

MY SELF-CARE CARDS



The 'Happy Chemicals'



Oxytocin



Dopamine



Serotonin



Endorphins



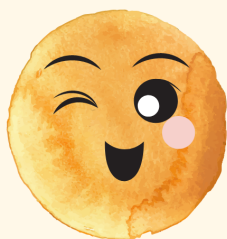
What are they?

Different glands across your body produce chemicals that travel through the bloodstream, acting as messengers and playing a part in helping regulate your mood.

Certain chemicals help promote positive feelings, including happiness, joy, and pleasure.

Four primary chemicals can drive the positive emotions you feel throughout the day, known as 'The Happy Chemicals' dopamine, oxytocin, serotonin, and endorphins.

Dopamine



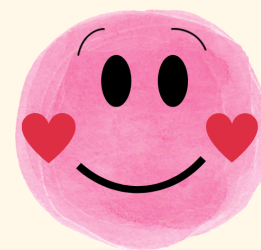
Dopamine

The Reward Chemical

Dopamine is often known as the reward or pleasure chemical,” this chemical is released during activities that are considered pleasurable, such as exercise or eating, rewarding us with a hit of happiness and when we expect a reward. It’s that exciting feeling we get when we are about to be rewarded.

It acts across several brain areas and can affect many functions, such as memory, learning, behavior, and movement.

Oxytocin



Oxytocin

The Love hormone

Oxytocin is the happiness chemical that helps us feel loved and connected to others.

Oxytocin is known as the love chemical as it is released when we have human-to-human contact, such as hugging and kissing,

It is also released when we feel trust. Social trust feels good because social alliances promote survival.

Serotonin



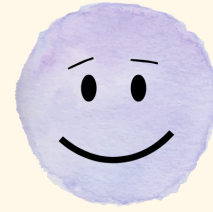
Serotonin

The Mood Stabilizer

Serotonin is one of the critical hormones linked to our emotions and mood. It's associated with satisfaction and optimism and also affects our physical health.

Serotonin flows through the brain when we feel significant within ourselves and others. For example, when we feel confident and take pride in our achievements and work, serotonin flows.

Endorphins



Endorphins

The Pain Killer

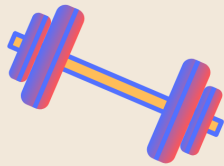
Endorphins are considered natural pain relievers and mood boosters. It's released during laughter, exercise, listening to music, and eating chocolate.

Endorphins act directly on the brain's opioid receptors, reducing pain; when released, endorphins result in an energized, excited feeling.

Additionally, endorphins are released when we feel physical pain to give us a brief moment of excitement as a survival mechanism. Laughing and crying also release small bursts of endorphin.

Dopamine

Exercise



The brains response

Simply getting your heart rate up by engaging in activities such as running, lifting weights, or cycling helps immediately increase your dopamine levels.

How to

Go for a power walk outside, join a local gym, or do some aerobics in your living room.

Numerous studies have found that when people rate their mood before and after exercise, their happiness levels increase. So you can start your journal to track your moods.

Endorphins

Acupuncture



The brains response

There is some evidence that receiving acupuncture can help with raising endorphins. This makes sense if you consider that acupuncture would also stimulate pain receptors.

How to

This is best not practiced at home but rather by a professional. Could you give it a go and rate your mood before and after and see if it positively affects you?

Endorphins Eat Spicy foods



The brains response

Did you know that eating spicy food can raise your endorphins?

When we eat something spicy, the receptors in our mouth and nose react, making us feel like we are under the sun's heat. Your body reacts the same way with pain and sweat, releasing endorphins.

How to

This is an excellent excuse to try out an Indian restaurant or pick a new spicy item off the menu next time you go out to eat.

Endorphins Art



The brains response

Doing something we love to do helps release endorphins, relieve stress, and reduce cortisol levels. Making or observing art is fun, engaging, and creative. In addition, artwork enables you to express yourself when you cannot communicate your desired emotion.

How to

Face painting, drawing, clay, and paint are all great ways to help increase your endorphins.

Endorphins Dance



The brains response

The brain releases endorphins during episodes of physical activity, particularly when our body is moving at a certain level; dancing can be just as physical as exercise but, in some circumstances, much more enjoyable.

How to

Dancing around your house can raise your heart rate and endorphins while limiting those unpleasant feelings.

Endorphins Play



The brains response

As we age, we often forget how fun it was to let go of what we are doing and play again.

