

Manage your happy brain chemicals with simple new workbook

14 Days to Sustainable Happiness

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You may think happiness comes effortlessly to others and you got left out. But the happy brain chemicals are not designed to flow all the time for no reason. They evolved to do a job, and when you know the job, you can stimulate them more easily.

When you feel good, your brain is releasing dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin, or endorphin. We've inherited these chemicals from earlier mammals, and we control them with brain structures that are basically the same as other mammals (the amygdala, hippocampus, and other structures collectively known as the limbic system). Your mammal brain turns on the happy chemicals when you see a way to promote your survival. But it defines survival in a quirky way, which is why we're all so quirky!

Breuning's new workbook shows how dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin, and endorphin motivate animals to meet their survival needs, and what that means for you today. Then she explains how your chemicals are controlled by neural pathways built from past experience. Old pathways make it easy to repeat behaviors that triggered your chemicals in the past, whether or not it's sustainable. Yikes! It's not easy being a big-brained mammal.

Fortunately, you can build new pathways to stimulate your happy chemicals in more sustainable ways. This workbook provides simple steps for doing that. There is no one recipe for happiness because each brain is wired by its own experience. You can build new wiring if you feed your brain new inputs, repeatedly. You can enjoy happy chemicals by taking steps that meet your needs, as defined by your quirky brain. This workbook helps you discover your old wiring and design new circuits that are just right for you!

Loretta Graziano Breuning, PhD is founder of the Inner Mammal Institute and Professor Emerita of Management at California State University, East Bay. Her many prior books on mammalian brain chemistry have been translated into ten languages and cited in major media. She has helped thousands of enthusiastic fans to make peace with their inner mammal. Visit InnerMammalInstitute.org for book details and many free resources.

This book is not intended as medical advice.

This workbook is a companion to Dr. Breuning's *Habits of a Happy Brain: Retrain your brain to boost your serotonin, dopamine, oxytocin and endorphin levels*, which provides a complete explanation of the underlying science.

Interview Questions

1. What do you mean by “sustainable” happiness?
2. How could a person change so quickly?
3. Why don't our happy brain chemicals flow all the time?
4. Is happiness easier for some people than others?
5. What steps to happiness are you proposing?
6. We hear bad things about dopamine; is there a safe way to stimulate it?
7. We hear that oxytocin is stimulated by hugging; is this a plan for hugging?
8. We often hear about low serotonin, but why does it fall?
9. Why do people repeat behaviors they know are unsustainable?
10. Why haven't we heard this before?

Quotable Quotes from *14 Days to Sustainable Happiness*

- Your mammal brain cannot process language, so your two brains are literally not on speaking terms. Your verbal brain is always trying to guess why your inner mammal turned on a chemical.
- We have two brains because we need both. Do not assume your animal brain is the bad guy. Do not think your human cortex is the bad guy. Each brain has an essential job. Your two brains can work together like a horse and rider. Then you can find good ways to feel good.
- Emotions are nature's GPS. Happy chemicals tell you to move forward toward rewards, and unhappy chemicals tell you to retreat from harm.
- A monkey doesn't understand its nutritional needs, but every monkey learns to feed itself because dopamine makes it feel good. Neurons connect when dopamine flows, which makes it easy to repeat any behavior that felt good before.
- Your brain habituates to the rewards you have. Taping a flower to your nose doesn't make you happy because you soon stop noticing the good smell.
- Your wiring was built from your own early experience. You don't consciously think about your childhood when you activate old pathways, but each brain relies on the wiring it has.
- A baboon escapes a lion by climbing a tree, and that wires it to scan for trees the next time it smells a lion. You are always scanning for whatever relieved your threatened feelings in the past.
- Life in a herd is not all warm and fuzzy. A gazelle is always choosing between the dopamine of greener pastures and the oxytocin of safety in numbers.
- Baboons make careful decisions about whose fur to groom because a baboon that's close enough to touch you is close enough to kill you. Trust comes before touch. Oxytocin is designed to reward real trust. If it flowed all the time, you would trust when you shouldn't trust.