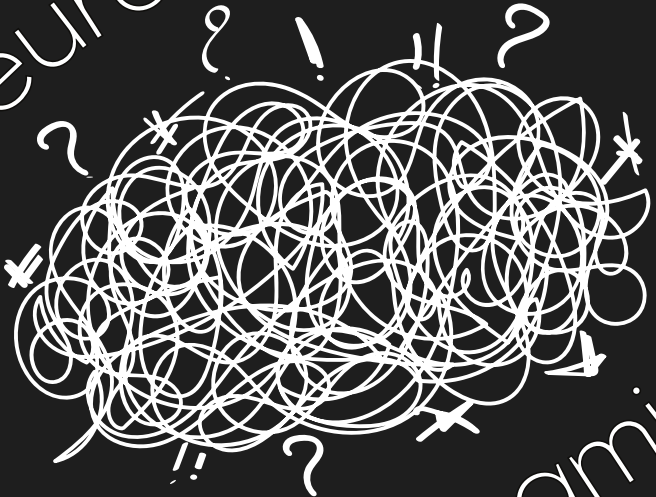


Neurobiology Of Dopamine

A central white scribble, resembling a brain, is surrounded by several question marks, exclamation points, and asterisks, suggesting a state of confusion or inquiry.

Understanding Why You Chase
the Hit (and How to Finally Stop)

*With
Dennis & Becca*

PART I

NEUROBIOLOGY OF DOPAMINE

Understanding Why You Chase the Hit (and How to Finally Stop)

If you've ever felt like your life is just one big loop of chasing comfort, checking your phone without meaning to, opening the fridge when you're not hungry, watching one more video when your brain's already fried—you're not crazy.

You're running a pattern that your brain has trained itself to follow.

And at the core of that pattern is dopamine.



What Dopamine Actually Is (Not What You've Heard)

Most people call dopamine the “pleasure chemical.” But that’s not quite right.

Dopamine isn’t what makes you feel pleasure. It’s what drives you toward pleasure. It’s what makes you chase, check, reach, refresh, scroll, bite, swipe.

It’s the chemical of anticipation — of craving. Not satisfaction.

That’s why you can spend an hour chasing dopamine through your phone and still feel completely empty afterward. Because dopamine promised pleasure — it didn’t actually deliver it.

And that right there? That’s the start of the loop that steals so much of your time, energy, and peace.

How the Loop Forms

Here's how it happens:

- You engage with something that gives you a dopamine spike.
- Maybe it's a scroll. A snack. A like. A new tab. A ping. Whatever.
- Your brain goes, *"That felt good. Let's do it again."*
- It makes a little note: this = reward.
- Next time you feel bored, stressed, tired, or overwhelmed...
- Your brain sends a signal: hey, go do that thing again.

And because it worked once, you do. And because you do, it works again.

Even if just a little. Even if you hate yourself afterward. It worked—because it distracted you, numbed you, gave you a spike of something. So now, the loop's locked in.

That's how behaviors that started out innocent—checking messages, having a sweet, zoning out for a few minutes—turn into compulsions.

Your brain literally wires to expect them. And when they're missing? You feel off. Unsettled. Restless. Irritable. That's not weakness. That's neuroplasticity. Your brain adapting to the feedback it's been given.

Why the Spikes Don't Satisfy Anymore

Let's talk thresholds. Your brain is designed to keep balance—a baseline. When you flood it with dopamine constantly, it adjusts. It starts to go, *"Okay, that's normal now."* So it downregulates dopamine receptors.

This means:

- You need more stimulation to feel the same level of reward
- You get bored more easily
- You feel numb unless something is exciting, novel, fast, or intense

You're not burnt out because your life is so full. You're burnt out because your brain doesn't know how to sit still anymore.

That's why you can't enjoy quiet.

Why doing “*normal things*” doesn't feel good anymore. Why real life feels flat—and only fast, loud, or tasty things register at all. Your dopamine system has been overstimulated. And now, your baseline is wrecked.

How It Hijacks Your Motivation

This is the most painful part. Dopamine doesn't just motivate you to check your phone—it motivates you to do everything. Work. Read. Clean. Move. Connect. Pursue meaningful goals.

So when your system is fried, even simple things—like getting off the couch or starting a project—feel harder than they should. It's not because you're lazy. It's because your brain no longer sees those actions as “*rewarding*.”

They don't spike your dopamine, so you don't feel pulled toward them. Instead, your brain pulls you back toward the known hits—the scroll, the sugar, the shortcut. And unless you interrupt the cycle, it just gets worse.

Addiction vs. Dependency vs. Overuse

Let's be clear. Not everyone is “*addicted*” in the clinical sense. But there's a middle ground between healthy and addicted: dopamine dependency.

That's where you live when you need constant stimulation to feel okay.

- If silence feels uncomfortable
- If you check your phone before you pee in the morning
- If you eat more for emotion than hunger
- If you feel “*off*” when you're not being entertained...

...you're probably in that dependency space.

It's not about judgment. It's about seeing the pattern for what it is.

So What's the Way Out?

Here's the short answer: You stop chasing spikes. And you start rebuilding your baseline.

That's what a dopamine reset does. It doesn't "detox" your body. It stabilizes your brain.

And that takes time.

Patience.

And a few specific shifts:

1. Remove the biggest spikes temporarily.

You don't have to live like a monk forever. But you do need a season of silence—where the major hitters are gone. Social. Processed sugar. Porn. Fast food. Screens first thing in the morning.

Not because they're evil. But because they're too loud for a brain that's trying to remember what quiet feels like.

2. Reintroduce slow, real reward.

You retrain your dopamine system by giving it low, steady doses of satisfaction.

Things like:

- Walking in silence
- Reading something physical
- Creating something with your hands
- Deep work without distraction
- Real, meaningful conversation
- Prayer
- Stillness

They don't spike. But they restore.

3. Give your brain time to rewire.

This isn't about gritting your teeth for a weekend and then binging Monday morning. This is about living inside a new rhythm.

One where you learn to sit in discomfort without reaching for relief. One where you build real joy instead of chasing endless hits.

Dopamine Isn't the Problem

You need dopamine. It's part of how you stay alive. It's not the enemy.

The problem isn't dopamine itself.

It's the unnatural flood of it from everywhere, all the time. The reset isn't about getting rid of dopamine.

It's about giving your system room to come back to center.

So you can actually feel again. So you can choose again.

So your attention belongs to you — and not whatever screen or substance is yelling the loudest.

