

Meet Your Happy Chemicals

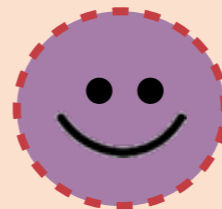
Dopamine



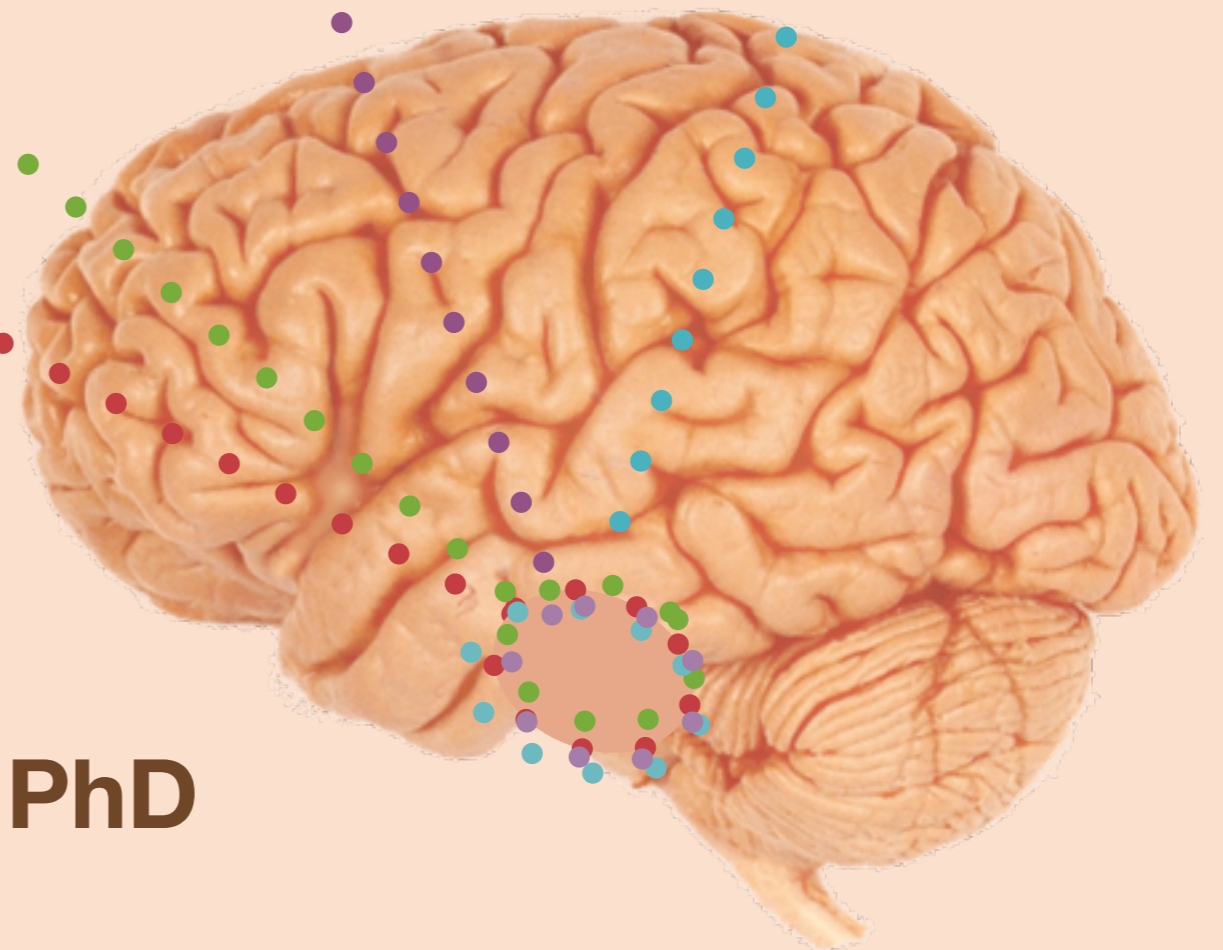
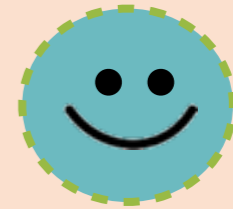
Serotonin



Oxytocin



Endorphin



Loretta Graziano Breuning, PhD

When your brain releases
one of these chemicals,
you feel good.

