed, forgive me for poisoning my own body in this way and clean my body and mind of them”.

Other examples: “God, forgive me all my anger and take it all out of me”, “God, forgive me all my sexual sins”, “God, forgive me all the bad energies of my ex-partners”, and so on.

The same goes for anything you might see that you don’t like, even if you don’t know what it means. If you see insects, ask God: “God, forgive me this energy” or “God, forgive me the insects I see and take them from me”.

And of course, you can just ask God: “God, forgive my body”.

Asking God for forgiveness ahead of receiving your *ícaro* for the things you want to clean **also makes it easier for the shaman to clean you and allows them to do more for you**. In this way, you get more healing out of your song.

We recommend you enter every ceremony with an idea of two traumas or blocks you’d like to ask for forgiveness for.



Receiving your *ícaro*

“When you’re receiving your *ícaro*, *concentrate*.”

— Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

When you’re called for your *ícaro*, leave your blanket and any lit *mapacho* behind, and bring your bucket with you. A facilitator will lead you to sit on a little mat in front of the shaman’s mat.

The *ícaros* enter your body by exposure to the voice of the shaman, so sit up straight and don’t put anything between you and

the shaman. Keep your bucket to the side, and if you need to use it during your song, lean towards it.

Stay focused on your shaman and song the whole time you are in front of them. Even if other people are receiving their *ícaro* near you, resist looking their way; you don't want the energies being cleaned from them coming your way.

It's best to keep still during your song so as to not distract the shaman, but if you feel like you need to move to the rhythm, do so gently.

And most importantly, work with your shaman by continuing your prayer to God as they are singing. In doing this, you will help them clean you more easily and faster, and you will get more out of your *ícaro*.

An example prayer: "God, please forgive me this trauma, clean it all, God, I want to be free of it, help me, God, I want to be healthy", and so on.

Once your *ícaro* is finished and you're back at your mat, rest and let the *ícaro* work. **It's important from this point on to not think about the energies you've cleaned**, so as to not provoke them to come back. Instead, focus on good things: ask God for his strength, light, love and peace to "fill up" on those good energies, and pray for the future you desire for yourself.



Mapacho and agua de florida

"Mapacho is the friend of Ayahuasca."

— Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

Mapacho (or tobacco) and *agua de florida* (or flowering water) are tools that can help you in ceremony, and along your medicine journey in general. They are medicines as well.

They are both mainly used for protection and self-defense: if you blow *mapacho* or you spray *agua de florida* towards bad energies, they will go away and leave you alone; it is poison to them.

This can be **useful to improve the quality of your visions if you are having unpleasant visions in ceremony**, and to clear a nice space around you.

Because *agua de florida* is a medicinal perfume, its smell can also help you regain calmness in ceremony, as it brings your attention to your senses and body. In fact, rubbing a bit of *agua* on your face and body will also help calm a strong effect.

Mapacho, on the other hand, can intensify your effect, so use it carefully if you already have a strong one.

This is because *mapacho* is *the friend of Ayahuasca*, and smoking it gives strength to your Ayahuasca medicine. For instance, if you smoke it right after you drink, it can help open your effect faster and more fully.

***Mapacho* how to:** Mapacho smoke is not inhaled into the lungs, but only kept in the mouth. Blow *mapacho* around you and on your body to clean a nice space for yourself. To blow *mapacho* on your head, cup your hands on your mouth and face, release the smoke, and brush your whole head with your cupped hands, going up until the crown and continue all the way down to the back of your neck.

***Agua de florida* how to:** You can sprinkle *agua de florida* from your hand, but the shamanic way is to pulverize it. You can do this by taking a bit of *agua* in your mouth and spraying it through your lips, or putting it on your hand, forming an O, and blowing through it.

Etiquette: If you light *mapacho* in ceremony, do it under your blanket, as the flame can be a distraction to the shamans' work and to *pasajeros*.



A strong effect

“It’s good to have a *bomba*—it cleans your spiritual weight quickly and connects you to the root of the spiritual world.”

— Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

A particularly strong Ayahuasca effect is amicably called by shamans a *bomba*, a bomb, and it can come with confusion and disorientation.

Whether you are in *bomba* territory or you just feel like the effect is a bit too much and you are confused, one simple thing you can do is tell yourself: “I have drunk Ayahuasca, I have an Ayahuasca effect, this is normal”. This can be all you need to find your concentration again and avoid fearful thoughts.

Aside from this, remember that at all times you are in Mother Ayahuasca’s hands. **You can ask her: “Ayahuasca, please lower my effect a bit”**. She understands; what matters is that you remember to ask. Similarly, if the visions are happening too fast, you can ask her: “Ayahuasca, please slow down the visions a bit”.

