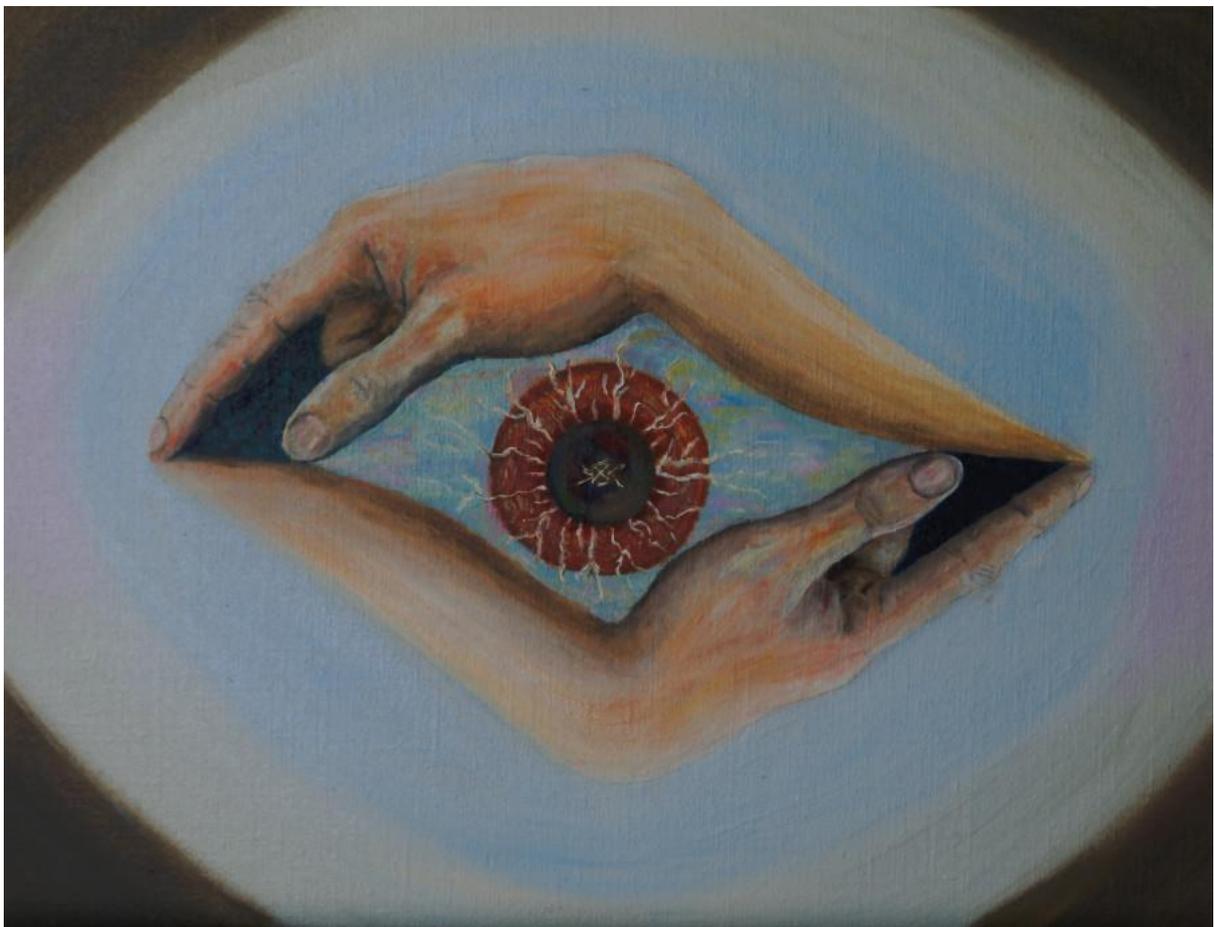


# Summoned or Not

Discover your Mind, Rewire your Brains

## Dopamine Detoxing

Quit Addictions and Learn How to Lead a Fulfilling Life



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# Summoned or Not

There's a quote I've seen pass by a couple of times lately. It says that we're an in between generation. Born too late to explore the earth, yet too early to explore space. This quote misses something important though. We are born right on time for the exploration of our mind.

Neuroscience is set to make major discoveries in the next twenty to thirty years. We have rediscovered ancient knowledge thanks to the likes of Freud, Jung and Erickson. Most importantly though, we now have the internet.

Right now, most of us know very little about what goes on inside our brains. I am the first to admit that I too do not hold all the answers to what makes us tick. I can however give you some very interesting insights and questions.

I'll give you a warning here before you continue. You'll never be able to look at yourself the same way ever again after you're done reading Summoned or Not. You probably won't even be the same person ever again.

So good luck and have fun. We'll be going through some very interesting parts of who you are. Because in summary, this book is about you.

# The Realm of Physicality

Let's start out simple. The physical brain. That thing that's in our heads right? Only it's not really just in your head. Your brain is spread out throughout your entire body. Nerves from your toes all the way up to the top of your head. Your entire nervous system is clearly interlinked and every part works together. It is all one big brain system.

This nervous system intertwines with pretty much everything in your body. Your muscles would be nothing without your brain. They're directly controlled by the same type of electric pulses that make you think or act. There's even a thing called muscle memory. Your muscles remember things. They remember movements amongst other things. I don't know if you could call them a part of your brain, but they're definitely an extension of it. Just look at someone in a wheelchair. Once the neural connection is destroyed, muscles completely lose their function and start to wither away.

How about your organs? Your kidneys for example. Surely those aren't part of your brain right? Well... Did you know your brain can store memories in them? There's documented cases of people receiving organ transplants that altered their behavior. Vegans turning into meat lovers after receiving a foreign organ. People that suddenly had memories they knew couldn't be theirs. Behaviors and memories that after researching turned out to have belonged to their anonymous donors. It's something called cell memory.

I'm pretty sure you'd classify behavior and memory as something your brain does right? Organs seem to be involved in both. So what? Is the entire body part of the brain now? I'm not sure. No one is.

Not to mention the enormous influence your gut has on your behavior. Poor gut flora leads to hormonal issues and can cause severe mental issues such as depression (more on this when we get to the chapter about hormones)

There is no division between your physical body and your psyche. There is no reason to believe that there is something inside us that is somehow completely separate from everything else. Everything is dependent on each other.

So your brain basically is your entire body? Well, this is where the bizarre truly starts. Do you have any special songs? Maybe the one they played at your father's funeral? Maybe during your first kiss? Maybe just a song that is somehow anchored to certain events in your life. A song that triggers emotions every time you listen to it? How about a special place? Maybe a secret spot you used to play as a kid? The place where you first fell in love? How about where you were when the twin towers fell?

There's research that indicates our brains outsource parts of our memories to our environments. Think about it. It's hard to really recall how it felt to be a kid. Yet, when you go

revisit that secret spot of yours, you instantly feel like a kid again. You just feel it. You want to go play in the trees again and build a fortress somewhere.

Same happens with people. Imagine you have a high school reunion. You haven't seen any of your high school friends in 20 years. Yet all of a sudden you're all 15 again. Bob is still the class clown. Daphne and Maria are giggling like school girls again. You automatically re-enter your place in the old high school hierarchy. Everyone will instantly go back into their old patterns and roles. Something you couldn't do if you tried right now.

You may be thinking: "Yeah sure, but that's still the brain in my body doing those things." Is it though? Would you still be able to recall how it felt to be a little kid if your secret spot is destroyed? Could you still act like your 15 year old if all the places and people of those days were gone? Is it possible that your brain truly somehow places these memories outside your body? Does everyone you interact with and everywhere you go somehow become part of your brain? These are honest questions from my end. Nobody knows these things for sure.

So what is our physical brain? Is it that blob in our head that works like a motherboard? Is it the entire nervous system like some sort of CPU? Is it the entire body acting like storage space? Or is it even the world we interact with? Like some sort of external harddrive?

And we're not even going into the implications of plugging ourselves into computers here. For most of us, our cellphones and our computers have become part of our brains. Very curious how that's going to play out for us in the future.

There's another thing that makes it complicated to know what the brain is exactly. There isn't just one brain. There's several systems we can identify that operate quite independently, yet at the same time are all somehow interlinked. You can move your arm quite independently from your breathing. However, these two do influence each other.

The more you study the brain, the more it starts to resemble a patchwork IT system. As we evolved, we just kept adding new parts to our brain. We're now like some flunky computer where some parts use the latest software whereas other parts still run on MS DOS. Our brain even seems to have conversion programs in place that let these different systems communicate with each other (in a sometimes very inefficient way). The ego comes to mind as a great example of such a converter.

The (semi)autonomous way in which these systems function can also lead to conflicts in the brain. Easy example is when your muscular and cardiovascular systems are telling you to stop running, but your conscious mind really wants to finish the race. It gets complex once different thinking systems start disagreeing with each other. Consciously you know that dessert is a bad idea. Yet, you still crave it. There's another thinking system in there that thinks that dessert is a great idea.

Seeing these internal conflicts play out in people is fascinating. Ever seen a woman trying to decide whether to buy those shoes for what seems like an hour? You know she's going to end up buying them anyways (More on this later).

# Conscious Thought

Let's be real though. It's fun to know how your brain is physically wired, but it won't do much for you. It's like with cars. We could be spending 20 chapters on all of how it's built. Or we could talk about how you can best drive and enjoy it. So let's leave the hardware for what it is and focus on your psyche.

It's a disgrace how little people know about themselves. You're about to learn things that almost no one knows. You're going to learn how you actually work and how you can change yourself. On top of that you're about to learn how everyone else and society works. You're about to get a superpower.

So how come we know so little about ourselves? One of the hardest things for us humans is to stare into the mirror and be honest about what we see. There isn't a single person alive that can be objective when it comes to who they are. Objective just isn't our native tongue.

We're built to be judgmental. No one is ever going to describe another person by saying their nose is 5.1 cm long and 2 cm wide. Either it's a big nose, a small nose or a normal nose. All subjective labels. Judgment is our natural way. We think in good and bad, beautiful and ugly, smart and stupid, etc. Keep this in mind whenever you think something doesn't sound rational. We're not rational, we don't always make sense.

In order to ease into the craziness that we're about to face, let's start out with the most objective and rational part of your brain. Your conscious brain. As far as I can tell, it is our newest system. Very few species on this planet seem to have a form of conscious thought. Only a part of the mammal and bird species are blessed with self-awareness. The only possible exception that I know of is the giant octopus. These are a big mystery though so who knows.

It's nice to have the capability for conscious thought (most of the time), but it isn't necessary for survival. We tend to vastly overestimate the role our consciousness has in our lives.

Our consciousness actually has a very limited bandwidth. It can only really focus on one thing at a time (your conscious absolutely cannot multitask), and even then usually relies heavily on your subconscious. It's just not very big on giving credit. Instead it has a tendency to team up together with the ego and act like they're all important. They're like that annoying team member that does almost nothing, yet tries to take all the credit.

So what can the conscious do? It seems to mostly do things like putting together pieces of information and analyzing them. It looks for patterns and tries to predict the future (which it absolutely sucks at). It also plays a major role in learning new complex tasks. Things like written language and maths are only possible when a brain possesses a consciousness.

Here's the interesting thing though: It's impossible to be very good at anything as long as it is something you have to do consciously. Let's say you want to learn how to play the guitar. In the beginning every movement your fingers make will be conscious. As a result, you're going to make a lot of mistakes. After a few dozen to hundreds of hours, your subconscious will start to take over more and more. Muscle memory will allow your fingers to make the movements for you. They will become automatic and happen outside of your conscious' brain's control.

After a few thousand hours, playing the guitar will become natural and after 10.000+ hours or so, you'll become masterful at it. The exact number of hours depends on things like how intentionally you practice and how much talent you have. Learning complex things takes a lot of time though. Even Jimi Hendrix had to spend thousands of hours to become the player he was. The Jimi Hendrix we know played the guitar on a subconscious autopilot.

Let's take myself as a second example. I used to play the guitar between the ages of 15 and 18. Haven't played in the 10 years since. I tried it out again recently. Learning a new very simple song took me hours of practice. Playing some of the songs that I used to know came easily. Within 15 minutes I could play the way more difficult riffs that I used to know. These old songs somehow got stored inside me somewhere. The skill of learning new songs? Not so much. I am now a 3 song virtuoso. Anything else I need to learn consciously like a beginner.

Once you reach the level of mastery, it can even feel like it's no longer you playing the guitar. Which is because the part of your brain that you'd consider "You" isn't actually doing anything. The movements are now coming out of the subconscious brain and happen outside of your conscious control. This is called ideomotoric movement. It's something hypnotists like to use to allow the subconscious to speak directly without interference of the ego or the conscious (and also for fun party tricks).

Almost every activity you've learned in your life works this way. Walking as a conscious activity is incredibly difficult. It takes babies months to perfect it, even though they are way better learners than we are. Don't believe me? Go visit a revalidation centre. Ask the people that have to relearn how to walk how easy they think it is.

The list is almost endless. Talking, eating, driving, painting, reading, you name it. If anything, our consciousness is actually a major screw up. It is the one that causes you to choke before you go out on stage. The one making you blurt out something stupid when you're hitting on someone. Our consciousness tends to overestimate itself. Egged on by your ego, it likes to take control of things that your subconscious is much better at.

One situation where this conscious take-over is very visible, is improv theater (especially with amateur improv). When faced with an unexpected event, there's two ways improv actors can respond: Either instantly, or after three seconds or more have passed. Either they let their subconscious experience do the work; or their conscious thinking kicks in. Usually it will take at least three seconds before the conscious comes up with anything. Often it will take

longer. The actor might even choke fully. Subconscious responses tend to be much funnier and better. The conscious ones are more self aware and insecure.

We all know that feeling when things just flow. You're having a great conversation or you're playing a song on your guitar flawlessly. Your consciousness gets out of the way so all the automatic (subconscious) systems can do their work. In some cases you may not even remember how you did it. Your conscious doesn't remember because it didn't do anything. It was just an observer.

You may be hesitant to trust your subconscious. The conscious and ego don't like to let go. Yet you'll find that results will often improve. The subconscious rarely screws up when it is doing something that it has been trained to do.

Once we get to the subconscious, we'll also get to the question how conscious we truly are. Before we go there, let's first discuss why our conscious thinks it's the top dog. Let's talk about the one part of your brain that is crucial in making or breaking you. The ego.



# On Ego

Ego is something we love throwing around. Egotistical, big ego, egomaniac. Our egos have a bad reputation. Let's be honest though, how many of us could actually define what the ego even is? Discussions like small vs big ego, or kill your ego, it's all nonsense. People talk about the ego like it's some person on the sideline of your brain shouting bad advice at you. This couldn't be further from the truth. Your ego is an integral part of your brain and it has some crucial functions. It is complex, weird & funky. It is also always present and influencing you.

So what is the ego? It seems to be multiple things. For one it is not the same as your consciousness. The ego is actually placed somewhere in between your conscious and your subconscious. Once we get talking about ego values and beliefs in the upcoming chapters, you'll understand how exactly.

Your ego is many things. For one it is a combination of that awful friend that's always egging you on to do stupid stuff & your mom telling you you're number one. Ever seen one of those videoclips of a skinny drunk guy threatening a gorilla looking bouncer? That's what happens when your ego runs wild. You do incredibly stupid stuff and you think you'll get away with it. Ever paid attention to the glazy look that the same guy has five seconds later when he's sat on his ass by mr. Gorilla? That isn't just physical pain he's in. That's the look of cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance happens when egos gone wild meet reality. Cognitive dissonance is so important to us that it is going to get its own chapter later on.

So why even have an ego you may be thinking at this point? Wouldn't it be logical that people without ego's become successful whilst big egos eventually get killed off because they angered the wrong gorillas? Well, no. Like I said, your ego is complex. It's also that friend that tells you, you can do it. The one that keeps you going when everything seems against you. It's your dad telling you he believes in you when you're getting close to giving up. Whenever you see anyone achieve a great feat despite all odds, you're witnessing a strong ego in action. It takes a strong ego to be brave enough to say the world is round when everyone else is saying it's flat.