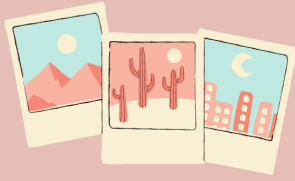
Playing your favorite card game, board game, sports game, or even just being silly with your kids can reduce stress, exercise your brain, boost creativity, strengthen relationships, and even make you feel younger.

How to

Schedule some time in your day to play, call up your friends, and have a game night, or the next time you hear your kids playing, stop what you are doing and join in with them.

Endorphins

Time Travel



The brains response

Take a trip down memory lane and see what photos and old videos you've stashed away.

Reliving your favorite memories can boost your mood and remind you of all the great things and times you have had.

How to

You may have seen a photo or video of a time that made you happy, you could try reinventing that time, or you might want to try and see that person again.

They can remind you of what you used to enjoy before you grew up.

Oxytocin

Connect online



The brains response

Social media can be a great tool to stay connected with friends and family you haven't seen in a long time or with those living far away. Human connection in person and online is part of our human needs that keep us happy.

How to

Go through your friends on social media and reach out to someone you last spoke to a while ago. Tell them about what you have been up to and ask how they are going; rekindle that friendship.

Oxytocin

Use the 'L' word



The brains response

Oxytocin is the love molecule, so loving others is part of your biology. So when you tell people you love them, it raises your oxytocin and connection with others, making you want more.

How to

Tell all the special people in your life that you love them. You can tell them in person, on the phone, in a letter, or via text.

Oxytocin

Hot Bath



The brains response

Increasing temperature and warm touch have been shown to increase oxytocin levels. Therefore you can trick your brain by having a warm bath to improve your mood.

How to

Get an overload of oxytocin by using essential oils in your bath while listening to some relaxing music. You will feel like a different person.

Oxytocin

Play with a pet



The brains response

Connecting with people is great, but did you know that a connection with your pet or a friend's pet can be just as successful in getting your oxytocin levels up? Spending just a short time playing with a pet or animal can make you feel happier.

How to

Play with your pet or ask a friend if you can spend time with their pet. Play ball, go for a walk, or even bathe and groom them. Trust the process; you will feel so much better.

Oxytocin

Share your feelings



The brains response

Sharing your feelings, love, and affection with the people that mean the most to you can help increase oxytocin. When you show affection, it makes you feel good, and you often get a kind reply such as a hug, kiss, or cuddle.

How to

Maybe you have a friend that makes you feel good and special. Perhaps you told that person that you value their friendship and look forward to many more special memories together. Sharing your feelings with people is a great way to boost your connection.

Oxytocin

Be nice



The brains response

Altruistic or selfless behaviors promote the release of oxytocin.

How to

Give someone a random act of kindness. Offer to help your neighbor, give some money to charity, support your favorite cause, or cook a meal for a family member.

Oxytocin

Cuddle



The brains response

Forms of physical intimacy like holding hands, cuddling, and kissing for a short moment have been shown to instantly increase oxytocin levels in the brain.

How to

Eight hugs a day is the magic number. Try to hug a loved one eight times daily and watch your mood and oxytocin levels rise.

Oxytocin

Friends



The brains response

Spending time with friends makes you feel socially supported, connected, and less alone. When you feel isolated and alone, your oxytocin and mood drop.

How to

Could you call your friends and organize to catch up and spend time together? It doesn't have to be a big outing; maybe you want to share a cuppa or go for a walk somewhere, go shopping?

Serotonin

Blessing exercise



The brains response

When we consciously think about everything we are blessed with, it instantly makes us feel good.

When we feel good, our body releases hormones like serotonin.

The appreciation of what we have brings awareness to the present moment and stops us from living somewhere in our stories of the past or the anxiety about the future.

How to

3 Blessings Exercise – a studied practice where you write down three things you are thankful for every night for one week. This practice has been shown to improve overall happiness for up to 6 months!

Serotonin

Remembering



The brains response

Thinking about positive memories allows us not to think about adverse events but can also increase serotonin production. Positive moods increase serotonin levels, while negative attitudes do the opposite.

How to

Could you write down your top 10 happy memories? Alternatively, you could choose your best memory from work, school, friends, parties, Christmas, holidays, time with friends and family, etc...

Serotonin

Set goals



The brains response

When we achieve our goals, we feel happy. It can send a serotonin rush, and we want to reach the next goal. The larger the goal, the higher the amount of serotonin. However, smaller goals can be more manageable and still release serotonin.

How to

Could you write a list of weekly goals, then break them down into daily goals? Achieving smaller goals will help you work towards the bigger ones.