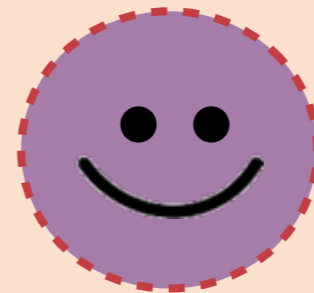
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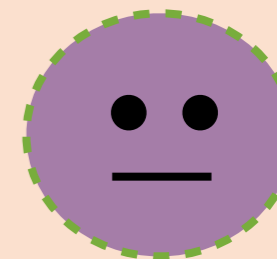
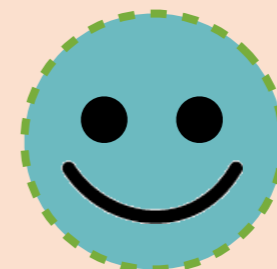
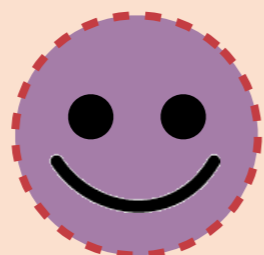
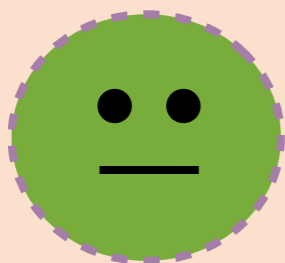
It would be nice if
they surged all the time.





But they don't
work that way.

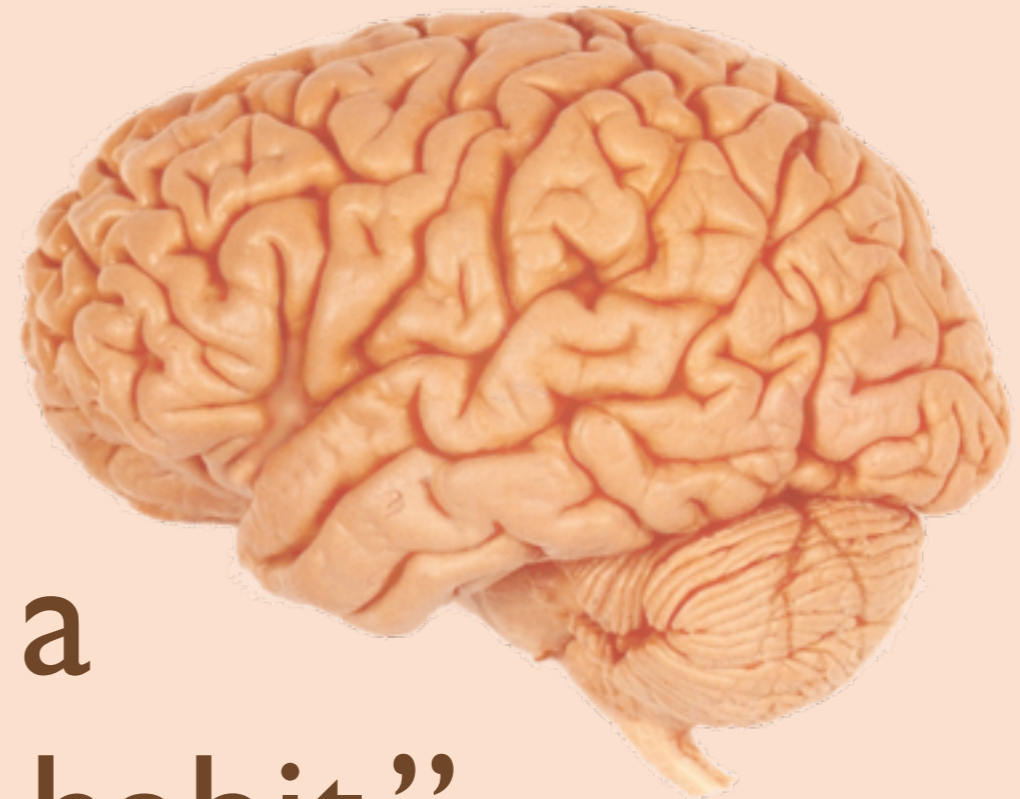
Each happy chemical has a special job to
do, and it turns off when the job is done.



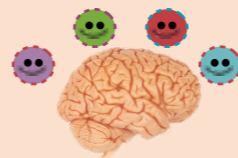
That's why we're
always looking for
ways to turn on our
happy chemicals.



