

Conscious social club Holistika seeks to provide connection and healing

By Elaine Borden Chandler



Photo Elaine Borden Chandler

Ash Lew, Holistika's founder, seated in its studio space with her pug Pucci.

The idea for Holistika came to Ash Lew during a session of psychedelic healing. "It was a message that this is what I need to do," she said with steady confidence while sitting in the club's peaceful white studio. Lew, a soignée woman with a gentle voice, started searching for emotional connection after recovering from trauma and alcohol addiction left her alienated from her old social circles. She wanted to build a holistic and accepting community, one that wasn't online or through temporary retreats. The only question — how? Her answer: to start her conscious social club, Holistika.

On a practical level, Holistika is a studio in Lafayette that hosts workshops, covering topics from yoga to therapy to cacao ceremony to plant medicine healing, and provides a space to work away from home; as well as networking events, dinners, and coaching for members. On a philosophical level, Lew founded Holistika to be a space where open-minded people could socialize, work, and heal.

Several years ago, Lew was a successful real estate agent but struggled with alcoholism and dating addicts. Unfulfilled and tired of her old patterns, she took a six-month life coach program and realized she was trying to recreate the love she didn't receive in her childhood. "I'm coming from two lineages where little access to the heart was allowed," said Lew, "I grew up in a perfectionist, emotionally unavailable, Asian culture family household on my paternal side. The maternal side of my family suffers

from depression and various addictions."

Just as the program ended and Lew was learning how to confront her problems, her mother passed away after suffering from alcoholism for many years. Lew decided it was time for change. She ended both her toxic relationship and her career in real estate, ended her alcoholic pattern through starting guided psilocybin microdosing, moved to Lafayette, and completed her transition to a new life by turning down a large, risky business opportunity. "I had the chance to invest with a bunch of Burning Man guys that are big in the city," said Lew, clearly a bit amused by this bombastic detail from her past. "My ego was so excited, but it was far too much of an investment with zero control. And the medicine was like, no, you're done with that, you are to provide a nurturing, loving, feminine space."

Following this directive, she started planning a conscious social club. Holistika opened in the old brick building on the corner of Mt. Diablo and Brown Ave on March 8 — the anniversary of her grandmother and great-grandmother's passing.

Many of the workshops that Holistika offers focus on embracing spiritual and psychological growth. Different types of yoga, breathwork, cacao ceremony, and sound baths classes are intended to positively affect participants' mental states. There are also workshops for different therapy models such as internal family systems, a therapeutic model where each person has different sub-personalities inside them, or Family Constel-

lations, a spiritual form of family therapy that deals with generational trauma.

Holistika is also the first brick-and-mortar location to offer psychedelic healing in Lafayette. They cannot legally sell psilocybin or other plant medicines, but instead provide guidance to clients who bring their own. Lew finds plant medicine to be particularly useful when emotional problems are unaffected by other forms of therapy or pharmaceuticals, or when ego stands in the way. "I can talk to you until you're blue in the face. I can coach you all day long. You can go to therapy. You can do all these things but until you are able to drop into your body and rewire your neural pathways — the problem just propels you."

Some studies, including from UC San Francisco and Washington University School of Medicine, have suggested that psilocybin can positively heighten neural connectivity. Psychedelics are currently illegal in California, however increasing interest in their potential medical benefits has created four recent attempts to legalize therapeutic use for psychedelics. San Francisco, Berkeley, Oakland, and Santa Cruz have voted to de-prioritize enforcement and punishment for psilocybin, effectively decriminalizing it.

Lew wants Holistika to be an open space where anyone who wants to engage in healing and communion can find a place. She started the Cheung Graham Foundation to give financial assistance for workshops and therapies, feeling that the people who often need them the most are the ones who can't afford them.

She has also learned in these first months of business to support herself by reaching out for support and giving up control. She looks forward to having others guide and develop Holistika's community, but she also tries to stay in the moment. "I'm in this space of figuring this out and wherever this takes us," Lew smiled, "I'm completely open to it."



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