Your ego is a bit of a cowboy. Unfortunately it isn't a very smart cowboy. If anything, it is mostly just stubborn and overconfident in its own capabilities. It might even take a good sit down by a gorilla before it even opens up to the idea it might be wrong.

Your ego is placed in between your conscious and your subconscious. These three work together in a certain pattern. Nothing ever reaches your consciousness without going through your subconscious first. Your conscious can't see or hear anything. Light enters your eyes, subconscious systems transform it into an image. This image travels through the ego, and only then does it reach your consciousness. On top of that, the information that does reach your consciousness is distorted by the ego. This is a very difficult concept to explain

Fortunately it is very easy to demonstrate via an example: Imagine you're sixteen again and you're walking on the sidewalk. All of a sudden around the corner your crush comes walking up to you. Your heart skips a beat. Those perfect eyes! That beautiful hair! Wait! Are those eyes looking at you? Is that pearly smile aimed towards you? That look, that.. TOOOOOOOT!!! Whoops, you just walked through a red light and almost got hit by that car you didn't even notice consciously.

You get millions of inputs every second. Images, sound, smells, things you feel. You can't focus on them all. If everything went through to your conscious unfiltered, it would break down. So instead, you get a heavily filtered version. Your subconscious gets all the inputs and makes a quantitative filtering which it sends to the ego. The ego puts a qualitative judgmental filter and sends it through to your conscious. Your conscious then chooses what it wants to focus on and sends that feedback to your subconscious.

*Sidenote: One of the main effects of LSD and mushrooms is they weaken the ego barrier between your conscious and your subconscious. This is why people on an LSD trip often see very bright colors and feel like everything just comes at them much more vividly.*

So for the example: Your eyes see hundreds of things at the same time. All the cars that are parked, the discount poster in the shop window, a bird flying in the background, you get the gist. On top of that you're hearing and smelling things as well. Two people having a conversation 5 meters to your right. A pile of dog poop to your left, etc.

You can't focus on all these things so your subconscious picks out the things that seem most important. Your ego then places a judgment on the things your subconscious sends through. Your ego won't be very invested into any of these things so they'll be weak judgments. Your ego isn't likely to care that much that laundry detergent is 20% off. Nor does it care that much about the grey sedan that's parked just down the street.

Everything changes when your crush comes round the corner. Your subconscious puts it on the top of the pile of things it sends through. Your ego kicks straight into action. It will do two things. Not only will it judge your crush to be very beautiful, it will judge that your crush is very important to YOU.

See, the car, the poster or the bird hold very little value to you. Your ego has no interest in how these things relate to you whatsoever. Your crush on the other hand, well when you're sixteen, your crush means everything to you. All the beliefs your ego holds about yourself will instantly be activated. Maybe your ego filter tells you: "There's no way my crush would ever like me!". Maybe it tells you: "We'd make the perfect couple! We have the same qualities and would be great together!".

These things are all subjective judgments that depend on the values and beliefs your ego has. Objectively you're just two teenage kids with a life filled with uncertainty ahead of you. If you were to have the same scenario twenty years later, it would play out completely differently. The way you see yourself has changed. The way you see your crush from 20 years back has changed. Your ego filter has changed. Maybe the changes will have been so

great that this time you do become aware of the fact you're approaching an intersection. Maybe this time you'll even notice there's a car coming.

Your ego filter holds all sorts of values and beliefs about yourself. Because of your ego, you will view everything and everyone in this world through the lense of how they relate to and affect you. The more important you perceive something to be for you, the more your ego filters are activated. This is why a random advertising poster doesn't provoke much of an ego response from you. The crush that you are definitely, totally going to be spending the rest of your life with, will put your ego in overdrive.

So how does this ego filter get built up? Also: How can the same ego that is supposed to give you irrational self-confidence, now all of a sudden tell you: "you're not good enough to be with your crush!?" Knowing the answers to these questions gives you the power to rebuild your ego into what you want it to be.

So how does your ego filter get built up? To answer that question we have to go even further back then when you were sixteen. We have to go all the way back to when you were born. As a baby your ego filter is still quite empty. It's impossible to tell whether it is truly empty when you're born, but it is definitely much more empty than when you're an adult.

Now, we started off this chapter with the fact that ego and reality aren't really best friends. Your ego is very, very stubborn and doesn't like to take any advice from anyone. There is one exception though. There is a state in which your ego is actually sort of shut off and information can enter uncritically. This state is better known as hypnosis or trance.

Forget all the Hollywood nonsense. Hypnosis isn't about shutting down your consciousness (you can be well aware of everything going on whilst in hypnosis). It is about shutting down your ego. This does two things. One, it makes it possible to make changes to the ego filter. Two, it makes it possible to get into direct contact with subconscious systems without having to pass through a very uncooperative ego first.

Your ego filter gets filled up in the first seven to twelve years of your life. Every time a little kid gets into a trance state, it will uncritically absorb whatever values or beliefs are presented. There are great implications to this. These years are crucial and for many will decide the outcome of the rest of their lives.

Kids go into trance ridiculously easily. There's actually an automatic reflex in us that makes us go into trance when we look up. This reflex isn't that strong anymore for adults. In little kids however, it is very powerful. They get big eyes and are completely mesmerized when they look up. Why? Well because that's where mommy and daddy are.

Kids carefully study their parents' behavior. Parents' beliefs will be scrutinized by entranced kids and then copied. This is especially the case when these beliefs are aimed at them! Most parents don't realize how big their influence over their children is. If both parents spend the entire day being lazy & hanging in front of the television, kids will literally imprint that being a

lazy couch potato is the standard. Their ego filter will implement the belief in them that they are a lazy couch potato.

There is nothing worse than a parent shouting abusive language at their kids. If you scream at your kids that they are useless and stupid, this will get imprinted as a belief in their ego filter. A shouting parent is an instant trance trigger for small children. The parent has just rammed a "I am useless and stupid" belief into their kid's ego that may end up being carried around for the rest of its life. You'd be disgusted to know what sort of things can come up during hypnotherapy. People struggling with severe anxiety issues their entire lives that just don't make sense. Until you hypnotize them and find out what sort of awful nonsense was rammed into their ego filter when they were young.

But why would the ego filter ever allow such garbage in? Like I said, it's not very smart. Your ego isn't very good at judging which beliefs and values are good or bad. It just absorbs beliefs when it is in a trance state. Once absorbed, your ego will start to consider those beliefs as YOUR beliefs and will start defending them, even if they're bad for you. To make matters even more complex: Whether a belief is good or bad is often dependent on what situation you're in.

Believing it's good to be quiet is great when you need to observe, but awful when you're trying to make friends in a loud social setting. This also somewhat explains the paradox of your ego. Why on one hand it causes irrational self-confidence while on the other hand it can cause you to believe you're useless. It just sort of gets hacked when you're a kid. Your ego seems to be somewhat schizophrenic. On one hand it has the natural tendency to be brash and overly confident. On the other hand it is filled with external beliefs it had little to no control over.

This leads to two extremely important and very interesting questions: Are your beliefs really yours? Are you your beliefs?

# Ego Investments

Remember the example of running into your crush? You may have noticed that I brushed on the concept of ego investment. There's also a realistic chance that right now, your ego is falsely telling you, you noticed. That's because most people's egos are invested into the idea of being smart and observant.

Every day, thousands of things reach your ego filter. Everything that gets sent to your conscious and everything that gets sent back into your subconscious passes through. Your ego doesn't care about most things. Imagine what would happen if your ego would form a strong opinion on everything you hear and see. Imagine that choosing which cup you'll drink your coffee from today is just as important to you as choosing who to marry. Life wouldn't be very easy.

So instead, most of the things your subconscious sends through get (almost) no judgment. Your ego lets more than 99% of inputs pass without really forming an opinion on them. Even when it does invest in something, it usually won't invest heavily. Chances of you becoming totally obsessed because someone you know is wearing a sweater you don't like are slim. The sweater will simply not be important enough to you to trigger real investment (even if it is really ugly).

The previous sentence is crucial in understanding the ego. The only reliable indicator on whether the ego invests is this question: How important is this thing for me? There's a fancy word for this: Solipsism. The ego only invests when it thinks something is important for you. A lot of negative associations to the ego come from this. Your ego only cares about you and your success. It is extremely selfish.

Your ego doesn't care when random Bob from another country drives an ugly car. It only cares when you have to drive it. Whenever something terrible happens anywhere, your ego's first question will always be: How does that relate to me? A million people die?: "How does that relate to me?" Animals go extinct? "How does that relate to me?". Nobody cares about things that do not relate to them, or alternatively they cannot relate to.

We live in a society that tells us being selfish is bad. I wouldn't be surprised if right now, you're looking for exceptions to prove me wrong. It is what it is though. We are all built this way. We all have extremely selfish egos. Even when you see people donating a lot of money or volunteering for something, their ego will find a way to make it about them.

Think about it: You remember small problems you had ten, twenty years back like they were yesterday. You wouldn't be able to recall last year's biggest disaster (that didn't affect you personally) if you tried. You probably can't even remember last month's biggest disasters.

So how come everyone cares when something big and terrible happens elsewhere? There's several reasons. First of all, they care because they could see themselves in the position of

the victim. Your brain is very bad at distinguishing between real and imagined experiences. If you look at disaster images on your television, you imagine you are part of the disaster so now you care. It's not a real experience though, so the effect is gone much faster. These fake experiences usually don't stick around in your brain like real ones do.

Secondly, people are told to care. Media and institutions love telling you how to believe and what to feel. They'll jump on any opportunity to make you feel guilty about how good you have it compared to others. The more guilty they can make you feel, the more they control you.

And then finally, most people don't care. They just pretend to care. It's a form of mass hysteria. When enough people have the same opinion about something, it becomes dangerous to go against it. If you're not seen caring, your social standing will be lowered. Everybody cares now because everybody else seems to care. Not caring now directly affects you, so your ego invests into it.

Next time there's a big disaster happening somewhere, and everyone is going on about how much they care, try this: Tell them you don't care at all. Watch how they'll get mad and confused.

Here's what's funny: Everybody will care soooo much about a disaster. Next day something else happens and they'll have forgotten all about it. As soon as everyone else has moved on, your ego will have no reason left to invest. You'll move on without even realizing it consciously.

You still might not believe me. I understand. Just realize that you are always looking through your ego filter. Almost everyone is ego invested in the idea that they're a good person. Any perspective that goes against this will be resisted by your ego. I'm not calling you a bad person though. It is just the way we are built. We know only one perspective: our own. The brain only has a limited capacity. It can only compare things that affect others to things that have happened, or might happen to you.

We have a limited amount of energy. Any of it you spend on things you do not perceive to be important to you, means you have less energy left to spend on your own survival. We are the product of 2 billion years of survival instinct. If the ego does not think something is directly important for you, it won't care.

There are of course plenty of examples of ego investments that don't make any sense. The ego isn't rational. Bad ego investments might not make sense if you put them through your ego filter, they do for the people making them. Like we discussed in the previous chapter, your ego-filter gets filled up in your youth by foreign beliefs. Not everything in there is good for you.

People make horrible ego investments all the time. People do things that are directly hurting themselves. Things that are very irrational. If you question people about their dumb actions,

their ego's will come up with rationalizations. These rationalizations will make perfect sense to them, and perfect nonsense to you.

Ego's are a very dominant force. They're stubborn, extremely irrational, and most of all: They will lash out violently at anyone or anything that dares to question them. Your ego simply cannot stand being wrong or a loser. It will never just admit to being wrong. Instead it will go into cognitive dissonance. It will try rationalizing why it was right all along until it is completely exhausted.

Cognitive dissonance also explains why you cannot argue with someone that is ego invested into something. Their ego will simply refuse to listen to you. Once you understand this, you can save yourself a lot of energy by never engaging in things like political debates. People are often heavily ego invested in their political beliefs and will therefore be highly irrational when debating them (Don't get smug though, you and I are just as ego invested in our political beliefs).

This is why it is so important to keep your ego in check. If it invests into the wrong things, it will destroy you. Look at addicts for instance. It is very common for them to ego invest into their addiction. They will rationalize it and attack anyone trying to help them, even if their addiction is killing them! Your ego can invest in the weirdest things. If someone becomes depressed, in the beginning they will have a depression. After a while, they risk becoming their depression. They ego invest in their depression.

A very common form of bad ego investments are bad relationships. Once you ego invest into someone, you cannot look at them objectively anymore. We've all seen or been in relationships where everyone could tell it was a bad relationship. Everyone except for the person in it. The ego will simply be blindsided by its investment. Every bad thing the partner does will be twisted by the ego so it somehow becomes something positive. The results, as you can well imagine, can be disastrous (\*cough\* Anthony Bourdain \*cough\*).

People that ego invest heavily into bad relationships are at terrible risk. We all know the stories of women sticking with their abusive partners. It is all too common to hear about men being absolutely destroyed when their wife decides to file for divorce. These people are completely blinded from reality by their ego's. "Sure he beats me, but actually he's a good person that's just misunderstood!". "How could she leave me and steal my kids from me when I did everything for her? She must just be confused!". Bad ego investments can get you murdered or willing to commit suicide.

By now you may think the ego is a horrendous thing. Truth is, we need it. The world is a very complex and irrational place. Our ego's simplify things into good & bad, right & wrong, etc. Without our ego's we get overwhelmed. We cannot survive. It's just unfortunate that the ego is a flawed system.

So how to make the most important investments of your life? How to ego invest? First of all realize that this is a lifelong ordeal. You can do everything absolutely right for 80 years, only

to destroy yourself after. History is filled with examples of people who conquered the world, only to be undone by their own ego shortly after.

The ego sits somewhere between your conscious and your subconscious. You're never fully aware of it, but it is always at work. It can also be very unpredictable and has a disregard for reality. The combination of these things make it a lifelong potential liability. Never make the mistake of thinking you somehow beat or killed your ego. It is and always will be part of your psyche. It's like saying you killed off your kidneys and liver. I really hope you didn't because you wouldn't last very long without them.

Your ego is made to invest in things it thinks are good for you. It cannot not do it. Thinking you have beaten your ego simply means this process will become more subconscious. Your ego is always at work, whether you realize it or not. You need your ego, no matter how flawed it may be. Anyone that has ever experienced a forced ego shutdown will tell you it's absolute hell (More on this when we get to cognitive dissonance).

So what are ways to improve the way your ego works? We'll get to that. Before we can though, we need to go one step deeper into how the ego actually works.



# The Ego Value System

The part of your ego that makes investments is your ego filter. How would your ego filter look like if we took it apart? You'd find two things: The ego value system and the ego belief system.

We are going to use words to describe values and beliefs you may have. Keep in mind that that's not how your ego actually works. Your ego thinks in emotions and feelings. Most of what it does is subconscious. It doesn't think to itself: "Ow, how does this thing go together with my value of freedom?" It probably doesn't even think in terms of freedom. Freedom is just a word that your consciousness uses to describe what the ego feels. Most of the time the ego doesn't even seem to be self-aware. It just works on autopilot, doing whatever it is programmed to do.

Your values are always there. They are the foundation of the ego and the part of the ego filter where I don't think you start out with a blank slate. Some values seem to be inherently born into people. The only influence you have over your values is how you fill in the details.

Values tend to be abstract and very hard to grasp. They're like an invisible force that you don't always notice, despite their enormous influence over your life path. They exist in the more subconscious part of your ego filter. Most people will live their lives without ever knowing what their most important values are. This makes them directionless. Your values are the anchors of who you are. Ignoring your main values, or trying to override them, is a recipe for disaster.

We see examples of this all the time where kids try to live up to their parents' or society's values instead of their own. This never works and has led to countless miserable lives. The son that becomes an accountant because his father values stability, even though the son really values novelty. The daughter that is told by society to value independence even though she really just wants to feel connected.