If you feel overall uncentered, this is something to ask God to help you with: “God, please center my mind and my body, and give me your strength.”

A *bomba* doesn’t have to be a bad experience, but it does take strength to navigate well. In fact, a *bomba* can be a very healing

experience, as it will clean your spiritual weight quickly and connect you to the root of the spiritual world. Well connected, you won't even need to drink as much to have a good effect afterwards.

The *bomba* is also educational, as Ayahuasca shows us a different kind of visions at that level; visions not only of our spiritual weight, but also of the world's sins, "the world's spiritual weight".

Because a *bomba* can be highly healing, one might choose to have one intentionally, and it is encouraged to do so. If you want to experience a *bomba*, just let the Maestro know at integration beforehand. This way, he'll know to keep an eye on you throughout the night and send help your way as needed.

Peace of mind: If necessary, a shaman can sing to you to lower your effect as a last resort. A fun fact: the strong effect they clean from you doesn't just disappear into thin air; they take it on top of theirs!



Asking for help

Sober facilitators will be in the room to assist you if you need help. Just say "help", and a facilitator will come to your mat.

If you're having a strong effect, **having someone to exchange a few words with can help you get back to your center** and regain calm—it really works.

Besides talking to you, a facilitator could blow *mapacho* or *agua de florida* on you and your space to open a clean area around you. Your effect and visions should calm down after this, giving you a chance to concentrate again.

They could also take you outside for some fresh air, or make sure that you get your *ícaro* sooner.

You can also ask for help if at any point you need a hand to get to the bathroom, or to find something in the dark, or if you need a new bucket, blanket or toilet paper. Facilitators are there to take care of you so you can focus on your work with the medicine.

Do consider: Stay in the *maloca* as much as possible, especially while the effect is still strong, as it is safer than going outside. In there, you have the protection and care of the shamans.



No effect

“If the medicine doesn’t open, it’s an opportunity to rest.”

— Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

It can happen, and there’s various reasons for it. Here’s some:

You might’ve not drank enough. If it’s not too late in the night, you could consider drinking a small second dose.

The medicine could be less strong tonight. Being naturally produced, the strength of the medicine varies from batch to batch and depends on the quantity and freshness of chacruna.

Ayahuasca could be working in a different way tonight. She decides «where to go» within you every night, and so she could decide what you need this once is a physical experience only.

Or there could be energies blocking you in the room, such as a *pasajera*’s menstruation or someone else’s spiritual weight.

Whichever the reason is for the medicine not opening, see it as an opportunity to rest and don't give in to frustration. Remember that **the medicine is still working in your body**, and that **you will still receive a powerful healing song**. You don't need an effect for that (in fact, you don't even need to drink for the *ícaro* to work).

Share that your effect didn't open at integration and the Maestro will guide you for your next ceremony.



No visions

“Visions don't heal, the liquid does. It's enough to have two or three visions, you don't need more.” — Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

It's also possible that your effect does open but you have none or very few visions.

While Ayahuasca is known for the visions, that's not the focus of her medicine; healing your body is. While the visions might be appealing, they don't heal; it's the liquid that enters your body that heals you.

It's sufficient to have just a few visions, enough to get a response to your question or to inform your cleaning intentions for your next ceremony's *ícaro*. You don't need more to have a perfectly productive and healing ceremony. You also don't need visions to pray.

If you have no visions at all and you think you drank enough of a dose, that's an indicator that you need to keep cleaning your spiritual weight. It could also point out blocks in your third eye.

If despite this you still desire an abundance of visions, consider drinking a higher dose.

PART III: THE DIET

“There is only one solution to live well in this difficult world:
the diet.” — Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

A master plant diet is the process of receiving healing, learnings and spiritual medicine from a particular master plant. It is akin to continuously administering a medicine, day and night.

As you diet a master plant for a period of time, you slowly connect with the spirits of that plant’s medicine. These spirits heal your body and help you work on your healing goals, and they, alongside Ayahuasca, guide your ceremonies. In a short retreat, **a diet can significantly boost your healing.**

Besides your body, the diet also gets connected to your mind and dreams, so it is able to guide your thinking and even communicate with you in dreams.

Dieting connects you to the root of the spiritual world, effectively making you «more spiritual»—that is, more aware of your spiritual self.

As you become more and more spiritual by dieting, you experience improvements all across your life: in your physical and mental health, in your work, in your relationships, in your luck, in your projects, and so on. **Dieting opens your mind and your heart, and with them, your life’s path.** It is the all-in-one solution to living a better life in this world.

