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Stimulating dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin and endorphin by learning how they're stimulated in animals

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Happiness comes from four special brain chemicals: dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin and endorphin. These chemicals evolved to do a job, not to flow all the time for no reason. They reward you for behaviors that promote survival in the state of nature. When you understand their respective roles, you can find healthy new ways to stimulate them. Dopamine is your brain's signal that a reward is at hand. The joyful excited feeling is released when you approach something that meets an unmet need. Oxytocin is the good feeling of social trust. It's released when you find the safety of social support. Serotonin is calm confidence in your ability to prevail. Social animals compare themselves to others and release serotonin when they perceive an advantage. We don't admit to this motivation in ourselves though we easily see it in others. Endorphin is an oblivion that masks pain. The good feeling enables an injured mammal to act to save its life. These chemicals are controlled by neural pathways built from past experience. Old neural pathways feel natural and comfortable because they're so efficient. This is why we try to stimulate good feelings in ways that worked before, even when the consequences are unfortunate. It's hard to blaze a new trail through your jungle of neurons. It takes energy and courage. But if you repeat a new behavior consistently, the trail builds. You can turn on your happy chemicals in new ways. But these chemicals are released in short spurts and are soon metabolized. You always have to do more to get more. Our neurochemical operating system evolved to motivate survival behavior. It rewards you for steps toward meeting your needs. We must understand the brain we've inherited to have a sense of well-being.

Biography

Loretta Graziano Breuning has completed her PhD and is Founder of the Inner Mammal Institute and Author of *Habits of a Happy Brain: Retrain Your Brain to Boost Your Serotonin, Dopamine, Oxytocin and Endorphin Levels*. She is Professor of Emerita of Management at California State University, East Bay. As a Teacher and Mom, she was not convinced by prevailing theories of Human Motivation. Then she learned about the brain chemistry we share with earlier mammals and everything made sense. She began creating resources that have helped thousands of people manage their inner mammal. Her work has appeared on *Forbes*, *NPR*, *Fox*, *Time*, *NBC*, *Wall St. Journal*, *Psychology Today*, *Men's Health*, *Dr Oz*, and numerous podcasts and has been translated into Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Arabic, French, and Turkish. Her new podcast is called "The Happy Brain."

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