History is filled with people trying to force their ego values upon others. Often through religion, politics or culture. I'm sure it is usually with the best intentions, but it is an unfortunate case of: "Hey this works for me, so it must work for everyone else!". This isn't how ego values work though. The accountant son will hate his work and will get into constant problems. The daughter will end up trying to create a community feeling inside her lawyer firm. Something that won't be appreciated by her co-workers that tend to have competitive values. It will also feel like a hollow replacement of true connections to her. Leaving her depressed.

Life becomes much better once you understand what your values are and you start working with them instead of against them.

So how many values do we have? I'm not sure. I've actually got several theories about ego values. Some of them even directly opposing each other. So let's just go with the most simple one: I think it differs per person. And not every value is equal. People tend to have around three dominant ones max. After these three there are secondary values. I wouldn't bother with those too much. Your primary values are way more important. You'll also often find that your secondary values are simply further expansions or additions to your primary values.

Realize too that values express themselves differently in every person. Just because two people have wealth as a primary value doesn't mean they'll both try to become billionaires. One of them could interpret wealth as having a lot of money whereas the other interprets it as having a lot of stuff. One person can end up with billions in the bank, but living a minimalist lifestyle, whereas the other hardly has any money but has a huge house filled with expensive stuff.

There are no right or wrong values. Society likes us to believe some values are better than others. This is nonsense. Some values just happen to make you more of a potential cash cow for corporations or an easier target for politicians (Only when you're not aware of what your values are though!). Once you know what your values are, you can take control over them.

Values can be interpreted in many ways. Make sure you become the interpreter instead of others. When you become aware that wealth is one of your main values, you can discover what wealth means for you. Maybe it's becoming very rich? Maybe it is being surrounded by the beauty of nature? Corporations and politicians love telling you wealth is you making money for them. Don't expect them to like it when you decide true wealth is living in a cabin in the woods. Don't let external forces tell you what to value or how to value it. They'll never have your best interest at heart.

An example of a value that plays out very differently for different people is beauty. One person may end up becoming a bodybuilder that tries to become the epitome of physical beauty. A second may want to become an artist and create beautiful things. A third one could become a scientist, trying to dissect the beauty of physics.

Values can be divided into two main categories. Positive values and negative values. "But wait! You just told me that there is no such thing as a good or a bad value?!". Yes, positive and negative mean something different here. Basically a positive value is: I want X. A negative value is: I do not want X. Both positive and negative values have benefits and downsides.

Fun fact: You may not be able to change what your main values are, you can influence whether they are positive or negative values. I'll tell you what the main benefits and problems of both are and then you can decide for yourself what you like best.

Let's use wealth as an example again. See how this can play out depending on how you interpret it. Say you have wealth as one of your main values. You happened to be born into

extreme poverty. Your experiences as a poor kid teach you this: I do not want to be poor! This is a negative value interpretation. In practice it will probably play out like this: You'll get yourself a good paying, stable job. Maybe government or healthcare. You'll make sure you are never without income or at risk of becoming poor again. Thing is, you're probably also never going to become very rich. You think it's more important not to be poor, so you'll be unwilling to take big risks.

Now let's say you were born with the same wealth value, but you grew up in a stable middle class environment. You learned that this isn't true wealth. True wealth is being very rich! This is a positive value interpretation. So how would that one play out? Well it's going to be more unpredictable. You're going to try to become very rich. Something that is much harder to do than not be poor. It requires much more time and energy and you have to take more risks. So maybe you'll end up very wealthy. Maybe you'll end up being very poor.

Furthermore there is no natural limit to positive value interpretations. "Not being poor" sets a limit. I don't think many people would call a millionaire poor. Once the person with the negative value interpretation reaches millionaire level, they would spend less energy on wealth. Going into maintenance mode so to say. If you have a positive value interpretation, you may find that being a millionaire isn't enough. You now go for billionaire, and then after that? Who knows. Maybe you could become the world's' first trillionaire?

Negative value interpretations are low risk low reward. Positive value interpretations are high risk high reward. Negative value interpretations have natural limits that protect you. Positive value interpretations don't have this. We can all think of examples of people that have gone overboard on a positive value. People completely neglecting their family lives because they're working 16 hours a day to make more money. People that end up alone in the gutter because they chased maximum freedom.

And then there's the extremely destructive option of the negative positive or double negative value. Some people will interpret a value like wealth with: "I do not want to be rich" or "I want to be poor". The I don't want to be rich is pretty bad as it leads to no chance of ever becoming rich, whilst at the same time having no safety net. The "I want to be poor" one I don't need to explain.

The negative positive or the double negative might sound weird in this example. There's not that many people around that want to be poor. I'll give you an example where they are all too common though. Any form of harmony/connectedness/love/acceptance value. Basically any value that is aimed at how you interact with other people.

Pretty much every person has one of those in their top three values. They seem to be the wild card value that can cause a lot of problems in people's lives. They are the one type of value where I'd personally advocate for having a positive value interpretation

Let's take connectedness as a value. Easiest example, the positive value interpretation. I want to feel connected. Pretty straight forward, you want to have connections in your life and spend energy trying to create them. Sounds healthy right?

Now let's take the negative value interpretation: I don't want to feel alone. At first glance they might sound very similar, but in real life they play out very differently. "I don't want to be alone" places you at risk of abusive relationships. When you have a positive connection value, you're always busy trying to meet new people and trying to build good connections with them. If one person happens to be a bad influence, you can easily cut them off. If you don't want to be alone however, you'll be desperate just to get one connection. Once you have that connection, you're no longer alone. You'll also be very dependent on the other person. Even if that other person is physically or emotionally abusive, you still won't leave them. They may even just not care about you, but they'll still be everything for you.

But it gets worse. The negative positive or the double negative. "I don't want to feel connected" or "I want to be alone". Like I said, the way you interpret your values is something you can change. People that have been in a bad relationship or are going through a bad break up, are at risk of developing one of these two. "Ugh I hate him, I never want to be with another man!" "She is such a bitch, I hate all women!".

Next thing you know, the ego is actively making sure that every time you get close to any feeling of connectedness, you'll quickly run away. You'll destroy all your connections to others until you're all alone and very unhappy. For most people, a value interpretation change is not something they do consciously. Most people don't even know it is possible to do this. If they get stuck with a "I want to be alone" ego value interpretation, it will haunt them until something dramatic happens that changes it again. The results can be disastrous.

In order to get the best out of your values you need to be able to

- 1) identify them**
- 2) decide how to fill them in**
- 3) see how they interact with each other**
- 4) prioritize them**

Here's something that makes this process complicated though. Your values aren't always aligned. People often have values that have a high likelihood of being at odds with each other. If you both have the values of novelty and loyalty, you'll find yourself struggling with the desire to experience new love affairs, whilst also wanting to be loyal to your current partner. Furthermore, switching one of your values from a negative to a positive value or vice versa, will also have an effect on your other values. Priorities may shift. There may be second or third order effects that you didn't foresee.

So how do you change the details of your ego values?

Well, through your ego belief system of course!

# The Ego Belief System

Ego beliefs are quite different from ego values. Your values are the steady force that silently influence you in the background. Your beliefs are the more conscious, direct influencer. Your beliefs are more important. Not because their influence over you is bigger, but because your influence over them is bigger.

Just like with values they come in positive and negative variations. Either you believe you are something or you believe you are not something. I am a social person. I am not evil. Values are inborn and internally focussed. Beliefs are given to you by others. Most of them before you reach the age of 7. Almost all of your ego beliefs are put in your ego belief system by the outside world, your conscious and your subconscious.

To answer the question I posed a few chapters back: ***Your beliefs are not yours and you are not your beliefs. Your beliefs can change completely. Sometimes very rapidly.***

Beliefs are much more concrete than values. I believe I can start my own company versus I value freedom. They are also much more numerous than values. We only have a few main values. We have thousands of beliefs. Every value you have will play an important role in your life. Beliefs vary widely in their importance. Some beliefs are extremely influential. Many have only a limited influence. Some are even very irrelevant. I believe I am a self-starter, I believe I can fix my own plumbing or I believe I can't polka dance.

Your ego belief system and ego value system don't communicate well with each other. Instead, your ego belief system holds beliefs about what your ego values are. These beliefs are often incorrect. This is because these "value beliefs" are also often placed in you by external forces. Society, your family and friends tell you what to value. Our ego belief system will start investing in believing these values are ours. This can make you totally unaware of what your values actually are. You'll just end up with this unpleasant, ever present feeling something is just not right. Many people go through life with ego value beliefs that are wrong. Only few will ever realize this.

Beliefs need constant reinforcement or they'll start to fade. This is especially true if the belief is not in line with your values. This is why in dictatorships, propaganda is constant. They need to hammer down their message into you or you'll eventually stop believing it. When it comes to false beliefs, you are your own worst enemy though.

People strongly seek confirmation for their own beliefs. They'll spin events in such a way that they can convince themselves that they indeed aren't something, or cannot do something. "See I could never run my own business because I overslept by 10 minutes this morning". "See I simply am not athletic because I went for a morning run once and was out of breath after 5 minutes". These things aren't truths. They're negative self-beliefs reaffirming themselves.

If you deep down believe you can never start your own company, your ego will go look for affirmations. A successful business owner oversleeps for 10 minutes and thinks “Hmm I should go to bed a little earlier and sleep better”. A self-belief sabotaging person will think it's ultimate proof they can never find the discipline within themselves to have their own business.

When your beliefs and values oppose each other, they can turn your life into hell. However, when your values and beliefs align, you will become happier. The chances of you becoming successful grow exponentially. What is success? Obtaining the things that you truly value and desire.

Chances are that you've never really thought about your beliefs that much. We just take them for granted and see them as reality. Once you start scrutinizing your beliefs, you'll realize they're often not really based on anything. They're just whatever you're told to believe. Your values are deep desires are part of you. Your beliefs are mostly what has been put in you.

Still, your beliefs often override your values. Because beliefs are more conscious and easier to put into words, you're more aware of them and more likely to follow them. Most people don't even really know what their values are.

Going against your values comes at a cost though. It means denying yourself your deep rooted desires. You'll slowly become more stressed and unhappy when you don't live according to your values. When you don't get your beliefs into line with your values, you slowly wither away fighting yourself.

There is one event during which you can really experience that your ego values and ego beliefs are two separate systems. The ego death. During an ego death, only your belief system gets shut down. Your values will still be there. You can see them clearly now because you temporarily don't hold any beliefs about them.

The ego death is an unpleasant experience for many. You are forced to face who you truly are instead of who you believe you are. Many people realize that they are wasting their lives and that they have made a lot of bad choices. You are confronted with your ego values. Ego deaths are often life altering. The real important process happens afterwards though. The rebuilding of your beliefs to be more in line with your values.

Your ego belief system, your ego value system and their poor communication are already very complex. Your environment's opinions and expectations make it even more difficult. On top of that, your conscious thinking patterns also influence your beliefs, and your subconscious also has its own desires. Combined, these outside forces create so much noise, that many will never learn what their values are or how their beliefs work.

Changing your beliefs is a process you should carefully monitor. For most people, belief changes usually mean a 180\* turn. They will hold a belief. This belief will get disproven by reality. Then, because they do not have any awareness of how beliefs work, the new belief

will usually simply be the complete opposite of the original one. I'll give you a well known example:

Say you have a romantic belief. Say you're a guy and you grow up with the idea that all girls are princesses. You get your first girlfriend. Eventually you break up in a particularly nasty way. You find out she was cheating on you with your best friend. Reality has just proven to you that not all women are princesses. If they were, then how could this woman be so evil to you?

Your belief gets turned upside down. An opposite belief that is just as unrealistic will replace the first. So instead of "all women are princesses!", you now get: "All women are whores!". Next time a girl is particularly sweet to you, it might switch again to "All women are great!". This isn't logical at all, but it is what happens with most ego unaware people.

Reality hardly ever works in absolutes. Any belief that has no room for exceptions will almost never benefit you in the long run. It is important you don't let extremes shape your beliefs. Just because your first girlfriend (and your best friend) turned out to be bad people doing bad things, doesn't mean everyone in the world is an asshole or a whore.

Good beliefs require attention to detail. To get good beliefs about people, you have to observe them in their day to day lives. To get good beliefs about yourself, you have to observe yourself in your day to day life. Moreover you have to try to do this as objectively as possible. Instead of drawing conclusions because you woke up late once, remember that you woke up on time the past 99 days. Oversleeping once is simply an outlier that doesn't mean much.

It is important to note that there are different types of beliefs. There's "I am" beliefs. These are beliefs your ego holds about what your identity is exactly. "I am smart" or "I am an artist" are examples of this. Note that things like "I am hungry" or "I am sad" are not ego beliefs. These types of "I am" beliefs are merely temporary signals your subconscious is sending to your conscious so you'll take care of yourself. These things could become ego beliefs if your ego decides to invest in them. "I am sad" can become "I am depressed".

Sad but true, for many a depression becomes part of their identity. At first they'll have a depression. After a while they'll become their depression. There's a lot of evidence coming out lately that psilocybin mushrooms can cure long lasting depressions. Why? Because they can cause an ego death, showing people the errors in their beliefs. The "I am depressed" belief gets kicked out.

Second type of belief is "I can". "I can start my own company" "I can win that race". "I am" and "I can" beliefs are often heavily interwoven. "I can win that race" depends on a belief that you are athletic. "I can start my own company" won't happen if you don't believe you are a self-starter.

Thirdly there's also likes & wants. These may sound like ego values, but they're not. Ego value wants are deep internally focussed desires. Ego belief wants are outward focussed

and can often change. "I want a relationship", "I want a new car". It is possible that belief wants are aligned with your values. Maybe you want a relationship because you highly value being connected. Or, maybe it's because all your friends are in one, your parents are pressuring you, and you believe that being in a relationship is just the right thing to do.

Remember that your values and beliefs are often not aligned. You could highly value independence. At the same time, you grew up watching a lot of Friends episodes. You now believe you need a relationship where you'll do everything together. Your values are built upon what's deep inside you. These are mystical and immovable. Beliefs are a result of your environment. In particular, your environment growing up. These two often aren't the same.

Most "I want" beliefs are constantly changing. You probably don't want to buy the same kind of clothes you wore 10 years ago. Fashion has changed, your style has changed. You want to wear different things. In fact, "I want" beliefs can change in mere seconds. You see a poster for a holiday somewhere warm and you really want to go there. You get a phone call and by the time you're off the phone, you've completely forgotten about that poster or the deal.

"I can" beliefs usually don't change that fast. They will often take time and learning to change. You usually don't go from "I can't start my own company" to "I can" in one day. Instead it will change when you learn more skills needed for running a business, like marketing or management.

"I am" beliefs finally, often take the longest to change. People's "I am" beliefs are an important part of their identity. People don't like changing their identity. Many "I am" beliefs last a lifetime. Which doesn't mean they can't change very quickly. Usually this rapid change will happen due to a dramatic event.

Also, don't forget how irrational your beliefs can be. There are people who know every important skill for creating your own business, that still believe they could never do it. At the same time there are people who don't have any skills that believe they could easily start their own business. There are amazing people that believe they could never get someone to fall in love with them. There are horrible people that believe they can get whoever they want.

Most people would benefit from placing less importance on their ego beliefs and instead focussing on finding their ego values. Unfortunately, modern technology is pushing us in the other direction. The main culprits are social media and our phones.

We are now constantly connected. We constantly come into contact with external beliefs. Beliefs that we will attempt to copy. Beliefs that are now constantly reinforced into us. People, corporations and governments all have beliefs and values they want to sell to you. The more you're on your phone, the more you're being told what to believe. This makes it harder and harder to discover your true values.

Simple example: Say you spend a lot of time on facebook or instagram. Pretty much everyone you follow is in a relationship. Almost every post, every picture you see on there is

of two people showing off how happy they are together. Before you know it you'll believe you want a clingy relationship where you do everything together. Your actual values will be overshadowed. Instead you'll start chasing what you think other people have.

There are two risks here. Not only does the chance increase of you going against your own values, those social media photos also rarely reflect reality. You don't just start believing you value a clingy relationship, you'll start believing that a clingy relationship will be all flowery and lovey dovey.

