

## Chemical Free Corner - Dopamine

We all want to feel good. Increasing our level of dopamine in the brain helps us do that.

What is dopamine?

It is one of the more than 100 neurotransmitters in your brain that promotes a sense of well being. Often when we reach for something be it nicotine, caffeine, alcohol, or sugar laden snacks it's because we are looking for a lift in our dopamine levels. The problem is that these substances can trigger a dopamine boost but then set up an addictive cycle that interrupts the natural production of dopamine in our body.

How do I raise my dopamine levels naturally?

There are many ways. (Google it!) Here are just a few you can implement readily:

Deep breathing, this sends a message to the brain to release dopamine for a calming effect  
Accomplishing a task

Learning something new

Playing a sport is great way to release dopamine

Exercising regularly, ideally daily for 20 - 30 minutes

Make sleep a priority. Aim for 7, but ideally 8-9 hours a night

Listen to some good music. Firing up your favorite playlist boosts dopamine!  
Practicing meditation

Focusing on increasing the feel good chemicals in a natural way can make our daily life so much easier.

Although, according to Dr. Anna Lembke, who wrote Dopamine Nation, balance is the key. A relentless pursuit of pleasure can lead to pain. Instead of turning away from unpleasantness we could practice turning toward it, embrace the lesson and reset our brains. Instead of being ruled by the next fix we can learn to manage it.

Getting enough sleep, eating well and getting enough exercise can sometimes be challenging but the payoff is so well worth it. And learning to find a healthy balance between pleasure and pain can have the power to transform our lives.

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