Serotonin New things



The brains response

Trying something new is a great way to increase serotonin. The less familiar you are with the activity, the more likely your brain will release serotonin because you will feel more accomplished.

How to

Try cooking a new recipe, or you can cook something entirely from scratch. Try a new hobby or practice a skill that you have never been able to master.

Serotonin Aromatherapy



The brains response

Aromatherapy with essential oils such as lavender, bergamot, and lemon can help lift your mood. In addition, using your sense of smell can prompt your brain to release serotonin.

How to

Use your essential oils in a diffuser, candles, or sprays. Rub a little on your pillow before bed, and start your diffuser as you wake up to start your day well.

Serotonin Gratitude



The brains response

The emotion of gratitude affects the brain's reward system; gratitude releases serotonin. It also has been linked to increased happiness.

How to

Practice gratitude daily by writing three things that you are grateful for. Remember to be thankful for all things, big and small.

For example, "I am grateful for my legs as they allow me to walk this earth."

Serotonin Massage



The brains response

When getting a massage, serotonin levels increase, and cortisol levels (a stress hormone) decrease. Massage helps to relieve stress hormones and improve serotonin levels which aid in reducing depressive symptoms. Massages can raise serotonin levels by as much as 30%.

How to

Ask your partner, mum, or best friend to rub your shoulders for 15 minutes, invest in a massage roller or even treat yourself to a professional massage.

Serotonin

Laugh



The brains response

It's been proven repeatedly that laughing lessens your stress and anxiety levels and improves your mood. When you laugh, it relaxes your brain's stress response, loosens your muscles, and slows down your heart rate.

How to

Watch a funny movie, read funny jokes, Laugh out loud, and laugh at yourself.

'Fake it till you make it"; even just faking your smile for several minutes can increase your serotonin levels.

Dopamine

Mindfulness



The brains response

A study has found that those who regularly meditate have a 65 percent increase in dopamine levels. Furthermore, dopamine levels are recorded at an optimally healthy range even when we stop meditating. Therefore, meditation ultimately provides a natural high without the crash.

How to

Practice mindfulness by trying to engage in the moment you are doing without letting your mind wander off.

Try grounding techniques, such as deep breathing, to help-center yourself.

Dopamine

Eat chocolate



The brains response

Chocolate contains an essential compound called tyramine, derived from the amino acid tyrosine. Tyrosine is the amino acid precursor to dopamine. Increased tyrosine levels increase dopamine levels, which results in the activation of the reward center in the brain.

How to

Just because chocolate releases dopamine doesn't mean you should fill up on it; a little bit of chocolate now and then will help increase moods, but it won't help maintain them long-term.

Dopamine

Sunlight



The brains response

When you spend time in the sun, and your skin absorbs sunlight and produces vitamin D, that cycle triggers the production of dopamine, meaning that spending time in the sun can help boost your dopamine levels.

How to

This is easy: try walking outside, spending time with friends on picnics, swimming at the lake, river, or beach, walking the dog, or even try reading a book outside for 30 minutes.

Dopamine Diet



The brains response

Protein is a significant building block of amino acids that can help keep your dopamine levels as they should be. Therefore, including protein in your diet helps keep your dopamine levels stable over time.

How to

Include high-protein foods such as cheese, unprocessed meat, yogurt, egg, fish, and milk.

Dopamine Sleep



The brains response

Getting adequate sleep helps your brain keep your dopamine levels where they should be. So to have the best chance of waking up with enough 'dopamine reserve,' make sure you get good quality sleep each night.

How to

Setting up good nighttime self-care can help get good shut-eye. This might include turning off your devices 30 minutes before bedtime, going to bed at the same time each night, using essential oils to help you sleep, or drinking warm water.

Dopamine Music



The brains response

Do you know that feeling when you hear a really good uplifting song and want to sing it repeatedly at the top of your lungs? When you get that feeling, it's because your dopamine levels are rising. However, research has shown that dopamine is released more significantly when we listen to pleasurable music rather than sad or neutral music.

How to

Make a feel-good music playlist with all your favorite uplifting songs.
It's a quick, simple, powerful tool to get a quick 'pick me up'.

Dopamine Small wins



The brains response

Every time we progress or accomplish something, it activates our brain's reward center and releases dopamine. This gives you a sense of pride and keeps you wanting to achieve more.

How to

Could you make a list of all the things you have achieved today? Remember to celebrate the small things. Your list might include making your bed, washing your hair, replying to a text, or getting a small job done around the house.