Once you get into a relationship, you'll find out that things aren't perfect. You believe a relationship is supposed to be only happiness, so you'll feel like a failure. You're now in a relationship that you might not actually value and you start believing you're a loser because it's not what Instagram told you it should be.

So to conclude: You probably have a few questions right now: "What about my beliefs?". "Are they good for me?". "How can I change the bad ones?". Find out in the next chapter!

# Destroying and Rebuilding the Ego

Your ego beliefs never stop evolving. Your beliefs are like books on your shelf. You can take them out and replace them with better ones. This isn't always a clear cut process. It often takes time. It isn't uncommon for people to work on certain beliefs for months with no results, until it suddenly just clicks and changes completely. Ego building is a lifelong thing. Your ego never stops changing, although it does get less flexible the older you get. Five year olds' ego's are open for nearly everything, 85 year olds' ego's often have difficulties adapting to changes.

Your ego is like a house. You put furniture in your house and you decorate your walls. Your furniture is not your house. That couch might have been there for as long as you can remember, it still isn't your house. You don't want to refurbish your house every week. That would cost a lot of time, effort and money. If however, one day you realise that your furniture just doesn't cut it anymore. If your bed is so bad it gives you trouble sleeping. If your hot water doesn't work anymore. You know you need to have a major makeover.

Redoing your house is usually not something you can do in one day. A major revamp will take weeks to months even. During that time you are probably worse off. You might injure yourself trying to get that old couch down the stairs. You might have to sleep on the floor before your new bed arrives. You might not even have a shower for a couple of weeks.

If you do decide to have a total makeover, you have to commit. You can't throw everything out of the house and then decide you don't want the makeover anymore. You need furniture in your house. You need to pull through to the end. If you don't, your mom might one day show up on your front porch with the ugliest bed you've ever seen and a mattress she found lying next to the road. Alternatively you buckle in and drag all your old stuff back into the house. The ego cannot stay empty. If you don't fill it up with the beliefs you want, someone or something else will put their beliefs in there.

Your house is also something you need to invest into permanently. If you do nothing, it will get filthy and things will start to deteriorate. Someone that cares about their house will keep it clean and in good condition.

You'd go crazy if you tried to constantly make major changes to your ego. You can't permanently live in a construction site. Ego rebuilding is a process where a lot of things can radically change in a relatively short amount of time. Afterwards, nothing much might happen for years.

A house is a perfect metaphor for your ego. Not just because it works beautifully with the core of your house (ego values) remaining the same whilst your furniture and style (ego beliefs) can be completely stripped out and replaced; but also because in life you will often see that people who are in the middle of an ego transformation, will get the urge to change things in their physical environment. When someone you know all of sudden has moved

around all their furniture, or is planning a major makeover, chances are there's a lot more going on inside their heads.

Also remember that for most people, this isn't a conscious process. They likely won't know why they have the urge to change everything around or why they all of a sudden want to move to another city. They'll just feel restless.

Enough with the metaphors. Let's go through a couple of ways in which you can actively control your ego building. The first step of ego building is acknowledging what your current ego beliefs actually are. This requires a lot of honesty from you. It's not fun to have to admit to yourself that deep down, you believe you're a loser.

It is crucial you do this though. Like Alcoholics Anonymous says: Admitting you have a problem is the first step to solving it. You need to know what beliefs you are trying to replace for it to work. Otherwise you're not going to be very effective. For many this is going to be the hardest part. It's not easy to be honest about who you believe you are. Just because your ego holds a belief that you'll never amount to anything, doesn't mean you can automatically consciously admit that to yourself. Most people choose to be in denial of their own beliefs because they somewhere consciously realize that they're stupid. We hate feeling stupid.

Once you've localized what beliefs you want to change, here's some ways you can change your beliefs. Keep in mind that this list isn't definite. There's thousands of things that can cause ego belief changes. These are just some methods that seem to work consistently.

In no particular order:

### **First way: Act of doing**

Doing new things forces your beliefs to change. Especially when you do things your beliefs tell you you cannot do, you'll force a change in your ego filter. Your beliefs are often heavily intertwined with your routines. You believe something because you do something because you believe something because you do something.

Going completely outside of your comfort zone and routines, forces your ego to question its beliefs. It's simple, but it isn't always easy. It often takes a while of you actively going against your beliefs before they're really changed. Especially fears and doubts can take a while to get rid of. In therapyland this technique is better known as gradual exposure.

Something that can help this process is acting class. During acting class you'll learn techniques to quickly change into someone else. You'll perform roles and do things that are very unlike who you actually are. You learn to be comfortable acting out different beliefs and values. Your perspective on your own behavior and beliefs changes.

A good actor not only knows how a character they are playing would act in a scenario. They also know why the character would act that way. Training this skill also helps you understand how and why you act the way you do.

## **Second way: Hypnosis**

Either by visiting or becoming a hypnotist, you can learn how to go into a trance state. Once you can go into there, you can start learning how to alter your beliefs. I've personally found this to be a great supporting tool. It's not enough by itself though. You still need to go out and do the things and get good at them in order to truly enforce the new belief. If you only do the hypnosis session, either the old beliefs, or unwanted new beliefs can creep in.

## **Third way: Mind Altering Substances**

Psilocybin, LSD, peyote or DMT. Let me explicitly state that I do not endorse this method. It causes rapid dramatic changes that can be very unpredictable. There are people who report incredible results through these drugs, there are also people that end up in an asylum for the rest of their lives. These things aren't candy and if you don't know what you're doing, you should stay away from them. These chemicals force an ego death upon you, allowing you to see what your deep rooted ego values are.

My main concerns with these substances are the potential side effects. There is also no guarantee that proper beliefs will be installed when you have no clue what you're doing. Changes can be so rapid with this method that they become hard to control if you're inexperienced. No belief is an island. These things are all interlinked in your ego. Changing one can have unpredictable results on others.

If you were to decide to try this method, make sure you do them in a safe environment. Preferably in the presence of someone that has experience with them and knows what they are doing. Again, no endorsement from me. I just want you to be safe if you were to try them out. You wouldn't be the first person to jump out of a 4th story window because you believe you're a bird. Also be careful of false "shamans". Just because someone has read a few books and has done ayahuasca a number of times, doesn't mean they know what they're doing. Anyone that acts like these substances are some kind of magic pill that will solve all your problems is either a fraud, delusional or inexperienced.

## **Fourth way: Act of Creation**

There is something about building something using your hands that is mind altering. Could be building a house, making a painting, creating music, doesn't matter what it is. The act of creating what you wish to see created alters your ego filter. You learn to focus on what is inside you. You spend less time focussing on what outside forces want you to believe.

The physical world and your mental world are very intertwined. People in the process of ego rebuilding will get the sudden urge to change their environment. If you actively change the world around you by creation, you will also change your ego.

This isn't really a method to change one thing specifically. The act of creation is something that is a quiet teacher of positive beliefs. I'd advise anyone to have at least a hobby where they create things.

### **Fifth way: Nature and Isolation**

Ego beliefs are a societal being. Without the constant reinforcement they will start to fade. Solitude is very powerful. Your ego beliefs will start to fade. Your ego values become more dominant. You realize what truly is important for you and what you are actually capable of.

Your ego becomes less important once you are alone. In nature only reality matters. In society we can afford ourselves all sorts of delusions, distractions and self-images. Nature is unforgiving. It doesn't matter what your ego beliefs are when you're alone and cold. Your societal status is irrelevant when you're by yourself, in a forest with rain pouring down on you. Either you can do that long hike or you can't, there's no excuse. These experiences in nature and solitude will give your ego a new perspective. "Conquering" nature will give your ego a newfound set of beliefs and a stronger image of the self. There is a reason so many coming of age rituals throughout completely different cultures consisted out of forms of solitude in nature.

Now I understand we can't all just pack our bags and go for a month-long camping trip by ourselves. We can cut out news and social media however. These things are complete echo chambers designed to make you either afraid, angry or jealous. They are designed to put you in a weakened state so they can ram down foreign beliefs down your throat. Beliefs that happen to make someone else rich at the cost of your happiness.

We can all see the result of the mass media explosion that started in the 50's/60's. We have all become adrift. Everyone seems to be looking for themselves. We subconsciously know that our ego values aren't being met. Hardly anyone understands why this is though. So they keep looking for answers outside of themselves. We try to fill the hollowness inside us with foreign ego beliefs instead of our own ego values. Experiences and goods are the modern day drug to numb us from the pain of being disconnected to our ego values. We are trying to live up to expectations that aren't ours and that aren't in our best interest.

### **Sixth way: Affirmations**

Affirmations are you consciously repeating to yourself that you are something. If you tell yourself often enough that you are something, your ego will start believing it. Affirmations will probably feel weird at first, but they work. If you want to try them out, I advise you to write them down. Go stand in front of a mirror and read them to yourself out loud two or three times a day. The more senses you engage, the bigger the chance your ego filter will pick it up. By reading your affirmations out loud in front of a mirror, you engage your eyes, your ears and your voice.

In case you really feel awkward doing affirmations, remember this: People have been doing them to you your entire life. They didn't feel awkward about telling you what you should

believe, so why should you? If your kindergarten bully had no problems calling you stupid and ugly 100 times, then why should you have any issues calling yourself smart and handsome 100 times?

### **Seventh way: Martial Arts**

Doesn't matter which form or tradition. Any martial art that involves sparring, is excellent to shake up your ego. Your beliefs become irrelevant when there's someone in front of you trying to punch you in the face or take you to the ground. Martial arts are humbling to the ego. This is because there is always someone better out there. There will always be someone that can beat you, no matter how good you are. This will give you perspective and will keep your ego from getting out of control with delusional beliefs.

Pain also has major effects on your ego. Forced pain, due to bad ego investments, will cause changes in your ego filter. Voluntary pain due to sparring mimics this effect. Allowing you to rebuild your ego. Having to tap out fifteen times during a sparring session keeps your ego humble. Getting punched hard puts things in perspective.



# Cognitive Dissonance and the Nuclear Way

All pain is mental pain. You feel pain because your brain tells you something is amiss. When you break your foot, it isn't actually your foot that's hurting, it's your brain. If a paralyzed person breaks a foot, they feel nothing.

Pain is a very strong signal. One that has the power to override your ego and even change it. The previous methods were all quite friendly to your ego. The worst that could happen being on the receiving end of a perfectly executed left hook or chokehold. In real life, ego change often isn't a choice. Often it will be forced upon you by reality. Before going into how this works, let's take one step back. Lets see how the ego actually works in daily life.

So far we looked at how the ego is built and how every part of it operates. The important question left is: What happens when you turn the machine on? Stories happen. We love a good story, we love being part of a good story. All of your ego together is a narrator. The different parts of your ego combined create your story. You can't hear him, but there's a David Attenborough inside all of us.

Everybody has their own story. Two people experiencing the same thing will still experience it differently. You and I are both the hero of our own story. Storytelling is one of the oldest arts there are. A good storyteller allows you to step into someone else's ego story. You temporarily become the hero of another story, something we love doing. When your ego works properly, it will make your life become a great adventure. When your ego filter is messed up, everything becomes negative and scary.

Because of your ego, every experience you have will truly be unique. No one could ever copy it. At the same time, nobody can truly understand it. This is the reason for every argument ever. Two different stories that don't go together. A common thing you see people do during arguments is ridicule the other. Know that usually it's your own incapability to understand the others' story that causes you to think the other person is dumb. Your ego prefers calling the other person stupid. In reality usually your ego is just not smart enough to understand the other's story.

One of the most common phenomena of an ego death is the deep sense of feeling connected. Your ego shuts down partially. You lose your unique perspective for a short period of time. Somehow this makes you understand and feel everyone else's. You feel truly connected to everything.

Here's a question for you though: If you and I experience something together, and we both experience it differently, we can't both be right, right? At least one of us has to be wrong, no?

Well yes, but it usually doesn't matter. If you and I walk past a house together, you may think it's beautiful. I may think it's ugly. Nothing will happen. There is no objective right or wrong here. We both just passed a judgment about something that just exists. Both our stories

work for us, and we can easily co-exist. The only risk here is we'll get into an argument where we probably just end up thinking the other person has bad taste.

Sometimes it does matter though. Let's say we walk past a dog. I believe it's adorable, you believe it's dangerous. I head towards it to pet it. You stay away from the dog. Being wrong here can have some serious consequences for me.

Simple examples of a very complex thing. In creating our story, we make a lot of judgments. Some good, some bad. Changing your story (ego filter) requires a lot of energy from our brains. You'd go crazy if you had to constantly change your story. You need your story so you have a direction in life.

Instead of changing our stories, our egos like to spin bad judgments in such a way that they somehow still fit the narrative. A little creativity is much easier for your brain than a complete overhaul of your story. When your ego story doesn't match up with reality, your ego will shoot into cognitive dissonance. Its first response will be to start spinning the events in such a way that they fit the narrative. This ego story spinning is called cognitive reframing.

We all spend a lot of time in cognitive dissonance. We make thousands of judgments a day. It is impossible to always be correct. The thing about cognitive dissonance is that it is very sneaky. It is really hard for us to know when we are cognitive reframing something. It just happens automatically. We can only tell when we are really honest with ourselves and learn to recognize the signs.

To be fair to your ego: A lot of time, things aren't very clear. Did you really make a bad judgment or was the thing that just happened an exception? Was it truly visible it was a sweet dog? I might say yes. You might have been bitten in the past by a dog that looked just like it.

Sometimes things are clear though. You were convinced someone was trustworthy but they ended up stealing from you. You can't rationalize that one away right? Well actually yes you can. The bigger your ego investment, the more you'll try to reframe. When you invest heavily into something, it becomes an important part of your story. Changing it will take a lot of energy. Your ego will still try to make the events fit your story. This can get quite extreme. The examples of people trying to justify horrendous relationships come to mind.

In fact, often our first response will be to attack the person that dared questioning our bad choices. If our ego's can convince us that the person calling us out on our mistakes is actually an idiot or a bad person, we can then ignore what they're saying. Most people shoot the messenger. Always avoid directly criticizing someone's ego investments when you can.

Surprisingly, your ego will often get away with this kind of behavior. Most things happen to have a big margin of error. Most things also won't affect you that much when they go wrong. To top it off, everyone does it. We all screw up constantly so no one really notices.

Sometimes though, sometimes the events just don't fit the story. Sometimes your ego just can't spin it.

Your ego may be very stubborn, it does try to act in your best interest. It will happen that your ego has to admit it is wrong about an ego investment.

Most psychologists would probably call such an event cognitive dissonance. They'd be wrong. Your ego admitting it is wrong goes beyond cognitive dissonance. If the ego investment was small enough, an ego restructuring will happen. This takes energy and feels unpleasant. This is the main reason no one likes to be wrong. Having to adjust your story is tiring and annoying to your ego.

An ego restructuring is usually already a major event. Most people are not experts on keeping their egos in check. Most people are also heavily ego invested in the idea of always being right (let's not kid ourselves). Your ego probably won't admit it was wrong unless you made a big ego investment into something bad.

Sometimes though, sometimes... Let me make a quick prediction here: I am going to tell you what the worst case scenario is. If you've ever experienced it, you'll immediately know and remember it. These events don't happen often, but when they do, you'll never forget. I'm talking about an ego meltdown.

An ego meltdown happens when your ego makes a very big, very bad investment and it blows up in your face. Your ego beliefs and values are all interconnected. When the bad investment is small, a restructuring of a few beliefs or values will be enough. When your investment is too big to fail, it will drag everything with it. All of a sudden every belief, every value, you start questioning them all.

Your ego will have a complete meltdown and nothing is certain anymore. The world becomes a very scary and unpredictable place once your story collapses completely.

I try to stay completely neutral in writing this (I don't even like politics). However, there is one very clear example of how a complete ego meltdown looks like that is just too good not to use. The 2016 US election of Donald Trump. Again, I don't care about who's right or wrong here, it's just a well documented example of some massive ego meltdowns.