Origins: We diet today following the example left in the world by Jesus Christ, who, in fasting for 40 days and 40 nights, dieted to receive God’s Medicine and Power.

Which master plant (or plants) you diet during your retreat will depend on your needs and goals. Some plants are fit for purifying the body and mind of substance abuse. Others are good for removing pains from the body and strengthening it. Others for opening one's heart and connecting to love.

A plant diet is started by drinking a small dose of a preparation made with that plant, and receiving an *ícaro* to «open» the diet, in ceremony. Depending on the plant you're dieting, subsequent doses of the preparation might be necessary to keep strengthening the connection.

To care for this growing connection as it gets established, a few restrictions are observed while dieting: no physical contact, no sex, no alcohol, no salt and sweets, no condiments, no oil, no red meats, and no milk. In stricter diets, no veggies and no fruits.

A diet is «closed» with an *ícaro* as well. This mandatory *ícaro* protects the diet from food, sex, alcohol and other energies, so that you may now resume your normal life without harming the diet and its medicine. This *ícaro* also protects you personally, by covering you in light.

Dieting is also the means by which shamans learn their trade, as there are healing diets and learning diets. Though both healing and learning is present in some degree in both kinds of diet, learning diets are geared towards learning shamanism, and they teach the *ícaros* and how to work with the medicine. They are also stricter and longer, starting at 3 months and going up to a year and more. Nihue Rao is one such master plant diet.

The master plants are also divided in plants and trees, with the latter being stronger and more powerful, but requiring a bit more

time than an 11 or 14 day retreat to connect. Trees also generally teach shamanism and have stricter restrictions.

Important: It is not advised to leave the center once you have opened your diet. If you absolutely need to, notify a facilitator and you will receive a protection song before leaving. And remember to still observe the diet restrictions while out!



To have a diet

“A person who has a diet has light in their heart. This light guides them and protects them wherever they go.”

— Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

Dieting helps you heal and work on your goals while you're going through your retreat, but that's not the end of it. In fact, a **diet is for life.**

Once you have that connection with the medicine spirits, they are with you for the rest of your days, guiding you and taking care of you. The diet now becomes part of your spiritual history; a good energy you now carry in your body.

The diet also brings light in your body, and this light protects you from bad spirits and energies wherever you go, as they don't like light and will refrain from coming near you.

By making good choices and living better, you will even make this light continue to grow after your retreat.

Learn more: The same holds for Ayahuasca: as you drink her medicine,

she becomes part of you, and will continue to guide you, help you and heal you as you navigate life.



Dieting well

“To diet, there are three important points: patience, love, and faith.” — Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

The better you diet, the more you will connect to the medicine and the more you will get out of your diet.

The medicine spirits like to see three qualities in us while dieting: patience, love and faith.

To care for your diet, **put to the side all anger and doubt, and take care to always act and think with kindness and good words.**

If you get angry, or prideful, or mistrusting, you can block your diet. Think of it this way: the medicine spirits are of pure light, so they don't enjoy being around negative attitudes.

If negative emotions or thoughts come when in diet, reject them. As you refuse to react with anger, or mistrust, the diet itself will little by little clear these things from you, making you kinder, humbler, and more centered, and opening your mind—but you have to reject them.

Have faith that your diet will get you where you need to be by the end, and be patient throughout your diet, however long.

Treat others with love and kindness, but also your medicine, expressing your gratitude and appreciation to the diet and to

Ayahuasca for what they do for you, both in ceremony and during the day.

If you make an effort to observe these good behaviors, you will be rewarded with a powerful diet, and your experiences in the medicine will open up more and more.

Aside from this, you can make a diet even stronger by taking further measures on your level of isolation. The minimum is to not touch others (including animals) so as to not get connected to their energies, but you can choose to cut down on conversations altogether. Or you can stay away from social media, or the internet in general, or even books. It is your choice how pure you want to keep your diet, but less influences leads to a stronger diet.

As you put these distractions aside, direct your thoughts instead towards your diet. Spend time with the plant you're dieting if possible. Converse with the diet often, asking it to help you in your healing goals, and in cleaning what you want to clean from your spiritual weight. The more you think about your diet, the more you connect to it.

One more important aspect in diet is to avoid being in direct intense sunlight. Spiritually, your diet starts as a small sapling of the plant you're dieting. As time passes, that sapling grows, but if you expose it to intense sun while it is *tender* it will wilt. So use an umbrella, hat or scarf when walking outside.

***Mapacho* in diet:** Your diet works on cleaning your body at all times, so blow *mapacho* smoke on your body throughout the day to help move things along and keep yourself clear. Smoking *mapacho* also strengthens your connection to the diet.