When we find something
that works,
we repeat it.



The brain builds a
“happy-chemical habit.”



Many happy habits have negative side effects.



Unhappiness results.

Your brain may react by trying harder to trigger happy chemicals in the same old ways.



A bad loop...



For example:

*I bet you can think of
ten examples in ten seconds*

We each struggle to manage a brain that seeks happy chemicals in the ways it learned from past experience.



The GOOD NEWS IS...



You can escape this loop.



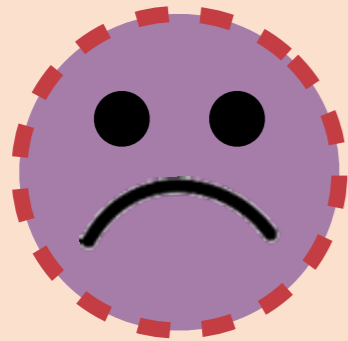
You can build a new happy habit to substitute for an old one.



You can do it in 45 days.



The BAD NEWS IS...



It's hard.



It won't feel good for 45 days.
It may even feel like your survival
is threatened because your brain
equates old happy habits with survival.



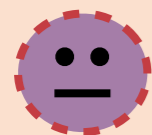
It's easier when you know how your brain works



This presentation has 3 brain-savvy tips to help build new happy habits with fewer negative side effects.



When this presentation is over, choose one old happy habit you'd like to replace with a new one.