Those who were most opposed to Donald Trump (liberals), had built a story for themselves. In their story, DJT was very evil. Fortunately the liberals, them included, were going to stop him from getting into power. They were going to be the hero that stops evil. A second major factor with DJT was that nobody gave him a chance of winning. All the commentators and experts were sure that Hillary was going to win the election. All the polls were saying the same. I remember there being a massive consensus around me on election day that Trump didn't stand a chance.

So this is the story that got built up in the ego filter of the most fanatical liberals (Again, I have no opinion on who was right or wrong in their ego beliefs). "Donald Trump is stupid and

evil. If he were to win, America would become a dictatorship and white nationalists are going to deport millions of people. Fortunately us liberals are here. We are the good guys, we're smarter and we are going to stop him. Besides the polls and experts all agree he doesn't even stand a chance anyways."

For the most fanatical liberals, the 2016 elections became their lives. They completely and utterly ego invested in politics. Their entire story depended on Hillary winning the election. They were utterly convinced it was going to play out like I just described. There was no way it could ever work out any differently.

And then Donald Trump won the election. Evil had won over good. They were now living in a racist dictatorship and they were powerless. Their ego's had a complete meltdown. You can see the videos on youtube. They may seem absurd if you're a neutral observer. Reality is that ego meltdowns are horrendous to go through. Remember that all pain is mental pain. Ego pain literally hurts. Your entire world collapses. I don't know the exact statistics, but I promise you, some liberals committed suicide that night. (I just looked it up: In the 24 hours after the election, there were four times more calls and texts to the suicide prevention hotline than usual.).

*Sidenote: Now by the time I'm writing the second edition of Summoned or Not, Joe Biden has won the 2020 elections and the most diehard MAGA fans have shown the same type of meltdown that diehard liberals did in 2016. Again, no judgment on who's right or wrong here, just an observation that no side is immune to this. The stronger your ego investments, the worse the crash will be.*

Humans need a level of certainty and security to function. Your ego gives you this perceived safety. When your ego collapses, you feel like you just lost everything. On election night, fanatical liberals truly felt like all was lost. Like there was no future.

So what happens next after an ego meltdown? Well, some people will never recover. A severe ego meltdown can literally break people forever. Ego meltdowns are no joke. They are the mind's equivalent of being involved in a car crash. When I said they physically hurt, I meant that they hurt a lot. They can make you physically sick. People feel like they got kicked in the stomach when they have severe ego pain. Some will even throw up.

Many people in mental asylums or suicide watch, are there because of an ego meltdown. Their story broke down and they now feel absolutely lost.

But let's not wallow on how horrible ego meltdowns are, let's talk about their benefits instead. Yes, they are very dangerous, and yes they hurt like hell. Yet, they also offer an opportunity for massive growth. Most ego meltdowns are caused because your ego filter just wasn't functioning good enough. Your story was just utterly incorrect. There's a few exceptions where it wasn't really your fault. Examples could be: being hit by a drunk driver or getting a severe heart attack despite living healthy. For your own sake however, always assume ego meltdowns are your fault.

Any meltdown caused by your ego investments is always your fault. Any bad relationship, any bad decision, your ego filter allowed it to happen. This is usually a very difficult pill for you to swallow. Your ego needs to be honest with itself, admit it was wrong, and that it isn't as smart as it thinks it is. These aren't exactly things your ego likes doing or is good at.

Even when an ego meltdown isn't your fault, it is still a result of your story no longer working. If your story is that you're on your way to becoming a pro runner. You will have an ego meltdown if one day you wake up in a hospital paralyzed from the waist down. And yes I know that it wasn't your fault that the drunk driver hit you as you were walking down the pavement.

An ego meltdown is simply a complete story collapse. Here's why you need to tell yourself it's your fault: Only when it is your fault can you take charge of correcting yourself. Only if you take charge, can you build your ego filter back up yourself. Your ego filter is going to be built up again simply because you cannot live without one (Don't you dare commit suicide over an ego meltdown). Your ego filter needs to fill itself back up, just like your heart needs to pump blood. Take charge of this process or you'll get it filled up by outside beliefs again.

Ego meltdowns are a weird thing. On one hand, they have destroyed many people. On the other hand, they have also created some of the greatest people in history. A lot of famous and important people seem to have had at least one major ego meltdown. Usually when they were younger. A rock bottom moment.

Why did so many people become great after an ego meltdown? Because it allowed them to take control over their beliefs. The outside beliefs were violently thrown out and they made the decision to take control over whatever their new story was going to be. Abraham Lincoln is a beautiful example of this. He seems to have had at least one major break down in his younger years. It took him a couple of years to recover, but once he did, he became one of the most important presidents the US ever had.

Understand that ego meltdowns are a rare and unique chance to recreate your ego filter in a way that is beneficial to you. This process isn't easy and might take a few years even, but it can make you stronger than you could have ever been otherwise.

I'd still advise you to use other means of ego correction when possible though. Ego meltdowns are not something to aim for.

# Dopamine Detoxing and Other Hormones



# Dopamine Detoxing

No man is an island. Rewriting your ego can solve many of your issues, but it cannot solve all of them. We live in a society. We are surrounded by other humans, corporations and governments. Most of them want something from us.

Unfortunately, there are ways our brain can be hacked by outsiders. Even if you keep your ego clean and effective, there are still other systems that can be taken advantage of.

The most important hackable system are your hormones. There are many different kinds of hormones in your body. The ones most often used against you are your pleasure & reward hormones.

There are four major pleasure & reward hormones we'll focus on here. Together they majorly influence your behavior. Unfortunately they don't always act in your best interest. Their release can be triggered by things that are bad for you. In fact they can hurt you a lot in the long run if mismanaged. These four hormones are: Dopamine, Oxytocin, Serotonin & Endorphins. D.O.S.E. if you want an acronym to help you remember.

Here's a short introduction to all four of them. Note that their real functions are highly complex. We don't even know exactly what each of them does or how and in relation to what other chemicals. This is a simplified explanation purely to make this book an easier read.

**Dopamine:** This is the reward chemical. Dopamine gets released when you feel like you've achieved something. *It can also be released by imagining you are going to achieve something.* This topic will receive some special attention later.

**Oxytocin:** This is the bonding chemical. When two people are close together, oxytocin gets released. The more oxytocin is released, the stronger the bond between the two grows. Example: when a baby is born, the mother and baby both release huge amounts of oxytocin to immediately create a strong bond.

**Endorphins:** This is the pleasure chemical that is for a large part related to pain. When the body experiences pain but needs to inhibit this, endorphins are released. Endorphins are the chemical that gives you runner's high. Other things that can trigger endorphin release are sex, music or laughter. Endorphins are also the main reason why the boundary between pain and pleasure can sometimes get blurred (especially during sex).

**Serotonin:** Serotonin is a hierarchical pleasure chemical. It is the status chemical. When you are on top of the hill, your body releases serotonin to make you feel good. If you are at the bottom of the hierarchy, your body releases almost zero serotonin but instead releases cortisol. Interestingly, one way to release huge amounts of serotonin is by feeling morally superior (Even if it's completely delusional). This explains a lot of human behavior.

**Cortisol:** Are stress hormones which are closely linked in with serotonin

# Understanding addiction

I originally came upon the topic of addiction, because I had been struggling with getting work done. I could just never find the motivation to do what I needed to do and would often end up watching netflix at 3PM or scrolling through social media for hours on end.

This despite the fact that I often did have the motivation at the start of the day. You probably know the feeling. "Today I'm going to sit down and do the work!". 10 hours later you're yet to start and all motivation is gone.

So why do we have that struggle? Why does our willpower seem to go from 100 to 0 in a matter of minutes? Well quite simple. Dopamine addiction. I was severely addicted to dopamine. If I'm completely honest with you, I still am addicted to it. Although much less than before.

Honestly, I don't even know if you can 100% get rid of it because dopamine is an essential part of our brain's systems. But I'm getting ahead of myself here, let's first go into what dopamine addiction is exactly.

**Because it's not just me who's addicted to the stuff, all of us are.**

Dopamine has long been seen as a pleasure chemical, but really it is a motivational chemical, it works as a reward mechanism to enforce good behaviors. Dopamine makes you feel good when you achieve things.

At least that's what it is supposed to be...

In fact we are all severely addicted to dopamine and it is the root cause of most of our problems. Yet almost no one is aware of it. Which is crazy, because dopamine addiction is a silent murderer.

In the olden days, our dopamine reward system was quite useful. We would only get a dopamine shot when we achieved something, so there was a big drive for us to achieve things. Doing nothing meant no dopamine, so that wasn't really an option for our pleasure seeking brain. You got hungry, hunted a mammoth. Not only did you now have something to eat, you also felt good about it thanks to a dopamine release.

Then in the 20th century, corporations made a dramatic discovery. Our brain's dopamine system can be hacked. There are ways to release dopamine without you having to achieve anything. The quickest way is via drugs, tobacco and alcohol, but those aren't profitable enough, plus they destroy you way too fast, with negative societal effects. So instead, consumerism was developed.

Consumerism was born through new marketing methods. Corporations, thanks to the work of Sigmund Freud and Edward Bernays, learned that with the right marketing, our dopamine system gets activated by buying stuff.

Ow and the problem with drugs destroying you too fast? Well big pharma solved that problem. They found ways to keep you hooked on their drugs for life. Their aim is not to cure you, it is to keep you dependent. Their drugs are designed to fight symptoms, not causes. Opiates have been a business model since day one. Opium destroyed China in the 1860's. Oxycontin & Fentanyl are destroying the West today.

Then, to make matters worse, technology came along. Suddenly it became possible to record music and create entertaining television. It didn't take long before corporations realized how those mediums could be used to make you release even more dopamine. How they could be used to make you addicted.

This was just the beginning. If the 20th century wasn't bad enough, the 21st century came with the development of the three ultimate dopamine machines:

- ***Social media***
- ***Computer games***
- ***Porn***

All three perfectly crafted to continuously trigger your dopamine reward system.

Although perfectly crafted might be the wrong word, because they are still continuously improving (perhaps worsening would be a better word. All three are rebuilding their earning models around a principle that is highly addictive and dangerous for those who get caught in it's trap:

### **Microtransaction Mechanisms**

You probably have heard of microtransactions before, but just in case you haven't: Microtransactions are the new way in which computer game developers make money. In the old days, they'd make a video game, you'd buy it for \$50 and then you'd play it as much as you wanted. Developers didn't earn a penny off of you after you made the purchase.

Eventually, developers realized that if they'd make an expansion to well performing games, they could get extra income for less work. After that, developers realized that they could start selling games in modules.

So instead of one \$50 game, you'd have 5 \$25 games. Eventually game developers realized that they could start selling smaller downloadable content for smaller prices. So you'd buy a cool armor or sword for \$2. Thus microtransactions were born.

The principle of micro-transactions, is that you split up the dopamine hits as much as possible. Instead of one big dopamine hit when you buy that \$50 game, you get 50 smaller

dopamine hits. Thing is, those smaller dopamine hits now all cost you \$3-5 a piece so you end up spending 3/5x what you would have otherwise.

Inevitably, some people get hooked hard on a game. It's not uncommon to hear about people spending well over \$1000 on one single game. Developers can now potentially earn 10-100x as much per customer as they would have if they just sold the \$50 game.

Now we're not discussing the ethics of trying to get as much money as possible out of your customers here. What is important, is that by turning away from big purchase products to micro transaction mechanisms, they have hacked your dopamine system even further so you become more heavily addicted. The fact that you end up spending 5-10x as much is a good indicator of how much more addicted you become.

The worst thing is you don't even notice how much money and dopamine you're spending. Buying a \$50 product is enough for most of us to at least give it a conscious thought. Do you really want this product? Is it worth \$50?

With micro-transactions, you're not even thinking anymore. It's only \$3 each time, less than a cup of coffee at Starbucks. The purchases become non-conscious. You keep spending \$3 every two to three days until eventually you've spent \$250 on a game that's worse than the one you could have gotten for \$50.

It's not just the sales model of games that has undergone a process of micro-transactionalization. The games themselves have gone down the same path. Games in the early 90's were hard. Try replaying the old Mario SNES games. Chances are you'll never even get to the 3rd level.

The dopamine model of those games was that you'd have to put in a lot of effort, but you'd get a big dopamine hit each time you managed to finally beat a new level. If you played those games in those days, you can still remember the feeling of beating a final boss. I certainly do.

These days however, games have become easier. They've become a constant stream of small dopamine hits that make you want to keep on playing. You barely notice anymore when you finish a level, you just keep on going to the next.

The old model of video gaming, you were much more likely to quit playing after an hour or two because it took much more conscious energy for much less dopamine. Games these days you can keep playing for 10 hours in one go because they've become a subconscious flow of constant smaller dopamine hits.

Micro-transactionalization didn't just happen with video games. Social media platforms are always busy improving their models to optimize how many likes you get and how many crumbs of dopamine are the optimal to keep you coming back. They build entire algorithms based on this idea. This is part of the reason why one day you might get 100 likes and the next day only 1, even if what you posted is similar.

Pornography has undergone the exact same process. Thirty years ago you'd have to buy a video at a video store and you'd watch it 10/20 times before buying a new one. Then came internet porn where you could go through 30 videos in 30 minutes. Now there's camgirl models and onlyfans content where you can keep spending small to medium amounts of money on girls for every photo they post or every action they do during a cam session.

In the 90's there'd be a big cost to getting a porn video or mag (physically going to the store and spending \$20-30 in one go). Now you can keep spending your money, one dollar at a time without any physical effort and without even noticing it. There are plenty of examples of men eventually spending tens of thousands of dollars on their favorite cam girl or only fans account.

*Important note here: Usually when men end up spending tens of thousands of dollars on camgirls, there is more at play than simply a dopamine addiction. In fact, nearly always when someone is severely addicted to something, it is more than just the dopamine.*

*Usually there are some really bad ego beliefs that are the root cause of this behavior. A man that's willing to spend his entire annual wage on some girl he has never even met, usually suffers from a severe belief that he is inferior and unworthy.*

*This is why I put Summoned or Not as the first section of this book and not Dopamine detoxing. There is no point to dopamine detoxing if you don't get your beliefs in order first. If the root cause is still there, you'll always end up relapsing.*

# The Price of Dope

So why is it so bad that we get a lot of dopamine spikes these days? Doesn't that just mean that we feel a lot better than we used to? Well... no. In fact, it makes you feel much, much worse.

For three main reasons.

- 1) *System overload*
- 2) *Nothing meaningful gets done*
- 3) *You get trapped in repetition*

Our modern society is built upon dopamine addiction. Global companies are producing goods that are aimed at maximum dopamine release. Even our foods and drinks are crafted for maximum dopamine (hi there sugar & flavor additives). Every day, we are bombarded by dopamine triggers from all directions.

Our brains weren't made for the constant dopamine stimulation that modern technology gives us. The dopamine system is meant to only get activated when you achieve something good. You spent all day hunting the mammoth and finally you got him! Nowadays it gets activated 50 times a day for no good reason. It simply can't handle that much work.

Our brains are so overstimulated that they eventually give up and break down. Stress levels rise, anxiety rises and eventually depression and burnout kicks in. All due to the enormous dopamine overload we are getting daily. An overload that is coming from all directions.

The consequences of this are clear to see. Depression is reaching all time highs. People are severely addicted to the dopamine rushes. Little children (and adults) go apeshit when they get their screens taken away. Burnouts are becoming common amongst young people.

News, Media, Music, Sugary food, Screens, Social media, Porn, Video games, Drugs. Over the past 100 years, all these things have been developed into perfect dopamine producing addictions. All of us are addicted to at least one of them

Including me, including you.

Be honest with yourself. What if someone were to take all of those dopamine inducing addictions away from you? Would you even know what to do with your time? Can you honestly say you wouldn't get angry, stressed out or even depressed? Just like a heroin junkie forced into rehab.

We are all dopamine junkies

The second reason why dopamine addiction is so bad? Nothing gets done anymore. Our reward system gets hacked. You already constantly get the reward. So why put in the effort?