A good sleep: As you diet to connect to the good energies of the

medicine, the bad energies in the air may come to block your process, especially at night. To sleep well, blow *mapacho* smoke or sprinkle *agua de florida* on your bed and around your space before you sleep.

One more thing: Respect the diet restrictions not only in action, but also in thought. Your diet does not like you to be thinking day in and day out about the next time you will be eating salt or having sex!



Post-diet

When you close your diet, the spiritual medicine you have been dieting begins to «open», connecting better within your body and mind.

To allow this to happen smoothly, **continue observing the diet restrictions a little longer**, and reintroduce foods, beverages and sex in your life little by little, trying one at a time and seeing how you feel.

For a short 11 to 14 day diet, this will mean eating light foods (salads, fruits, vegetables, fish, white meats, nuts...) and refraining from sex for about 7 days. For longer length diets, this period of temperance should also increase.

If you close your diet and the next day you eat heavy foods, have sexual activities and drink alcohol, you will block the medicine you have worked so hard to obtain, and you can experience digestive issues and general discomfort.

PART IV: THE RETREAT

Your healing retreat brings together the elements we've discussed so far—the shamans, the master plant diet and the Ayahuasca medicine—, all in a space where you can focus on your healing day and night.

To make the most of your retreat, it is important to understand how to work with the shamans; that will be the focus of this practical section.



Cleaning intentions

Every ceremony, **you will receive a cleaning *ícaro* to clean 2 to 4 items from your spiritual weight.**

The way to communicate to the shamans what you want to clean is by providing your cleaning intentions. These get translated and read to them right before they sing.

The Maestro and facilitators will assist you in choosing your intentions at the integration conversations, but **it is your task to find within yourself what you want help with, every night**—for you know yourself best! People that get in the habit of thinking about their intentions often are the ones that get the most healing out of their retreat.

Here is an example of a set of intentions for a cleaning song:

clean trauma of sexual abuse at age of 7
clean sadness and anxiety
clean suicidal thoughts
clean the heart

As you see, the clearer your cleaning intentions, the more the shamans can do for you when it's time to receive your *ícaro*.



Choosing your intentions

“In order for us to help you change your lives, we need to know your *true* intentions.”

— Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

For your first ceremony, a facilitator will pick your intentions for you from the form we ask you to fill on arrival. These intentions will be used for your second ceremony as well.

From there on, **we will ask you at integration what you want to clean next**. To find your 2 to 4 cleaning intentions for the next ceremony, turn to the following:

- **Your day-1 intentions.** Keep an eye on the intentions list you filled on arrival and draw items from it as you go.
- **Ayahuasca and the diet.** As you drink the medicine and progress in your diet, Ayahuasca herself will direct your attention towards new intentions you're not thinking of. These take priority!
- **The integration talks.** The Maestro himself, as well as the facilitators, are likely to propose new intentions for you at integration based on your share.
- **Our list of suggestions.** If you're out of ideas, find inspiration in the list of intentions in the *Common intentions* section (coming up).

A tip for your time with Ayahuasca: An easy way to know what you could benefit most from cleaning at any point is asking Ayahuasca every time you drink: “what is the root of my issues?”.



The integration conversation

Integration talks are a chance for you to discuss your ceremony with the Maestro. **The end goal of these conversations is to put together your cleaning intentions for the next ceremony**, so come prepared with ideas. Put simply, the Maestro wants to hear from you the key words: “I need your help with...”.

For him to help you draw your final intentions from your experience, it’s important for you to communicate the following points:

- **Any pains and physical discomfort** you might have experienced during ceremony or the day.
- **Negative emotions and thoughts** such as confusion, anger, fear, doubt, suicidal thoughts, etc...
- **Negative or confusing visions** from ceremony you need help interpreting. This applies to dreams as well. Also mention if you had no visions or the medicine didn’t open.

Note that integration is not the time to share your whole experience, nor to discuss the beautiful parts of your ceremony—those are for you to keep and cherish, or share with other *pasajeros* or facilitators privately.

Here's an example of a good integration share:

“My ceremony was quite confusing and fast, but productive. I had a big headache all night long. Ayahuasca showed me that there is a black sticky substance in my lungs. At the end, I saw a scary black jaguar walking towards me. I also remembered I had a head injury when I was 4 and I would like help with that.”

To which the Maestro might respond:

“Since the effect was too fast, lower your dose a bit tonight. The black mud in your lungs is the residue of drugs, so we need to keep cleaning drugs. The jaguar you saw is your anger, a symptom of the drugs. Since your head also hurt, we'll do a deep cleaning of the head, mind, and emotions (including anger). And we'll clean the trauma of that accident too.”