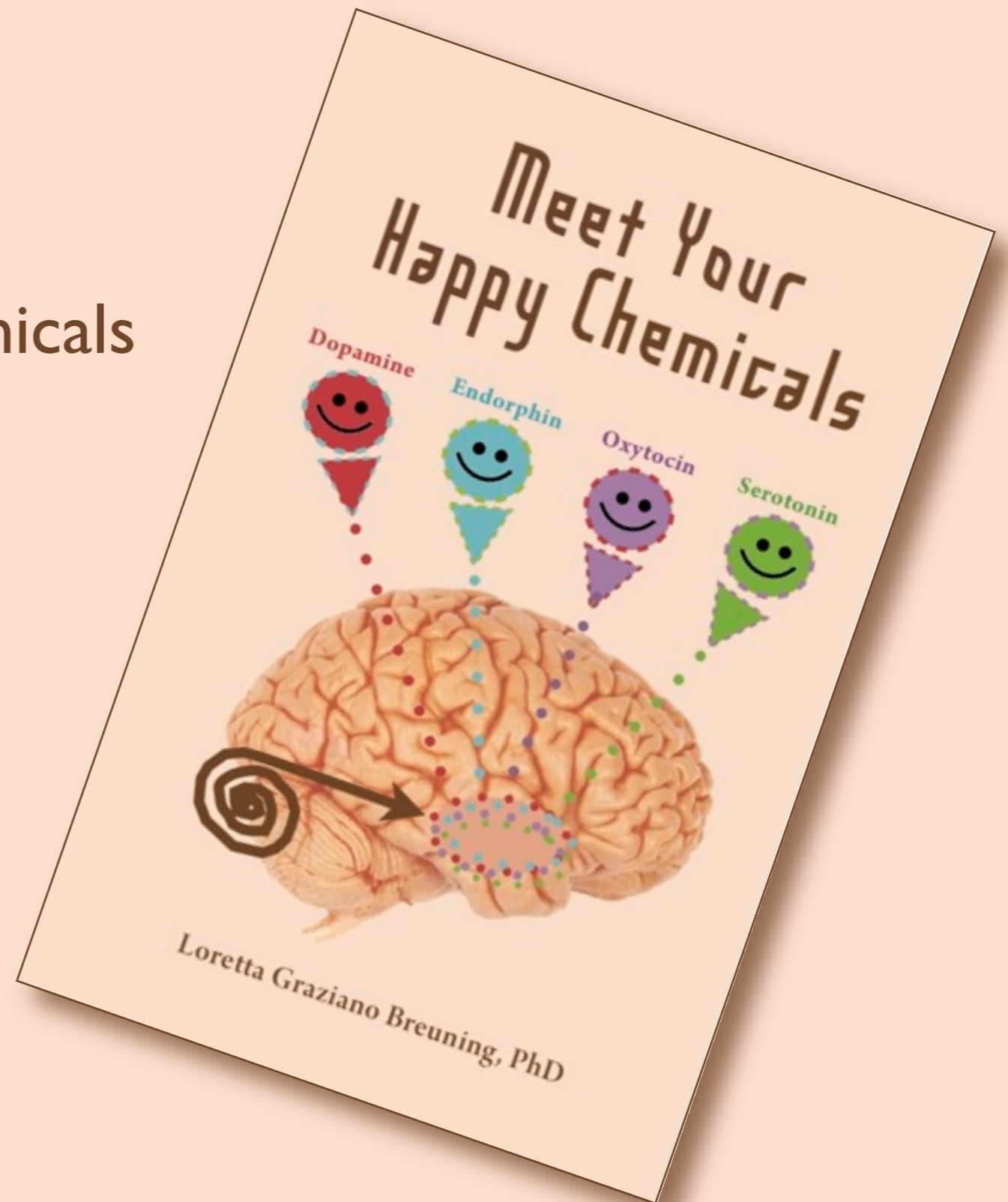


Plan in detail how you will activate a new behavior for 45 days while your brain is re-wiring itself.

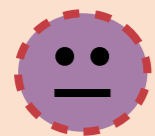


All the information here is elaborated in my new book, Meet Your Happy Chemicals

\$9.⁹⁹ on Amazon
\$2.⁹⁹ on Kindle



3 tips for easier rewiring



1. Don't judge yourself for 45 days.



2. Make peace with your unhappy chemicals.



3. Choose your new happy habit wisely.



Tip #1

Don't judge yourself for 45 days



Your brain needs 45 days of repetition for a new habit to start feeling normal.



Accept bad feelings for those first 44 days instead of letting them change your course.



Don't expand the bad feelings by judging yourself. Your brain is a complex contraption.



Examples



Jane starts eating healthy after years of compulsive snacking. But she doesn't feel as "great" as she expected. "Maybe this isn't for me," she thinks. She catches herself judging and sticks to her plan. In 45 days, healthy eating feels natural to her.



John stops partying and gets serious about his studies. But he has the impression that everyone else "gets it" faster than he does. He focuses on studying instead of judging, and in 45 days he feels good about his new self despite the frustrations of social comparison.



Mary and Mel stop fighting and build the habit of calm acceptance. They think it feels "phony" when they control their tempers. But instead of judging these awkward feelings, they stick to the plan, and in 45 days, calm acceptance feels great!



Why is our wiring so quirky?

- ! We learn effortlessly in youth, but as you age, new learning requires repetition. Your happy chemicals got wired by things you picked up by accident.
- ! Humans are not born pre-programmed with survival skills. We're born to connect neurons from life experience.
- ! Our earliest experiences make connections that our later knowledge rests on. By age 2, some of your neurons have already died, and others have started networking. By age 7, your network is big enough to rely on. By 21, your neurochemical cake is baked.





Your brain equates old learning with survival, even when you learned something unhealthy.

There's no delete button, but you have the power to build a new circuit by putting your focus elsewhere.

The new circuit must grow big and strong because the old circuit will always be there.

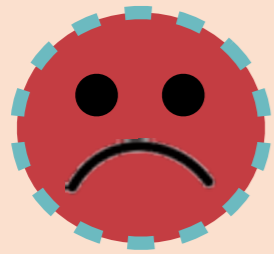


Tip #2

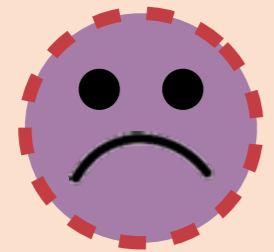
Make peace with unhappy chemicals



Unhappy chemicals are part of your brain's normal operating system.



They alert you to survival threats the way happy chemicals alert you to survival boosts.



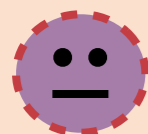
If you run from them, you'll always be running. You can learn to live with them instead.



Why do unhappy chemicals seem to surge when you do things that are good for you?



They were there all along but you were masking them with a happy habit.



Unhappy chemicals are always trying to protect you by finding potential harm and sounding a warning.



They feel bad because that works: it gets your attention.