And even if you did, there's no dopamine left to reward you. We are continuously distracted and even smaller goals aren't reached because we do not find the motivation to put in the work. Dopamine addiction, in its many forms, robs you from the will to achieve anything. So you achieve nothing beyond the necessary basics

Make a living wage and spend the rest of your time on porn, your phone, and video games. Like a junkie always looking for the next fix

Whether it is likes on twitter, reaching the next level in a video game, the entertainment of television, the drama of politics, the sensations from food or music, or even the orgasm from porn. They all give you the dopamine that you'd otherwise only get from accomplishments.

Dopamine addiction robs you of real achievements. Your brain already used up all your dopamine on social media, so there is none left to reward you when you want to do useful things. Useful hard work won't feel rewarding. You try for five minutes, but then simply go back to checking your instagram likes.

In the long run this causes you to get caught in a trap. Your dopamine system gets hacked by netflix, but other parts of your brain realize that there's something wrong. So part of you wants to change, but the dopamine system refuses to do so. It is addicted after all

Which brings us to the third reason why dopamine overload is so bad for you. It makes you get caught in repetition. Your mind numbs out when you play video games, watch tv, or scroll through social media.

This becomes an especially big problem when micro-transactionalization comes into play. One more level, one more like, one more click, one more scroll. The actions become so small, that you no longer notice you are doing them. You look at the clock and several hours have passed without you even noticing.

You keep scrolling without even being aware of it. You're stuck in a kind of dopamine haze. The reason why this is so bad for you, is that your brain gets very tired from the constant dopamine bombardment, but you're too zoned out to notice. To make it worse, often it leads to you going to bed late. Your brain first gets extra tired and then doesn't get any sleep to recover.

The end result is someone who can't retain his attention on anything useful, is permanently tired, feels awful about never getting anything done, is completely dependent on stimulants like caffeine to perform, yet can't change a thing because he needs his dopamine fixes to keep coming.

# The Root of All Addiction

When someone is addicted to porn. Know that they aren't really addicted to porn itself. They're addicted to the dopamine it gives them. Simply quitting porn won't help them, because they'll find another way to get the dopamine. Porn wasn't the problem, it was simply a symptom of a much bigger problem.

When you play video games, watch porn, or go on social media, your dopamine system will give you the dope reward. It will make you feel good, but subconsciously you know you didn't earn it. You know you aren't living a fulfilling life. This eats you from the inside.

Dopamine fix replacement is a huge problem for people trying to kick a bad habit. Because you may quit playing so many video games, but chances are you'll just replace them with self-improvement youtube videos, or suddenly you're on social media 10 times as much.

I cannot stress this enough. You aren't addicted to video games. You aren't addicted to porn. You aren't even addicted to heroin. You are addicted to quick dopamine releases. Everything else is merely a behavior that is a symptom of the real problem. Dopamine addiction is what causes your problems with video games or whatever symptoms you have

So how do you fix dopamine addiction? Same way you fix any kind of addiction. In the short run, you need to do a full detox. You need to remove bad dopamine habits from your life. On top of that you need to immediately start building up positive habits. Habits that actually help you reach your goals and make progress in life. Replace your dopamine addiction behaviors with actual achievements.

Unfortunately, in this day and age, this is far from easy. I'd love to tell you that there's an easy five step program you can follow, but I'd be lying. We've been groomed for the past century to be dopamine addicts and turning all of this around takes willpower, consistency and a willingness to go against the masses. Because it's not just you who is addicted. Everyone you know is addicted to a certain degree. Some worse than others.

However it can be done. If you understand that the real problem is your addiction to dopamine. If you understand that the porn, video games, social media, sugar, all day music listening, etc are merely replaceable symptoms. You can fix the problem

One special mention here is for humor. Humor is great. Having a good laugh from time to time is more than necessary for leading a happy life. However it can also be a pitfall. Humor can be a coping mechanism.

A way to distract yourself from facing your issues. Whether it is through wasting your time scrolling through endless lists of funny memes and cat videos, or turning everything that gets too close to comfort into a joke, humor can become a pitfall. A way to give yourself that undeserved dopamine fix that will only increase your issues in the long run.

# Detoxing

Dopamine detoxing is far from easy, but it can be done.

Let's go over some of the things you can do to make things easier for yourself. We'll also go over a few things that you can expect to happen. Both positive and negative.

## How to make detoxing easier on yourself

First off, here's a list of things that are all big dopamine inducing activities. You're going to want to print this one out or write it down somewhere as a useful reminder. Because often when you cut out one of these activities, you'll get a strong urge to replace it with one of the others. This way you're not solving the problem, you're just changing the symptoms.

- Sugar (both in food & drinks)
- Music
- Porn/masturbation
- Social Media
- (Video) games
- Movies/series
- Screens in general (TV/Computers/Phones/etc)
- Buying things
- News/media
- Alcohol/drugs

Now if you want to go really extreme for the first 24 hours, also avoid:

- Sex
- Any form of entertainment (even reading)
- Food
- Any drink that isn't water

Personally I'm not a big fan of the extreme version. The goal is to redirect your dopamine towards productive things. Not to prove how extreme you can live without any form of comfort. However, if you like challenging yourself or are currently dealing with a particularly nasty addiction, give it a go.

The first thing you need to know, is that it is virtually impossible to get completely rid of dopamine addiction. Sorry to break it to you, but unless you're willing to go live in a cabin in the woods without access to any form of technology, you cannot fully detox. Society is just too filled with Dopamine Inducing Machines (DIMs).

It's not about completely detoxing from dopamine. It's about reducing the amount of cheap dopamine fixes as much as possible. It's about getting the main culprits out of your life & giving yourself back those hours wasted on DIMs.

Because the main benefit I got from dopamine detoxing is all the extra time. I also have the energy and motivation to do useful things with that time. Think about it. I'm sure you know this situation. You have a deadline for a project or exam. You tell yourself you're going to study all day for it. You sit behind your desk and try to start. But first you check your phone. Then you check your email. You study for 15 minutes and you take a break to go on twitter.

At the end of the day, you've only studied for about 1 or 2 hours, yet it took you the entire day.

I know it sounds cliché, but my productivity has gone up x10. Dopamine detoxing really is a productivity hack if I've ever seen one. It's not really a hack though, it is hard work and unpleasant to say the least. But if you manage to get through the withdrawal period, it's worth it.

### **So how did I dopamine detox? How can you dopamine detox?**

Well I went hardcore for the first week. No screens, no music, no sugar, no purchases I didn't need. It was tough to say the least. You don't even realize how much of your time is spent on these things until you go without.

You don't realize how much **you depend on them** until you go without.

One thing I did allow myself was 15 minutes of phone time a day. I set a timer and had to stop as soon as the timer went off. Because let's be real, our phones have become socializing hubs for us. With no phones, it's become very difficult to stay in contact with family & friends.

Another important thing I did was to let a number of friends and relatives know I was doing this. I calmly explained why & they were all understanding. Some of them even joined in for a 24 hour no phone challenge.

### **A lot of unexpected things happened that first week.**

First of all, I slept. I slept a lot. I averaged 10-11 hours a night that first week.

Funny thing about having no DIMs around you, evenings get boring. You'll be too tired to do any meaningful work, and there is no mind numbing way to entertain yourself. So you are left with boredom. I went to bed around 9 most of the evenings. Sleep literally became the most exciting option once the dopamine was gone.

Secondly, I got sick. I got flu-like symptoms and did feel quite shitty for a few days. I looked it up and apparently dopamine is an immune system repressor. So as long as you get a lot of

dopamine fixes, your immune system isn't fully capable of getting rid of minor diseases lingering inside you. As soon as the dopamine stops though. It activates to flush everything out.

**I got way more social.** Not only did I no longer have the option to be on my cellphone when I was out (I left my cellphone at home all week), I also no longer got any dopamine fixes from it.

Turns out being social gives you similar rewards to dopamine. There are more pleasure chemicals. Oxytocin specifically rewards you for bonding with others. With the dopamine out of the way, I had more time and need for oxytocin producing activities like good conversations and quality time spent with others.

*Side note: this is especially useful if you're single and want to meet someone. Dopamine addiction keeps you home & anti-social. Doing a detox means you'll go out more and have a higher chance of meeting someone.*

(One of the most telltale signs of depression, is low levels of oxytocin. The more dependent you are on dopamine, the bigger the risk you'll get depressed)

I also learned that you need much less dopamine than you might think. It is just like when you've been starving for a week and someone gives you a cracker. That cracker will taste just as good as a nice juicy meal would have otherwise. When you regulate your dopamine, the amounts that you get, will feel just as good, if not better than the usual unending stream. You learn to appreciate the smaller things again. I can really enjoy eating an orange or listening to one song now. Hell, five days into my detox, I got really excited when I found a particular brand of shampoo I had been looking for.

Finally, you learn that that little devil on your shoulder definitely exists. It keeps whispering little suggestions into your ear to make you stray from the detox. Little thoughts like "You did really good today, let's reward yourself with one hour of netflix". You'll have to fight off a lot of those thoughts the first few days.

### **There were also some positive effects that you probably do expect**

Energy and focus went up dramatically. Even those few days that I felt sick, I still got more work done than I would on a normal day before my detox. It's only now that I realize just how distracting those DIMs were when trying to get work done. And only now do I realize how much energy they suck away from you.

I could read again. Before the detox, I'd sit down to read a book, read 3 pages, check my phone, read 1 more page, check my phone, check my phone, check my phone. Now I can easily read 20/30 pages in one sitting and really get immersed into the book I'm reading.

I also felt more relaxed and happier. I'll admit, not the first 4 days. The first 4 days I definitely got some withdrawal symptoms. I was grumpy and short tempered. The withdrawal is real,

don't underestimate it. But from day 5 onwards, I started feeling very relaxed and happy. All those DIMs create a lot of stress inside you. Like a body that's always working out, your mind is always active.

**And just like how your body needs to rest after exertion, so does your mind.** It's not until you give it that rest, that you realize just how important it is.

Hardcore detoxing was definitely necessary for me, but in today's world, it was impossible for me to keep going forever. As much as screens are a dopamine distraction, they're also necessary for much of the work and socializing we do today.

So after week 1, I cut down on the detox. That first week was like a shock to the system I needed, now it was time to start finding a way to make this manageable for the long run.

I upped my screen time, became active on twitter again and allowed myself to watch movies or play a video game if in the presence of others.

*Side note: Only indulging in DIM activities when you're with others is a good way to control the behavior. Addictions tend to get out of hand once you start doing them when you're by yourself. If you only allow yourself to watch a movie, drink alcohol or play some playstation when in the presence of others, that acts like a natural brake.*

I did keep doing certain habits I had built up during that first week though. If you want to do a dopamine detox, here are some of the things you definitely want to do:

- Never put your DIMs at arms reach. Personally I always made sure my computer, phone and iPad were always in a different room than me. This way getting on my phone became an active, conscious decision rather than an automatic thing
- Change your passwords & pin codes. You'd be amazed at how automatic your addicted behaviors are. When you change your pin code, you can no longer get on your phone on autopilot. Typing in the wrong pincode 20 times in one day really wakes you up out of your habits.

On top of that, I also suggest getting an extra phone. Get yourself one of those old flip phones that you can only text or call with. Get the cheapest plan you can get (or get pre-paid). Get a new number with that phone. Start taking that phone with you when you leave the house. Give that new number only to your closest friends and family & let them know to only use it for emergencies or really important stuff. This way you can still be reached if necessary, without being unnecessarily distracted. All for the price of max \$10 a month

Even though I have increased my usage of DIMs again, I have become more selective. The real difficulty of keeping that dopamine in check, is the fact that you have at least 8 major ways of getting it right now. If you reduce that to 1 or 2, you can monitor them much better.

Personally, I no longer play video games, watch netflix/tv, porn or news & media, I cut out excessive sugar and no longer listen to continuous music.

So now I only have to keep social media and a limited amount of music time in check (and the occasional movie or video game when with friends). It's much easier to control my dopamine now that I only have to focus on those two.

After week one, there are definitely going to be some swings. Some days I was really productive and got almost no distractions. Other days were almost as bad as before. The key is to keep mindful about it and to keep pushing.

And finally & most importantly, the big question: **Will dopamine detoxing turn your life around?**

The answer is simple: No it won't.

Dopamine detoxing by itself doesn't mean anything. If you go from being on your phone 8 hours a day to only 1 hour a day. That doesn't mean anything.

What will change your life, is you doing productive, useful things in those 7 hours you've just gained. Something that's far from automatic. If you don't have any motivation to do anything useful, you'll slip back into your addiction.

If instead of being on your computer all day, you go hang out on a park bench with friends all day, nothing will happen. You have to build something with the time you're now granted.

Dopamine detoxing isn't the thing that will turn your life around, but it definitely helps setting you up to turn things around. Don't be too harsh on yourself though. If you gain 7 hours a day through cutting out DIMs, it's ok if you spend 5 of those hours doing useful things and 2 hours to relax and recuperate.

So I'd say, try it out. Go hardcore for a week, realize how big of an effect it has on your life, and then after that week, start building a new lifestyle. One where you are focused on your long term goals, one where you suddenly have those 4 hours a day to work on that business idea. One where now you no longer have an excuse not to become more social. One where you are more relaxed and healthier.

# Willpower

There is one very important subject that you cannot ignore when talking about dopamine detoxing, willpower. Willpower and dopamine have a close relationship together. In an ideal situation, your willpower is the push factor and dopamine the pull factor for you to become successful.

However, if these two are not in line with each other, then they sabotage each other and lead to nothing but procrastination and feelings of dissatisfaction.

But before we go further into this relationship, let's take a quick look into willpower on its own. Willpower is like a power battery. It takes willpower for you to go do that difficult or boring task. It takes willpower for you to get started on something. Every time you make a decision to go do the right thing, you use up willpower.

## **Your daily amount of willpower is limited**

Nobody has infinite willpower. If you want to become more productive, you have to learn how to maximize your use of the limited willpower you have.

Note that you can train your willpower just like a muscle. By doing the right thing every day until you've exhausted your willpower, you will gain more of it and you will be able to be productive longer each day.

Just don't think you can become some sort of 16 hours a day productivity machine. You are human after all and you need to relax and enjoy life as well or you'll burn yourself out within a matter of months.

Besides, most people aren't even truly productive for more than 2 hours a day on average. Learn how to become productive for 6-8 hours a day and you'll be miles ahead of your competition.

Now let's get back to willpower & dopamine. Willpower is what drives you to be productive. Dopamine is the reward you get for being productive. They are the push & pull that help you get things done.

When we rest, our willpower charges back up. That's why when you are tired, it becomes difficult to be productive. Your willpower just isn't charged up so it becomes much harder to motivate yourself to get to work.

It's also why most people fail their diets during the evening. Their willpower is depleted so they budge and get out the potato chips (It also doesn't help that their dopamine system has already given them the pleasant feeling for doing so well during the day). It's much easier to motivate yourself after a good night's sleep.

It takes willpower to get you across the initial threshold of discomfort; but it is the prospect of a dopamine reward that makes you want to stay in the uncomfortable position for prolonged periods.

Because dopamine rewards us with pleasure after we accomplish our goals. Humans by nature, are comfort seekers. Most of us, if we could, would avoid all uncomfortable situations. Hard work is uncomfortable.

To counteract the discomfort of working hard, our brain gives us dopamine as a reward. Pleasure to compensate for the discomfort. Willpower is useful, but it wouldn't help much without the dopamine reward at the end.

You can willpower yourself to put your hand into a flame, but because you'll only get pain from it and 0 dopamine reward at the end, you're not very likely to do something so stupid. Even if you did, it wouldn't be long before you'd pull your hand out again.

Motivation is fleeting, your willpower gets drained pretty fast when it has to motivate you by itself. Willpower is like a kickstarter to get you going and create some momentum. But if you have to rely on willpower alone, the tank would be empty within minutes.