Between what the *pasajero* brings and what the Maestro interprets, a solid set of intentions comes together for the next ceremony.

And of course... If you don't feel comfortable sharing something at integration, you can talk to a facilitator about your intentions in private instead.

A note on intentions: We differentiate between *personal* and *cleaning* intentions. Personal intentions are what you personally intend to do in your ceremony (for example: “forgive my mother”, “become more grateful”, “learn about love”...). These are between you and Ayahuasca. Cleaning intentions are the intentions that inform your *ícaro*—these are the intentions to share at integration.

Common intentions

To help you get started on your journey, here's a list of common things the shamans can help you with.

- Substances** clean drugs (or a specific drug)
clean pills, medications, anesthesia, antidepressants, etc.
clean alcohol
clean cigarettes

- Traumas** clean sexual trauma
clean physical and/or emotional abuse
clean trauma of birth
clean childhood trauma
clean *susto* (a shock or scare in which the soul exits the body)
clean trauma of accident
clean trauma of bullying
clean trauma of divorce
clean trauma of poverty
clean trauma of death of parent, etc.

- Physical** clean pain in lower back, etc.
clean the digestions
clean the liver, kidneys, throat, eyes, etc.
clean surgery in knee, hip, etc.
clean ear inflammation
clean skin rashes
clean the thyroid
clean a particular disease (e.g. diabetes, cysts, etc.)

- Head and heart** clean within the mind and emotions
clean and open the heart
clean sadness, anger, confusion, fear, etc.
clean suicidal thoughts
clean depression
clean within the memory
clean and open the third eye (and other chakras)
clean symptoms of drugs

clean bad luck

Content clean books
clean movies (e.g. scary)
clean video games
clean pornography
clean internet energies

People clean energies of father, mother, etc.
clean family energies
clean energies of a past partner
clean energies of friends
clean ancestral energies
clean problems with partner, family, etc.

Ucha (sins) clean abortion
clean sexual *ucha*
clean *ucha* of the story of your life (in general)
clean *ucha* of childhood
clean *ucha* of clubbing, drinking, drugs, lying, violence, etc.
clean *ucha* of the world (the world's sins you've connected to, which are "floating" in the air)

Try to add some additional details to these intentions when possible. For example, "clean trauma of accident *at age of 4*" or "clean emotional abuse *from ex-husband*" give a better idea to the shaman of what to sing to.

A last resort: If you don't have a clear direction on your cleaning intentions, you can always request a "general cleaning". The shaman will know to take a pass on a physical, mental and emotional level. For experiencing deep healing, however, we do encourage you to try to get to the root of your issues.

Other good, general intentions that are sure to help you when you're out of ideas are cleaning *ucha* of the world, *ucha* of the story of your life, and the energies of your parents and family.

Some of these intentions will require more than one song. For heavy drug users, for example, it is recommended to get 4 songs with that intention. If you're wondering about a specific case, ask at integration.



Flowering baths

A nice compliment to your retreat are *baños de florecimiento* or flowering baths. These are made with a variety of fragrant, medicinal plants crushed and infused in water.

As you bathe (shower, really) yourself with this macerated mix, you wear the energy of the plants in it, which both helps keep your body clean in diet in the way that *mapacho* smoke does, and protects you from bad energies. It's particularly useful on ceremony days (and on hot jungle days too!).

To take a flowering bath, take a bucket of the *baño* and bring it to a shower stall. Grab a handful of plants from it at a time and rub them well all over your skin. At the end, pour the liquid over your body to wash off the plant bits, and let it dry naturally on you.

Remember to shower before taking the flower bath, and not after, so as to not wash it off; keep the smell on as you go into ceremony.

Flowering baths also help you attract luck and love!

For your journey: If you enjoy these flower baths, a similar plant mix is sold in perfume form. This perfume protects you in your daily life and helps you attract love, luck and fortune.

PART V: LIFE WITH THE MEDICINE

The Path of the Light

“There are two paths: the Path of the Light, and the path of the darkness.” — Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

In showing you and teaching you about your spiritual weight and about the effects of your choices and ways of living, the medicine essentially offers you a choice: do you wish to keep what you see, or do you want to leave it behind and live better?

In other words, the medicine offers you help in redirecting your life and aligning yourself more and more with the Path of the Light. If you want to live healthier, you must accept that, and not resist it.

The Path of the Light is the path of connecting with the good, white, medicine spirits, and it leads you to happiness and health. These medicine spirits help you live an all-around better life: they guide you to make better decisions, they protect you and care for you, and ensure your good health. Medicine spirits work the energies of light, peace, love, joy, laughter, and so on—all energies of God.