Examples

a smoker

Joe started smoking because it helped him feel safe in uncomfortable situations. He stopped smoking and his unsafe feelings grew. His brain needs time to build a new safety habit. He tried donuts, but saw the down side. So he tried just noticing his threatened feelings, and reminding himself of his own triumphs. In 45 days, that new habit felt as safe as a cigarette once did, even though the world is not actually safer.

a spender

Shopping made Sue feel important, and as soon as she stuck to her budget, her old unworthy feelings kept creeping up. Manipulating people helped her feel important again, but she realized that has bad side effects too. Instead, Sue started accepting her natural urge for importance, and its inevitable ups and downs. In 45 days, she could face disappointments without self-destructive spending binges.

a workaholic

Frank felt good at work. When he started coming home early, bad feelings took him by surprise. Instead of running back to work, he faced those bad feelings and learned about his fear of conflict. In 45 days, his brain learned that conflict does not kill him, and that his needs will be respected if he respects the needs of others.



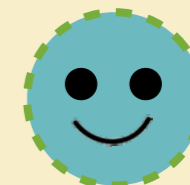
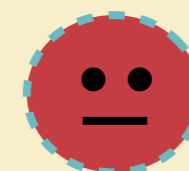
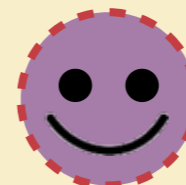
Instead of perceiving unhappy
chemicals as urgent disaster,



you can accept them as natural

blips in the awareness of a mortal

being.



Unhappy chemicals helped our ancestors survive by alerting them to danger quickly.

Unhappy chemicals connect neurons, so you learn about danger. Once something causes you pain, your brain keeps trying to avoid it to protect you.

Unhappy chemicals will always be part of life because danger and disappointment are part of life. Your brain keeps trying to protect you with whatever circuits you happen to have. Give it a break: build some new ones!



Tip #3

Choose your new happy habit wisely

You have 4 happy chemicals to choose from:

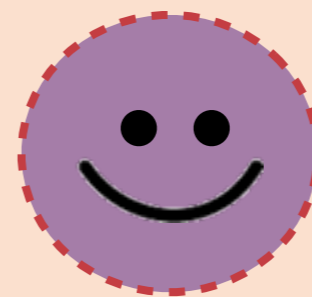
Dopamine



Serotonin



Oxytocin



Endorphin



Your brain wants all of them.

Give yourself a well-balanced happiness diet.

Don't stick to the one you're already good at.

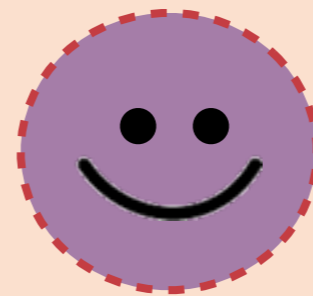
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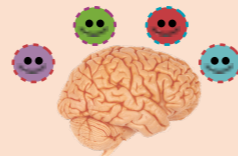


**“Everything I like is illegal,
immoral, or fattening.”**

If something feels good, it promoted survival for your primitive ancestors. Happy chemicals connect neurons and the brain “learns” to get more of things that feel good.



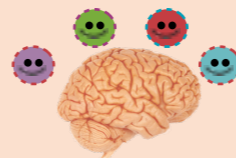
**Too much of a good thing
is often bad. Good and bad
feelings flow at once and
your brain decides which
choice promotes your well-being.**



How can I stimulate happy chemicals without bad consequences?

Knowing the job each happy chemical does makes it easier to find ways to stimulate them without harmful excess.

But it's never "easy."
Happy chemicals were not meant to surge all the time. They turn off when their job is done so they're ready to alert you to the next good thing.



Dopamine

is the great feeling that you will succeed at meeting your needs



Your ancestors felt the joy of dopamine when they found a new berry patch or fishing hole after hungry wandering.

Dopamine connects neurons, so your brain turns on the dopamine the next time you see signs of a berry patch or a fishing hole.








Dopamine turns on when...

- an alcoholic sees a bar
- a wandering eye sees a hot prospect
- a video game player wins points
- a drug user finds a new supply
- a reward falls into your lap

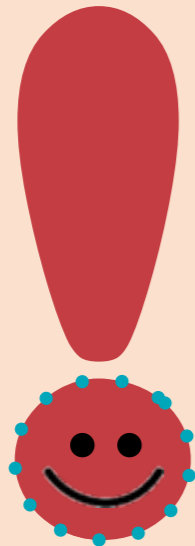


But for good reasons too...

-  when you achieve a long-sought goal
-  when you take a step toward a goal
-  when you see another move toward a goal
-  when your efforts are rewarded
-  when you invest effort and expect it to be rewarded



The “I GOT IT!” feeling



learning to ride a bicycle
finding a parking spot
winning a spelling bee
discovering a new park
doing a crossword puzzle
planning a meal
exploring a new city
playing a musical instrument



Getting a promotion stimulates dopamine.