Fortunately, you also have your dopamine reward system. Willpower is like the stick, dopamine is the carrot. Once willpower has got you started, the knowledge you'll get that sweet dopamine at the end is what keeps you going.

If there was no dopamine reward system in our brain, we wouldn't be willing to go through prolonged periods of discomfort. We simply don't have enough willpower to stay in them for long periods of time (think about the hand in the flame)

### **To achieve great things, you need to be uncomfortable for a long time**

This is also why momentum is so powerful. Once you start getting results, you start getting your dopamine reward hits. The more dopamine you get from a certain action, the less willpower you need to do that action. You simply keep going & keep getting those sweet dopamine hits.

That's why you get discouraged when you don't get any initial results. You used your willpower and your brain believed it would get a dopamine reward soon. Unfortunately, the dopamine doesn't come. You underestimated how much effort it would be to get what you want and now you're feeling unpleasantly.

To create a successful business, to achieve mastery in a skill or to become successful at anything, all those things require months to years of hard work & stepping outside of your comfort zone before you truly get the results you want. Which is why so many lose the willpower to push through the discomfort. All willpower, no dopamine makes Jack a very unmotivated boy. Willpower alone won't get you there, you need that dopamine.

# Why You Have Motivational Struggles

Why are you, I and everyone else, having so many problems with getting things done? Why don't you simply have the motivation to do the uncomfortable things you know you should do to get what you truly desire?

It is because you are wasting all your willpower.

You waste your willpower because your dopamine system is hacked.

Why work for months to get your dopamine reward, when you could also click on a button and get the same feeling?

Why challenge yourself doing a task you don't even like doing, when you could get the same reward from playing a video game?

When your dopamine system gets overloaded by modern technology, there is no more reward for hard work. This puts your willpower on its own

See, when there are a 1000 distractions around you that are all dying to give you a dopamine hit, you no longer need to ever feel discomfort to get your dopamine. You naturally dislike feeling uncomfortable, but now you no longer even get a reward for it at the end.

In the ideal situation, your willpower propels you forward towards your goal and your dopamine system pulls you towards that same goal. They work together and help you achieve maximum results for your effort.

Unfortunately that isn't how it's working for your right now.

Because, not only has your dopamine system been hacked so that it no longer rewards you from achieving your goal; It now actually actively drains your willpower. Because you now also constantly have to discipline yourself not to check your phone.

Not only does your willpower now have to do all the work to get you to your goal; Your dopamine is actively derailing you. So you now also need 10x the amount of willpower you needed before just to keep going.

It's like driving on a highway with low fuel and a passenger that's constantly pulling the wheel to try to get you to exit at every stop for some time wasting, unhealthy fast food. Good luck reaching your final destination like that.

Be honest with yourself about this. You know you shouldn't be on your phone. You know you shouldn't be watching Netflix at 3PM, but you do it because your dopamine system is yearning for those quick fixes. Anything to get out of the discomfort of work and into the sweet reward of (false) achievement.

As soon as you get to work in the mornings (or even before then), the mental battle starts. That voice in your head telling you it's ok to go watch netflix for an hour first. Or That you really deserve that coffee break even if you've only done 10 minutes of work so far.

You're not achieving what you want, because you are constantly distracted. You're constantly distracted because you are surrounded by dopamine inducing machines. Screens, news, netflix, music, porn, video games, social media, sugar, consumer goods, etc

If you truly want to become successful, you have to go through the discomfort for as long as it takes

Now there are two ways to maximize the amount of time you're willing to be uncomfortable. Dopamine detoxing is only half of it. The second major mental improvement you can make, is willpower maxing.

# Willpower Maxing

Willpower maxing is much easier than it may sound, it only requires some discipline and good habits.

First let's get the big one out of the way: **sleep**

Sleep is the absolute number one factor when it comes to willpower. Motivating yourself to get to work is ten times easier after a good night's sleep. It's almost impossible to motivate yourself after pulling an all nighter.

A well rested brain is a motivated brain. A tired brain just wants to relax and do mind numbing things.

When it comes to good sleep, there are multiple factors you want to take into account. The most important ones are:

- **How long you sleep:** Now you get many conflicting messages about this. On one hand you have many people saying you only need 6 hours and anything over that is a waste of time; On the other hand you have people claiming you need 9+ hours.

The truth? It depends. Sleeping is highly personal. Some people need 4 hours or less to function well, others need 10 hours to function well. Find what works best for you. Personally I've found that I perform really well on 7 hours of sleep for a few days in a row, followed by one or two nights where I sleep 9+ hours. I suggest you experiment to find out what works best for you.

- **Bedtime:** This factor is highly overlooked. Your sleeping hours aren't equal. Our bodies respond to sunlight and they follow something called a circadian rhythm. What this means is that in the evening, your body goes into a sleeping mode. In the morning, your body goes back into an awake mode. You can go against this rhythm of course. It is perfectly possible to stay up all night and then sleep during the day. However, this will mean the quality of both your sleep and your awake time will be less.

Going to bed early is a great way to boost your energy levels. Unfortunately, our modern culture goes against our natural rhythms. Mainly thanks to modern technology, it's suddenly become the norm to stay up until midnight or even later. When really, the perfect bedtime for most people is somewhere between 8 and 10 PM.

Coming back to total hours of sleep. The best way to find out how many hours work best for you, is by going to bed early. Let's say you go to bed at 9 PM and don't have to go to work until 9 AM. That way you have plenty of hours to sleep without having

to put on an alarm clock (or just put one at 8AM as a failsafe). This way your body can sleep as many hours as it needs. Do this for a few weeks and you'll have a firm grasp of how much sleep really is best for you.

I know you might be thinking right now "I'm not going to go to bed at 9-10, I'd just be lying wide awake in there for 2-3 hours before I could finally fall asleep." And you're probably right. If right now your standard bed time is 1AM, you're not going to successfully switch it around to 9PM in one go. Rather you should try to change it in increments of about 20-30 mins a day until you get there.

- **Proper relaxation before bed:** Most people watch tv until midnight and then go straight to bed. Then they complain the next day about how they couldn't fall asleep. Is it any wonder though? When you watch screens until right before you go to bed, your brain is activated. It is stressed because it has to work all evening. You can't expect such a wired brain to calm down instantly and fall asleep as soon as your head hits the pillow.

Give your brain rest during the evenings. I know this will sound boring and old fashioned, but turn off the computer at 8PM and go read a book instead. Do some light reading. Go do some of the chores you still have laying around. This will make your mind feel bored and tired. Which is exactly what you want it to feel after 9PM..

- **Get a good mattress:** This another factor that's highly overlooked. A high quality mattress and pillow that are well suited for your body, can make all the difference. A bad mattress & pillow will cause your body to tense up and become painful during the night. This severely hampers your sleep quality and energy levels. A good mattress and pillow will mean you wake up energized with a relaxed body.

## **Cut Out Distractions**

Of course willpower is about more than just sleeping properly. It is about consistently doing the things that you don't feel like doing. Willpower is just like any other muscle. Use it often and it will get stronger.

There is one very underrated way of maximizing your willpower. Which is building your life in such a way that you hardly need any willpower. This is best explained via using an example, so let's introduce Bob and Jake.

Bob has a TV in his bedroom. The first thing he does when he wakes up in the morning is turn it on and watch 20 mins of tv before taking his shower (tv still on in the background). As soon as he gets downstairs he grabs his phone and spends his entire breakfast scrolling through his social media. Then he goes to his study/hobby room where he goes to work behind his computer. Right besides him is his brand new playstation 5 that's hooked up to

his brand new 60" flatscreen tv. It's only 10PM now but he's not really feeling productive anyhow. An hour of Call of Duty can't hurt right? Fast forward 12 hours, Bob has done almost nothing today.

Jake on the other hand doesn't have any electronics in his bedroom. He wakes up, goes straight for his shower. Eats his breakfast in silence and goes to his study room. His room is nicely organized and has only what he needs. He works on his old laptop that's fine for working but sucks for video games. He needs to write today so he turns off the wifi router and gets to work. It's only 1 PM and he's already gotten 4 hours of solid work in. He goes to his kitchen to get lunch and only now grabs his smartphone to answer the messages he got. After about 30 mins he goes back to work. He works until 4 and calls it a day. Only now does he go on his social media. He allows himself to play Call of Duty for 2 hours in his hobby shed and turns off all electronics at 8PM.

Now most people reading this would say Jake has more willpower than Bob. They'd be wrong. Bob probably has more willpower than Jake for being able to get any work done at all in his conditions. But he's fighting an uphill battle whereas Jake made it easy for himself.

Bob puts the candy bowl right in front of him and then has to spend all day trying to not eat from it until finally he caves in and eats it all. Jake on the other hand puts the candy bowl in a hard to reach cupboard and forgets about it because he doesn't see or smell the candy.

You should consider all DIMs to be like candy. The more you have them around the house, the more you'll use them. Nobody is that iron willed that they can create 100 distractions for themselves and then not use them.

A great example of someone who understood this is one of my favorite painters, Lucian Freud (grandson of Sigmund). When he was younger he spent a lot of his time chasing girls, going out and gambling. He always had a huge passion for painting, but his other passions got to such a point that they really hampered his work.

Then as he got older, he started cutting out those distractions. The partying stopped, the gambling stopped (to be honest, the chasing girls never did) and as a result, he was painting more at age 80 than he was at age 30, despite having far less energy than he used to have.

He simply cut out everything from his life until all that was left was painting. So he ended up being 85, still painting 10 hours a day. An incredible feat most 30 year old artists wouldn't even manage to do. All because he optimized his life for painting to such a degree that he didn't see any other option for himself than to paint.

Now I understand you don't want to turn yourself into a hermit with a life devoid of any DIMs, but there are probably a few small things you can do that will already make a major difference. Things like putting your phone in another room or creating a workspace that's devoid of distractions. Often a small hurdle is enough to stop you from using your DIMs. Personally I've made my atelier a technology free zone.

In my atelier there's nothing but canvasses, paint, pen and paper (except for an old flip phone so people can call me if they need me). That's it. And guess what, my productivity during my painting sessions has gone up dramatically. I used to spend 4 hours a day trying to paint (but being majorly distracted by the DIMs around me). Now I actually paint 4 hours a day. My painting output has nearly doubled. The only difference I've made is cutting out the distractions. No extra willpower needed!

### **Long Term Thinking**

Most people don't have the luxury of flipping their entire lives around in one day. We all have commitments and responsibilities. Which is why you have to approach this from a long term perspective. I started noticing my old atelier was limiting my output well over a year ago, but it took me a year to get a new affordable space to work in.

The most important thing is understanding what your biggest distractions are and slowly getting them out of your life. Have issues with phone addiction? Next time you have to replace your phone, get an old model that doesn't have all the extras. Getting majorly distracted by your big tv? Next time you move places, create a set up where your TV doesn't get a prominent place in your living room. The way you decorate your home has a huge influence on how productive you'll be. What are you giving the most prominent places? Is it your Playstation set up or is it your study desk? Do you have all your DIMs in one room or are they all over your house?

Remember the golden rule here: What your brain can't see, it doesn't care about. If you throw out every DIM you have, within one month you won't even miss them anymore. Simply because your mind will have found alternatives for them.

You know that hobby you've been wanting to pick up for years. The one you somehow never get around to starting because you're too busy? You know what's the best way to get started? It's throwing your TV in the trash. Suddenly you'll find you've got way more energy and willpower in the evenings to go do that hobby.

Because that's a crucial thing you need to understand about how our brains work. Once they're addicted to DIMs, they'll go look for excuses why you shouldn't do any work and go enjoy your DIMs instead. The mere fact that there's a 60" plasma screen in your living room will make your brain find reasons why you should watch it instead of doing something productive. Your brain will start telling you how tired you are and why you should rest and watch some tv (even though watching TV is way more tiring than most hobbies!)

Long term thinking is the number one most important thing in becoming more productive and more successful. 90% of your productivity depends on a small amount of moments where you make important decisions. Am I going to get the superfast computer that allows me to play the newest games? Or am I getting the older model that doesn't have a good graphics card? Am I getting the latest Iphone? Or am I going to get this cheap \$100 model that's good for calling & texting but nothing else? The decisions you make in those crucial moments can

make the difference between leading a successful and fulfilling life, or spending 2000 hours in the next 2 years being addicted to video games.

## **Momentum**

The next thing you need to understand about willpower, is how to use it most efficiently. The number one way to make sure you are as productive as possible during your regular days, is momentum. The best way to use your willpower, is by using it to kickstart your momentum. As soon as you're going ahead full speed, you no longer need willpower to keep going. It's Newton's 1st law. When you're at rest, you want to stay at rest. When you're going full speed, you want to keep going at full speed.

The best way to create momentum is having good morning habits. Note that I'm not saying morning routines here. I'm not a big fan of routines. Life is unpredictable and most people don't have the luxury of having a solid routine, especially not when there are kids involved. Which is why I prefer to use habits.

Habits like: Taking a shower and getting dressed as soon as you wake up. Habits like: Not allowing any form of DIMs to be turned on until after you've done at least 4 hours of work. These are flexible habits that you can hold on to even when little Jimmy had to throw up during breakfast or when you've got an 8.15 appointment with the dentist. Relying on routines too much means that when something happens that gets in the way of your routine, you're off balance for the rest of the day.

Because it will happen someday that you aren't able to start work exactly at 8:30 like it's your routine and it will destroy your momentum. Whereas it's still possible not to turn on any DIMs even if you can't start working until 9:30 today. Habits have room for flexibility that routines simply don't have.

To get back to Lucian Freud the painter. In his final years he had the habit of waking up, then going to a little breakfast place near his house where he'd read a morning paper or meet with some friends. After breakfast he'd go straight to his atelier where he'd work until it was time for dinner.

One day he might be up and at the breakfast place at 7. The next day it might be 9. But each day he would wake up, go have breakfast at that same place, and then get to work. If instead of this morning habit, he would have had a morning routine that forced him to be there each morning at 7:30, it would have unraveled if he ever overslept or had to work late.

## **Double Triple Momentum**

There's one thing you need to get out of your head when it comes to work. The 16 hour hardcore hustle mentality. I see this popping up online time and time again. This weird idea that somehow it's possible to work for 16-20 hours each day and get tons of things done.

It's a perverse form of bragging where some guys go on and on about how hard and long they can work. Shaming you for not doing the same thing. Making you feel bad about yourself even if you got in 6-8 hours of solid work today.

Don't fall for the hype. None of these guys are actually consistently putting in 16-20 hour days. There are maybe 1000 people in the entire world that can do that without relying heavily on drugs. I'm talking about Elon Musk or Donald Trump level guys and even they're heavily suspicious. Wouldn't be the least bit surprised if it turns out either of those two men has a little powderhabit.

If you try to create enough willpower and momentum so that you can go hustle 16 hours a day 7 days a week for 10 years until you're a multi-billionaire, just stop yourself right now. The only thing you'll accomplish this way is a major burn out and physical health problems.

We aren't made to work such long days, and we're definitely not made to sit behind a desk for 16 hours a day. Forcing yourself to do so is going against nature in a severe way. You can't win this fight.

So what to do instead?

Instead of trying to do 16 hour marathons each day, go for 3-4 hour sprints 10-15 times a week. Anything more than that becomes mental masturbation with detrimental effects.

So how does that work?

Simple. Pick your work moments. Let's say you do one each morning. You wake up around 7. Take your shower, have some breakfast, and then at 8 you sit down for work. For the next 3-4 hours do deep work. Make sure there are no distractions nearby and use your willpower to create the momentum to work until 12ish. It's ok to take a 15 minute break somewhere in between. We all need to stretch our legs and use the bathroom once in a while. Just make sure you don't use that break to do any dopamine inducing activities. Either go read something light for 15 mins, do a small work out, or just close your eyes for a few minutes and relax.

Then after your morning sprint, take a proper break. Rest for at least one hour. During this time you can have some lunch, go for a walk, go to the gym, take a nap, do whatever you want.

