

✓ Week 01 - Build the Menu

Week 02 - Read Your Hunger

Week 03 - Sequence the Meal

Week 04 - Become the Chef

SERIES 02 · DOPAMINE MENU ARCHITECT

WEEK 02

READ YOUR HUNGER

Or: Under-stimulated is not one thing — and ordering the wrong course makes it worse.



BUILDING ON WEEK 01

You built the menu and used it at least once a day. You noticed which courses you reached for and logged a 1-5 rating after each item. Those numbers are about to become useful. Bring them.

Last week you learned to reach for the menu when you felt

under-stimulated. This week we go one layer deeper:

under-stimulated is not a single state. There are at least three distinct flavors of it, and each one responds to a different course.

Ordering an Entrée when your body needs an Appetizer is like eating a heavy meal when what you actually want is a glass of water — technically food, technically fine, but it misses what you actually needed. **This week you learn to read your hunger before you order.**

THE THREE FLAVORS OF UNDER-STIMULATION

FLAVOR ONE



Restless Boredom

"I need to move but I don't know where to go."

YOU'LL NOTICE

- Fidgeting, leg bouncing, can't sit still
- Switching apps every 30 seconds
- Irritability without a clear cause
- Physical tension in shoulders or jaw
- Wanting to do something but nothing sounds right

REACH FOR

- An Appetizer first — always
- Movement is the fastest reset for this state
- High-energy Sides if movement isn't possible
- Entrées only after the body has discharged

FLAVOR TWO



Foggy Flatness

"My brain is running but nothing is loading."

YOU'LL NOTICE

- Staring at the screen without reading it
- Starting sentences and losing the thread
- Everything feels slightly too hard to begin
- Low energy but also can't sleep
- The feeling that time is passing without you

REACH FOR

- A gentle Appetizer — slow stretch or short walk
- Then an Entrée with a clear, defined endpoint
- Avoid Sides — novelty without structure deepens fog
- Hydration and a snack before anything else

FLAVOR THREE



Anxious Overcrowding

"There's too much happening in my head and none of it is real work."

YOU'LL NOTICE

REACH FOR

- A slow Appetizer — stretch, not jumping jacks
- Sides over Entrées — low pressure, absorbing
- Avoid Entrées that require decision-making
- The goal is to quiet the system, not challenge it

- Racing thoughts that don't connect to anything actionable
- Catastrophizing small things
- Scrolling as a way of drowning out your own head
- Avoiding tasks while also feeling guilty about avoiding them
- Hyperawareness of sounds, interruptions, sensations

BEFORE YOU ORDER THIS WEEK – ONE QUESTION FIRST

"What does this feel like in my body right now – restless, foggy, or crowded?"

You don't need a perfect answer. A rough one is enough. *Restless* points to Appetizers. *Foggy* points to a gentle Appetizer then an Entrée. *Crowded* points to a slow Appetizer then a Side. When in doubt, Appetizer first. Movement is almost always the right first response to any flavor of under-stimulation.



1

THE PAUSE

When you notice under-stimulation: stop for ten seconds before opening the menu.

This is new behavior. Before, you noticed the state and went straight to the menu. Now you add a brief pause — enough to ask the one question. *Ten seconds is not a meditation. It's a look inward.* What is this? Restless, foggy, or crowded? You don't need certainty. You need a direction.

🙏 Both feet flat. One breath, slow. Eyes closed if helpful. Ask the question.

🕒 10 seconds

2

THE MATCH

Choose your course based on the flavor — not just the time available.

Time still matters — a five-minute window still means Appetizer. But now you're adding a second filter: **what does this flavor actually need?** Restless with twenty minutes available? Appetizer first, then Entrée. Foggy with twenty minutes? Gentle Appetizer, then a structured Entrée. Crowded with ten minutes? A slow, absorbing Side.

🙏 Check the time. Check the flavor. Match the course. Then open the menu and pick.


 20 seconds

3

THE UPGRADED LOG

Add one word to your log: which flavor was it?

Your log now has three pieces: course, item, 1–5 rating — and now a fourth: the flavor. *Restless. Foggy. Crowded.* Over the week, patterns will emerge. Certain items will consistently score higher for certain flavors. That's your brain giving you data. **We'll use that data in Week 03.**

 Notes app. Date · flavor · course · item · number. Under 90 seconds. Close it.


 90 seconds

4


THE HONEST MISS

If you grabbed the wrong course — log that too. It's not a failure.

You reached for an Entrée when you were restless, and it didn't help. Log it: flavor, wrong course, rating of 2. That entry is one of the most valuable things you can bring to session. *The mismatches teach you more about your own nervous system than the perfect orders do.*

 No self-criticism. Just the facts on the page. Date · flavor · what you tried · how it went.

 90 seconds

 *Knowing the flavor of your under-stimulation is a skill most people never develop — because most people aren't paying close enough attention to their own nervous system to notice there's more than one flavor. You are learning to read your own hunger. That is a form of self-knowledge that compounds over time and belongs entirely to you.*

— Brian Jaeger, MA, CRC, LMHC



This week's reflection (bring it to session)

Which flavor showed up most this week? Were there times of day when one flavor dominated? And did your log reveal any mismatches — moments you ordered the wrong course and noticed it?



The week's target, simply stated

Use the menu daily. Add the flavor word to every log entry. Notice which flavor you live in most. Bring the mismatches — they're the interesting part.

Brian Jaeger, MA, CRC, LMHC · brianjaeger.com

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