You can't get a promotion every day, or control whether you ever get one. But working toward a goal with positive expectations stimulates dopamine.

If you **ONLY** focus on getting promoted, your positive expectations will erode. Diversify your dopamine efforts!

Take on a new challenge.

Take small steps toward it every day without fail for 45 days.

Your brain will learn to stimulate dopamine in a new way.

Serotonin

flows when you feel important



This brain we've inherited seeks importance because that promotes survival in the state of nature.

Sometimes people make bad choices to get that nice serotonin feeling.

And sometimes people give up on feeling important. That feels bad too.



You can find healthy ways to feel important.



You can't control the world and the importance it gives you. But you can train your brain to feel confident in your own importance regardless of what others do.

You can appreciate the importance you have instead of focusing on the importance you don't have.

People respect you behind your back.
Imagine that instead of imagining the worst.

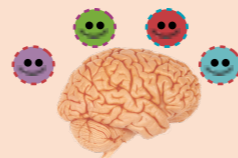


Our brain equates attention with survival because we're born helpless. We build self-reliance over time, but those early circuits are still there.

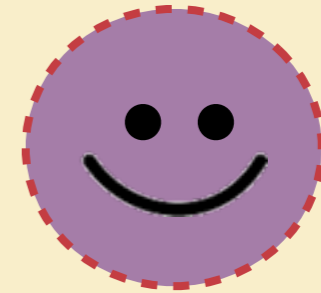
Your survival does not depend on getting attention today, but it feels that way unless you build a new circuit.



The brain keeps seeking importance no matter how much you have, because the serotonin feels good!



Oxytocin is the feeling of trust

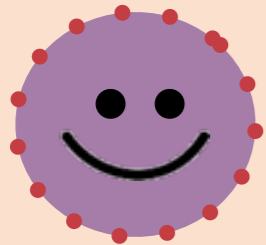


Oxytocin gives you a good feeling when you're with someone you trust.

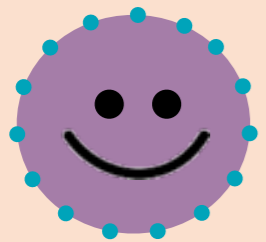
Social trust feels good because social alliances promote survival.

But misplaced trust does not promote survival. Solid trust bonds take time and effort to build.

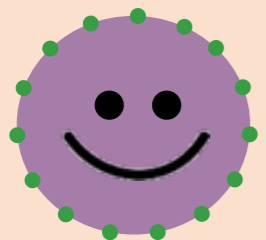




You can stimulate oxytocin by enjoying the trust you have instead of focusing on the trust you don't have.



You can build new trust bonds in small steps over time. Trust builds each time expectations are met.



You can build trust with anyone by making the steps small enough. Negotiate expectations that both parties can meet, and repeat, again and again.



Endorphin

is the brief euphoria
that masks physical pain



Endorphin helped your ancestors get help
when injured.

Real physical distress triggers endorphin.
“Runners high” only happens when you
exceed your limits.



Creating pain to enjoy the endorphin is a **BAD** survival strategy.



Laughing and crying stimulate small bursts of endorphin!!!!

Varying your exercise routine can stimulate endorphin without harmful excess.





Ready for a re-wiring project?



Don't expect to rewire yourself completely overnight.



Choose one healthy way to stimulate your happy chemicals and repeat it for 45 days, no matter what.





Don't judge your results too soon.



Don't run from unhappy chemicals.