The more you connect with the good spirits, the more your mind and heart open, and the more your spiritual knowledge and experience expand. You feel whole, you have purpose and you live well in all aspects of your life.

And as you gather medicine experiences, it becomes easier for you to establish your faith in God, which in turn is key to truly and fully walking the Path of the Light.

The path of the darkness, on the other side, is the path that connects you with the black spirits. Unlike the medicine spirits, they lead you to your downfall, pushing you to cultivate vices, corruption and inappropriate behaviors in your life. They work anger, envy, untruthfulness, evil, and so on.

These behaviors have the opposite effect of opening you more: they block you more and more, until you become spiritually weighed down and your paths close.

By seeing the qualities of both good and bad energies in your Ayahuasca ceremonies and how they affect you and others, you become better equipped to make choices and understand their effects; you can see the paths a little clearer. The more you drink and diet, the more you'll learn.

Though the generosity of the medicine spirits is infinite in helping you align with the light, they do draw one clear line as to what they expect from you. And that line is: **once you have medicine, no more drugs**. Put simply, the medicine spirits are not willing to live alongside those energies.

Drugs block your mind, your mental psychology, your memory, your emotions, your five senses and your third eye. They contaminate your body, leaving a residue that spiritually looks like rubber, insects, worms, death spirits and other bad energies. And with them, they bring in a variety of symptoms: anger, resentment, doubt, paranoia, mistrust, confusion, suicidal thoughts, low self-esteem, etc. They also essentially make you a magnet for bad energies.

If you have consumed drugs in the past, the medicine can help you clean all of this completely, erasing them and their symptoms

entirely from your body and mind. But the medicine has one ask: never again.

If you do consume drugs once you have medicine, that medicine will not only become blocked, but it will become *shitana*, or bad energies, blocking you more and actually adding to your spiritual weight. That can bring confusion, anger, doubt and a variety of other negative symptoms.

For this reason, walking the Path of the Light with the medicine, when it applies, begins with cleaning all drugs from one's body and saying farewell to them, for good.



Caring for your medicine

“We must love and have appreciation for the medicine we have, as it is what will help us live better—in our work, in our relationships, in everything that we do.”

— Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

Aside from what we've seen in the previous chapter, there are a few guidelines we can observe to care for our medicine, that is, for the Ayahuasca we have drunk and the diets we have completed. Remember; both of these stay with you, and so they can keep helping you, if you help them.

Caring for your medicine starts with **following the guidance the plants have given you**. In incorporating their advice into your life and not going back to old habits, you show appreciation to the medicine spirits you have with you and make your medicine take root.

Caring for your medicine continues with caring for yourself. As you diet, your body essentially becomes a home to medicine spirits and good energies. To make it a pleasant one for them, you must consider what you put in it.

The general direction for this is simple: **avoid heavy foods**. Within this, there's a few known specifics.

First, **the medicine absolutely does not like pork**. In fact, a history of heavy pork eating is a common cause of not having visions in the Ayahuasca effect. Eating pork after you have dieted and drank Ayahuasca effectively wipes all your medicine, so if you want to take care of your medicine, avoid it for good.

The medicine also does not like cow products, so try to minimize these. Reduce cow cheese, milk and butter intake to a few times a month, and choose lighter white meats over beef.

Last, the medicine spirits do not like hard alcohols (wine, beer, cider and the like are fine) and intense spicyness.

If you follow these guidelines, you'll give your medicines and their spirits an environment where they can enjoy living and working in your favor—this is what it means to appreciate and love your medicine.

The longer your diet, the more important it is to adhere to these guidelines. If you diet for longer than 3 months, they are crucial to keeping your diets centered and working properly.

Aside from these restrictions, you can actively maintain and nourish your medicines further by using *mapacho*.

For instance, **smoking two *mapachos* per month will continue to strengthen your connection to the medicine**, even after drinking Ayahuasca and closing your diet.

If you do eat something that the medicine does not like, swallowing *mapacho* smoke (that is, into your stomach) eight times can help clear it from your body quickly.

Smoking *mapacho* also strengthens your body, mind, soul and spirit, which helps raise your self-esteem and self-confidence. It is a powerful ally in your medicine journey.



Learning the medicine

“Dieting to learn the medicine is like sowing a plant. It is hard, but at the end it gives its fruits for you to reap.”

— Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

Learning the medicine and the shamanic trade to help others is done by dieting plants and trees for extended periods of time. These diets are more rigorous than healing diets, leaving out all strong flavors and requiring better isolation.

When you diet to learn the medicine, the spirits of the medicine teach you not only the *ícaros*, but also all the spiritual knowledge you’ll need to heal and guide others on their own medicine journey.

Dieting, along with drinking Ayahuasca, helps you slowly piece together more and more of God’s grand cosmic vision, and to understand how you can work within it to help and heal others: What do people even need help with? What does it even mean to help?

Building this vast body of knowledge, the shaman is a scientist, a doctor and a physician. But also a philosopher, and a theologian. They’re an astronomist. But also a historian. And so on.

Different plants focus on teaching different aspects or “portions” of the medicine. Some teach how to clean particular energies. Others teach protection and defense, an important skill in this trade. Others will even teach how to give shamanic massages. And then some are vast generalists.

The main way to work the medicine you diet is singing *ícaros*, and so the more you diet, the stronger your *ícaros* will be, and the more things your medicine will be able to do.

Becoming a shaman goes beyond learning a new trade and job, though. To be able to help others, you must first be clean and healthy yourself, so your learning and your healing tend to happen in parallel. As you diet, your mind and heart open more and more, and the diet orders your life all-around—then you are ready to help.

Learning the medicine also goes beyond learning *ícaros* to work Ayahuasca ceremonies; it makes you a light in the world, in whatever way you need to be. Your diet and its spirits will support you and guide you in whatever work you do, whether you are a therapist, a teacher, or work preparing plant remedies.

So how long should you diet for? Well, shamans say dieting is for life, and so you’re only really done dieting when you’re done roaming the Earth. The medicine is infinite, after all; there is always more medicine you can learn.

To begin on this path, 6 months of learning diet, if done well, will make you a *sacha curandero*, an apprentice healer. It will take a year long diet with one or multiple plants to make you a *curandero* or shaman. At that point you’ll be a “baby maestro”.

Once you have a year of diet (which can be done continuously or broken up in, say, four three-month diets), you’ll be well connected to the medicine and to the root of the spiritual world, so

subsequent diets don't need to be as long. For example, after a year long Ayahuma (a powerful tree) diet, you'll only need to diet something like Shihuahuaco (another tree) for one or two months to connect well with its medicine. The year mark is sort of the graduation into the medicine.

To learn well, you'll want to have a good Maestro guiding you along the way; that is, someone with *at least* 30 years of experience in the medicine world. Guiding someone on their learning journey requires a whole other level of expertise.

Dieting to learn the medicine is not an easy task, so you will also want to make a good, firm decision motivated by a genuine desire to help—the very spirits of the medicine are known to test this motivation. This clear direction will help you get through the challenges the diet will present you.

One more thing: It's worth noting that not only the Amazon has master plants that teach the medicine. God spread medicinal plants all over the Earth, but because many cultures have abandoned their ancestral traditions, they aren't even aware of what their local plants can do. Europe, for example, has about 12 plants that teach shamanism.

ANNEX

The Shipibos and origins of Ayahuasca

So how did someone think of combining ayahuasca vine and chacruna leaves to make what we call Ayahuasca today? A common question with a fascinating answer and wonderful cosmology around it.

This story begins in times of the Incas. At that time, the whole of the Shipibo people amounted to about thirty families, all living in ten houses in the Kumankaya lagoon in the Amazon.

This being the glory days of the Incas, they were very powerful by virtue of their great faith, spiritual knowledge and connection to God, and so they could work a variety of trades in ways we would call miraculous in the present day. For instance, they had the ability to very finely cut big blocks of rock for constructing their houses and buildings, and also engrave them with great detail. Scientists can't figure this one out, but one can see drinking Ayahuasca (and dieting Coca, the medicine of the Incas) how they did it: they had a bird with a long beak, the tip of which could get so hot it melted and cut rock. Crafty.

Being contemporary and in close proximity territorially, the Incas shared with the Shipibos a lot of their trades: hand pottery, textiles and embroidery, jewelry, arts, and even the *kene*, the patterns you see all over the *maloca* mats and that so uniquely identify the Shipibos nowadays. They also shared a lot of their spiritual knowledge and experience, which put the Incas and the Shipibos at a similar level of power.

In these days, though Ayahuasca was not yet known, the concept of dieting medicinal plants to connect to their spirits and acquire spiritual knowledge was already in use. And so it happened that at the time, the *curaca*, the authority of that Shipibo village whose name was Rai Nita, was dieting Noya Rao.

And while dieting Noya Rao, he had a dream with the spirits of this tree saying to him: “Go to such place in the jungle and you’ll find this plant. Go to this other place and you’ll find this other plant. Mix them, cook them, and drink that brew. This is a powerful medicine you can use.” In waking, he did as he was told, finding indeed the plants where the dream indicated, preparing them and drinking the brew. This is how Ayahuasca was first “discovered”.