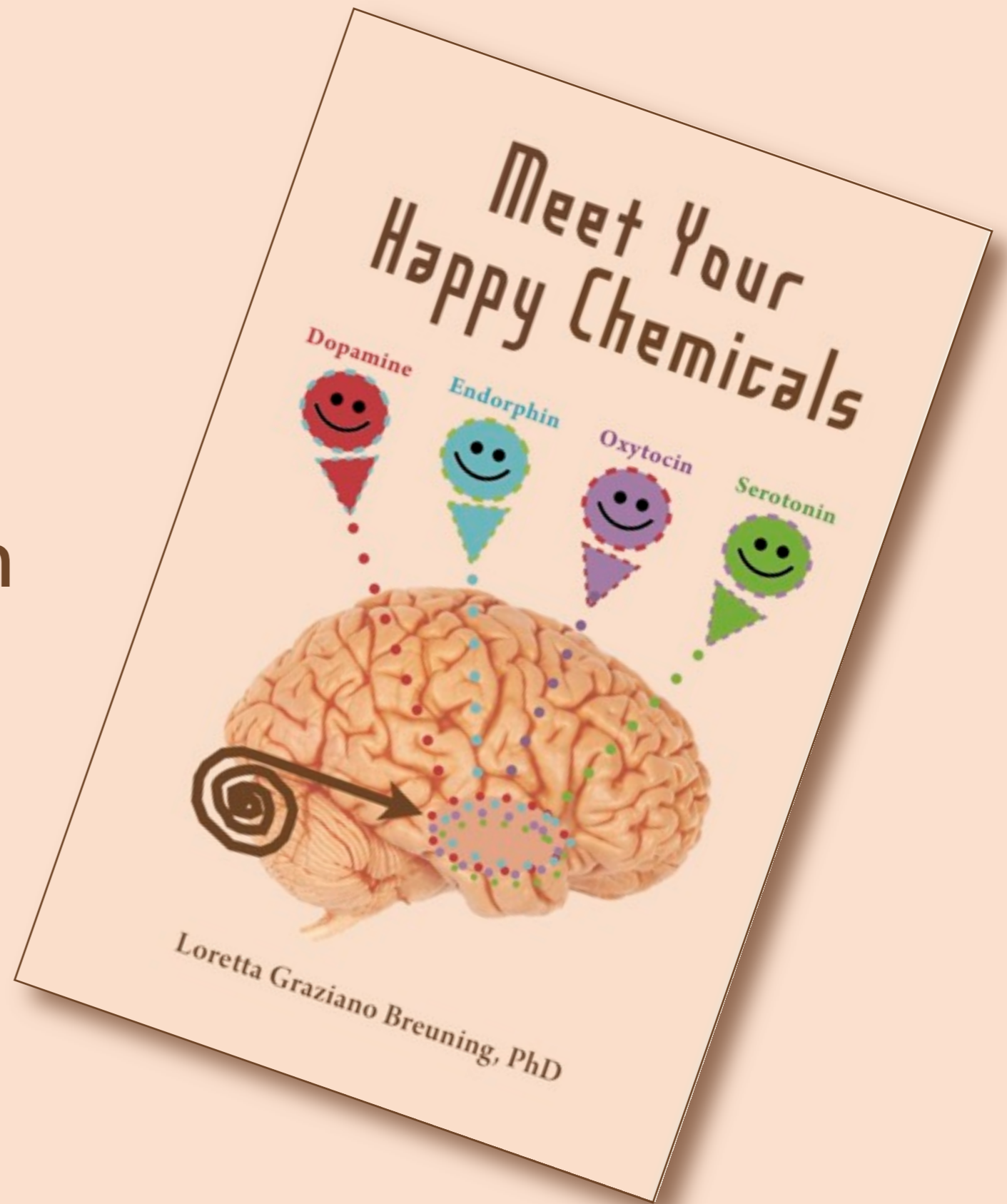


Choose your new habit carefully.

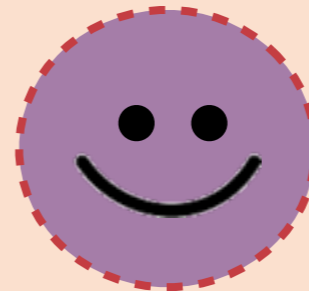


Plenty more on
how to do this
in my book.

\$9.⁹⁹ on Amazon
\$2.⁹⁹ on Kindle



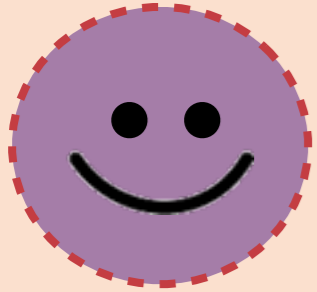
You can eliminate a bad habit
by replacing it with a new habit.
It's the only way.



When one re-wiring project succeeds,
start another.

You will always have more good feelings
to look forward to.





Your brain needs happy chemicals.



They are nature's signal that something is good for your survival.



Anything linked to survival gets your attention, though the brain has a quirky way of defining survival.



You can build a new
happy habit in 45 days *

* But it's hard.