It is worth noting that the ancestral shamans of those days didn’t diet to learn the medicine as we do today, for a few months or a year, but for five, six or even seven years at a time. In these long diets, they would acquire truly great spiritual knowledge and powers—such as being able to levitate using the airs of Nihue Rao, predict the future, or even go to visit the Sun. These shamans are the *merayas*, advanced doctors in the science of spiritual medicine.

Some time after the discovery of Ayahuasca, the *curaca* of the Shipibo village, again guided by Noya Rao, ordered his people to gather Noya Rao leaves. They had observed that when the fruits of this tree fell in the river and fish ate them, they would fly (and hence the name: *noya* means to fly, *rao* medicine). So they gathered a few canoes full of Noya Rao leaves, crushed them, and laid them all around the perimeter of the village, encircling it completely.

With this, the entire village —people, houses, ground and all—elevated into the air, all without making any rumbling sounds, and began to cruise across the sky hovering about two hundred meters

above the ground, until it landed in Contamana, on the Ucayali river. The Shipibos played drums and flutes during this whole passage.

This moment is known as the enchantment of the Shipibos. The age those people had at that time, that same age they have now; they do not die. They also cannot be found or told apart unless they want to be, despite them still going out among people to get their provisions and goods. They have layers upon layers of spiritual protections to ensure this.

This moment was also the enchantment of the Noya Rao tree, for which reason it can no longer be found physically—you might be able to see a glimpse of it from afar, but you won't be able to find it. Rai Nita and Corin Bari, his wife, along with the people in that village, are spirits and owners of the Nihue and Noya Rao trees.

Because of this enchantment, Noya Rao cannot actually be dieted anymore. One can, however, connect with it spiritually, and therefore also see it in Ayahuasca ceremonies. It's common to diet Nihue Rao, which does still exist physically, and connect with Noya Rao through that same diet.

The Incas also became enchanted at the time of the enchantment of the Shipibos, and they too are immortal. Unlike the enchanted Shipibos, which are mostly found in the spiritual Cumancaya and in the jungle (these are the *chaikuni*), the enchanted Incas live in underground cities made of gold, which one can see dieting Coca. They too have extensive spiritual protections and cannot be found or distinguished when out and about.

That is, unless you match their seven year diets...

God's Medicine and the Oración diet

We've talked about plant medicines and diets, but there is one more diet that is very worthy of mention: the Oración diet, the diet of God's Medicine.

In short, **the Oración diet is a passage into a better life**, and the ultimate protection you could have.

This diet goes beyond one plant and medicine. Since God created all the medicinal plants, **dieting to connect to God's Medicine is like dieting *all* the plants**, as it “contains” them all.

And not just to God's Medicine; the Oración diet also connects one to God's light, love and peace, and to his power, strength, wisdom and intelligence. It connects one to the spirits of God's Angels, Virgins, Armies and the Holy Spirit, and to God's Paradise and Divine Celestial Science—all elements from the Cosmos.

The diet also teaches shamanism if one wishes to learn, and gives them great power and knowledge of the spiritual medicine.

And as one connects to God's energies, **the diet cleans a person's entire spiritual load** and heals them extensively. It is such a powerful diet, we call plant diets weak in comparison.

Despite the vastness of this diet's benefits, it actually is far less strict than a plant diet. First, Oración is a social diet: you can diet it going about your life, working and even touching people.

The food restrictions are just six: no beef or pork, no cow milk, no spicy (no “hot”, including black pepper), no raw fish and no alcohol.

Chicken, turkey, goat, game meats, etc, are fine. Condiments are fine. All vegetables and fruits are fine. Salt and sweets are fine.

Because cow milk is out, so is cow cheese, but alternatives such as goat or sheep cheese are fine.

And last, no sexual activities.

To properly connect to God's energies, a year long diet is needed. The minimum length to diet is 6 months, but the full year is highly recommended (which can be split over two 6 month diets if desired).

Unlike plant diets, one does not need to drink any preparation to start an Oración diet; the opening of the diet is done purely with *ícaros*: four *ícaros* over four ceremonies to open the year-long diet, and half of that to open the half-year diet.

It is worth noting that, though Oración translates to "Prayer", the name does not mean to imply that the dieter is to be praying at all times.

The Oración diet is a fairly new diet in the shamanic tradition, as the shamans slowly opened the necessary connections to God in the last few generations. In fact, it takes a shaman that is very well connected to God to open Oración diets for others.

“At Nihue Rao Centro Espiritual,
in this very maloca, is where *the heart of*
Ayahuasca is, where *the heart of the*
medicine is.”

— Maestro Ricardo Amaringo