Personally I prefer to still not use too many DIMs during my first rest because they decrease motivation for my second sprint. It's something I call the problem of the initial reward. You work hard in the morning and feel like you have earned yourself a little reward. However, that initial reward cascades into you spending your entire afternoon on social media and doing nothing productive. It's a problem I have personally. if you don't have that issue, then go ahead and use them.

Then after a 1-2 hour break, go sit down for your second sprint. Let's say this one is from 2 to 5. Do the same thing as you did in the morning. No distractions, work until you feel your momentum drying up and then go take a rest.

Now after that second sprint, usually you'll be pretty tired (in a good way). You can be happy about how productive you've been today and take a well deserved rest during the evening.

However, if you're feeling extraordinarily productive today, or if you've got a major deadline coming up, you can decide to go for a 3rd sprint. Again take an hour or more rest. Go have dinner and relax for a bit. Then at 6:30 go sit down again and push out another 3 hours of work.

Personally I rarely do a third sprint in one day. Only when I feel particularly motivated or if I really have to finish a painting or book soon. I usually do between 10 and 14 sprints per week depending on how motivated I am and how busy my personal life gets. This means I hardly ever have to do a 3rd sprint.

### **Comparison is the Mother of all Unhappiness**

Find your own optimum amount of sprints per week. Don't be too soft on yourself, you can definitely do more than you may think, however also don't be too rough on yourself. Do what you can do, not what you think you should be doing.

Which is why personally I don't follow any motivational accounts or anyone claiming they consistently work 16 hours a day. Either they're lying or they are sitting behind a computer for 16 hours a day being unproductive and wasting their time. In fact, whenever I see someone talk about how they hustle 24/7, I either mute or block them. There's no place for liars and idiots in my life.

Because remember the real goal here. You want to get the most out of your life. You want to live to the fullest. Half working 16 hours a day for 7 days a week, until your mind & body fall apart, isn't what I would call living.

So stop comparing yourself to others. Instead compare yourself to yourself. Are you being more productive than last month? Are you happier than you were last month? Find your optimum. If you find a way to only have to do 5 sprints per week and still make enough money to live the life you want, then why do more? Work to live, don't live to work.

### **Boring...**

When it comes to making the most out of your willpower and momentum, you have one amazing ally. One that most people don't even realize they have anymore. Because it's one we hardly recognize anymore in a world filled with distractions. **Boredom.**

Hard work is a form of discomfort. We hate feeling uncomfortable. But boredom is also a form of discomfort. So when the only alternative to discomfort (with a reward); is a different

form of discomfort (with no reward); You suddenly don't need much willpower anymore to do work.

Productivity & success requires you to get rid of as much dopamine distractions as possible. Your quickest route to dopamine should be through hard work. When the only alternative to hard work becomes boredom, your productivity skyrockets.

Boredom is key for productivity, but it's easier said than done. In the beginning, you'll need a lot of willpower to resist the temptations of dopamine. Which is why a solid detox is a good way to start this process. That way you can resist the temptations with your full attention. Within a few days you'll start to notice increased productivity. Purely because now you only have 2 options. Either you work, or you're bored.

### **Positive Feedback Loops**

Imagine there are two men who both want to become writers. They both start writing and within a year they both publish their first book.

Writer A gets picked up immediately. He becomes famous, gets praise and recognition everywhere and gets all the perks that come with fame.

Writer B doesn't get picked up. His book doesn't really sell and he remains in obscurity.

Which one of these two writers is most likely to continue being a productive writer?

Well actually this is a trick question. You can't answer it because you don't know anything about the writer's personalities. You don't know why they write and what they want to accomplish with their writing. Simply put, you don't know what kind of feedback they are looking for. The things that will fire off their dopamine hits.

If they both started writing because they want fame and recognition, then writer A is much more likely to get a second book out than writer B. He's the one getting the positive feedback. As long as he keeps writing and publishing, he can keep this loop going. Meanwhile writer B withers away and will probably give up after book 2 or 3.

However, if they both started writing because they simply love to write, then writer B is much more likely to keep writing novels. Because writer A now has to deal with all the distractions that come with fame. Much easier to write novels when nobody is bothering you to come on their tv shows or go to their parties. When there aren't tons of people that want to be your friends or date you.

The point here is. If you want to create successful feedback loops, you need to know what you want. There is no right or wrong here. People love the whole romantic "Ow he's making art for art's sake" thing, but that doesn't make it superior (In fact there's a great argument to be made that art for art's sake is a form of masturbation).

If you want to become famous and you happen to be a very talented writer, then it's perfectly fine to write for fame's sake. It's about what drives you, not about what you think should drive you.

Creating positive feedback loops is about recognizing what you want and taking action towards it.

Let me give you another example. I know a number of painters. All of them are good painters. However the reasons why they paint and what their painting process is differs greatly. One painter I know wants to make a difference in the world. She spends quite some time getting exposure. Working on her instagram and trying to get expositions. She paints because it's her way of expressing her beliefs.

I know another painter that just wants to paint. His last exposition was 30 years ago and he hated it (his family had convinced him to do an exposition). He just loves to paint for no other reason than painting itself. He's almost 80 now and still paints every day. I've had the privilege of being one of the very few that was allowed to see most of his work and there were tons of paintings in there that deserved to be shown to the public. But they never will be because he dislikes publicity.

Both these painters are painting a lot. They have both created the feedback loop that works for them. One is getting her dopamine hits because she's making an impact on her local community. The other is getting his dopamine hits simply because he's painting.

So take some time and be really honest with yourself why you're doing something. Don't let yourself answer with "Because I want to make money". Money is always a tool or a surrogate. It is never the goal. Ask yourself: "If I won the mega jackpot today and money wasn't an issue anymore, what would my real goal be?"

Figure out what your true goals are and then build a plan towards reaching them. If you want recognition and fame, don't just spend all your time writing. Make sure you spend time getting an audience too. This way you stay motivated as you write. Seeing your social media accounts grow slowly with everything you publish. Getting feedback from every chapter you publish on your substack. Building an audience that's big enough that you can get book deals etc.

If you don't create such loops, you won't last. Even if you love writing, you will lose motivation. The world has lost innumerable talented people this way. All because they weren't clear on what it actually was they wanted to achieve. Stuck in an unsupportive environment with more distractions than motivators. Your brain needs dopamine to function. It's your job to make sure it gets it for the right things.

# Serotonin Rebalancing

Serotonin is the second of the big 4 pleasure chemicals. A lack of serotonin is seen as the direct cause for feelings of depression and numbness. Having excessive amounts of serotonin can cause hallucinations, flu-like symptoms and can even cause death. No worries though you're not going to die off serotonin overdose unless you take serotonin increasing medication. Merely added that to show you just how powerful the effects of these chemicals on our brains are.

Serotonin has a very interesting relationship with Dopamine. During sex for example. Your body builds up more and more dopamine. During orgasmic release however, serotonin gets released by the brain. This serotonin gives men that post sex clarity. It causes their penis to go flaccid again and for them to lose the mood for sex.

I know that during the dopamine detoxing chapters I claimed dopamine addiction is the cause for porn addiction. Reality as always is more complex. Serotonin also plays a role here (as with other addictions). The reason I'm only mentioning it now is because this book is about improving your life, not about the exact workings of all your hormones.

In general, dopamine can be seen as the chemical that gets you riled up. Serotonin can be seen as the chemical that lets you calm down. There are exceptions but this is a good rule of thumb to work with.

Serotonin is a key hormone for gut health, sleep quality and your memory. Which is why making sure your serotonin levels are good is crucial for your health. Without serotonin, you can do all the dopamine detoxing you want, you'll still not get anything done.

## **So how do you make sure you have plenty of serotonin in your body?**

Four key elements. Sun, Sleep, Fish, Meat. Assuming your overall diet is healthy, the key elements to creating serotonin are vitamins B6 and D, omega 3 fatty oils and enough resting time so your body can actually start producing. Finally, also get enough exercise in. Sedentary lifestyles are a major cause of decreased serotonin levels. There's a reason there are so many memes about how lifting weights cures depression.

Eating healthy, getting plenty of exercise (preferably outside in the sun) and sleeping well are key elements in making sure you have enough serotonin. With enough serotonin in your body, it becomes easier for you to deal with the effects of dopamine and keep yourself under control.

# Endorphins & Cortisols

Endorphins are a very interesting hormone. They are closely intertwined with cortisol. Endorphins play a big role in survival for animals. They get released when the body gets into acute pain (think getting slashed or bitten). Together with adrenaline they give you an euphoric numbed feeling. They block out the pain and allow you to focus on survival. A deer that gets bitten in the leg by a wolf can still run on it because it's not feeling the pain of the wound yet due to this cocktail of hormones.

Sometimes this will allow a prey animal to escape despite its injuries. Other times it allows them to run away for a bit before collapsing completely and dying. The effects of these hormones are so strong that they allow you to keep going full strength right until death.

Endorphins are also one of the main reasons why pain and pleasure can get blurry sometimes. They're one of the reasons why many people like to feel a little pain during sex and why some people like to feel a lot of pain during sex. In the most extreme scenarios, endorphins are even responsible for auto-mutilation. People cut themselves because this releases endorphins, making them feel better.

Runners high also comes from endorphins. They get released when you work out and are the reason why often you'll feel great after finishing a particularly gruesome workout. Which is why sports are a good way to help you get a lifestyle that's less dopamine dependent. Going to the gym 3x a week instead of spending those evenings on watching tv will make you feel just as good in the short run, and much better in the long run.

## Why We Love Status so Much

Endorphins have a second major function though. Together with oxytocin (more on that in the next chapter) they can be seen as bonding chemicals. They get released when bonding with someone. One prime example of when endorphins release, is during sex. You bond with the person you have sex with. Which is why loose sex can pose a risk to your emotional health. Engage in sex with too many partners and it can mess with your ability to bond.

But that's not the point here and I'm not writing this to morally judge you. What's more important is knowing these hormones are important for your emotional well being and your ability to bond. Oxytocin and endorphins both have an important function for bonding. However, they work in very different ways. Oxytocin is also known as the cuddling hormone. It creates bonds of love. Endorphins have a more pragmatic way of creating bonding. They do this together with cortisol.

Basically endorphins get released when you gain status. They get released when you win a race, when you get praise, or when you get laid.

Cortisol act like the opposite of endorphins. They are stress hormones. They get released when you get rejected, lose or when you get dumped.

Endorphins suppress cortisol levels. People on a winning streak become fearless. Cortisol on the other hand makes you feel stressed out and risk averse. People on a losing streak try to play safe. Their brains are literally wired differently from winners.

Note that this is all temporal. Someone on a winning streak (let's say a stock market trader) becomes fearless. He'll start taking bigger risks and he'll become blinded to the risks. This might work out for him and he might get even richer, however the chances of him screwing up increase. One day his winning streak is over, he loses bigly and suddenly cortisol starts flooding his body. He starts doubting everything. The markets, his own capabilities. If he now gets into a losing streak for an entire year, he'll be a completely different person by the end of it.

You can't control this process. You can't simply tell yourself to stop making endorphins because you need to stay careful. The only thing you can do is realize this process is happening and consciously temper your enthusiasm about your own magic stock picking capabilities.

Likewise you can't simply tell your body to stop making cortisol when you just had a major rejection or loss. If you want to know how powerful this effect is, think back to the first time you ever got rejected by someone you were really into. Or think back to the first time you got dumped. Remember how strongly your body reacted to it. How it felt like everything became tensed up and heavy. How you got that feeling that you just wanted to run far far away from there. Cortisol did that.

You have to consciously realize that your body is overreacting and that you need to calm yourself down. After a big loss it's often best to go for a long walk with nothing to distract you. Simply go into nature and enjoy yourself. Calm your body down and then get back at it with a fresh mind.

### **Morally Superior**

Now here's a really interesting fact about endorphins and cortisol. You don't have to actually win or lose to release either of them. Your mind has difficulty separating reality from fantasy. Just like dopamine can get triggered by watching a hero in a movie getting attacked (Which consciously you know is all fake and filmed inside a studio) Your endorphins & cortisol can fire off over fake things.

One huge way to get your endorphins firing off, is by getting a feeling of moral superiority. This explains for a very large part how mob mentality and cancel culture works. When you can find a reason why you're supposedly morally superior to someone else, your endorphins fire off. Your brain can't tell the difference between what's actually a win or what's something you just think is a win.

It's why racists feel so good about themselves. It's why people form mobs and try to cancel others for bad thoughts. It's why rich people like to buy Lamborghinis and show off. Everyone else just thinks you're a douchebag, but your endorphins fire off like crazy as

you're flooring the gas pedal of your Ferrari in a poor neighborhood. You're unemployed, sick and lonely, but that moment you see someone's twitter account get banned because you reported their wrongspeak, your endorphins are having a mini orgasm.

Just like how you can get dopamine hits by being a fake warrior in video games, you can get endorphin hits by being a fake winner. This is what the advice to always stay humble is really about. Never give yourself too much undeserved hormonal rewards.

Because and pay double attention here because this is very important.

One of the main causes of so many addictions is this: ***They make you feel like a winner for just a tiny while.*** Take porn addiction. Your real sex life is in shambles. You're a total loser in the real world dating market. However as you're watching porn, for those few minutes a day, your mind is fantasizing that it is you fucking those pornstars. That you're the top dog winner. Your endorphins and dopamine levels start building up higher and higher. Ending in an orgasm where your serotonin floods your body. You feel great for a short while... Until the hormonal high fades away and you get the black mirror moment where you're confronted with how much of a loser you actually are. After which instead of trying to make meaningful changes to your life, you go look for the next hit.

It's the same for many other addictions. Video games, Social Media, some drug addictions like cocaine. They all make you feel like a winner for just a short while. You just lost your job but your post got 100 likes and your orc warrior is slaying it. Nobody actually wants to be near you, but you're so coked up you think you're the top dog in this club.

### **Mental Self-Flagellation**

Now the line between real and fake isn't just blurry when it comes to dopamine and endorphins. It's also very blurry when it comes to stress and cortisol.

So many people perceive themselves as losers and their body reacts to that. "Ow I'm a loser? Better release those cortisol then!". These people live in permanent stress and anxiety because they convinced their mind they're losers and their mind obliges.

This is why negative self-talk is so bad for you. You can literally talk yourself into being a loser. Do it long enough and your body will get into a permanent state of being stressed out. Every social situation you'll get in you'll just be looking for the door. Every party you go to you'll feel awful and rejected, even if in reality nobody rejected you but yourself.

Let's take an example from the animal realm to show you how great the effects of endorphins and cortisol can be in the long run. Let's take a troop of Chimps. Now this is a small troop and it has two young males. These two males are comparable in size and strength. One day they get into a fight over dominance. Male A barely wins, male B retreats sulking.

Now what happens here? Both males were equally strong. Male A winning was more luck than skills. He just happened to have better footing then they went at each other and that slight advantage allowed him to win. Physically they're still equally strong and their next fight tomorrow could easily go the other way.

However mentally, their roles have been decided forever. Chimp A is getting his endorphin rush and becomes more confident. Chimp B is getting cortisol and loses his confidence. The next day chimp B doesn't even dare to challenge chimp A anymore.

This sets off a chain reaction where chimp A gets more food and access to female chimps than chimp B. Because whenever there's a scarcity of anything, chimp A gets it and chimp B cowers.

Fast forward 2 years and chimp A is now bigger and stronger than chimp B. He's the one procreating whilst chimp B has become the gamma male of the troop. What started out as purely a mental difference, has now become an actual physical difference. All because of that early endorphin and cortisol shot.

Now realize you are both chimp A and chimp B. Your actions decide how successful you become. Your self talk decides whether cortisol or endorphins flush through your body.

If you avoid cortisol and also the pitfalls of endorphins (stay humble) then you will become chimp A. You will get more of the good things in life and you will feel better about yourself.

# Oxytocin

Oxytocin, like endorphins, is a bonding hormone. Its effects are quite different though. Endorphins are a more “pragmatic” hormone. They help establish your place in the tribe. Your position in the hierarchy so you know who’s above you and who’s beneath you. It avoids conflict and uncertainty.

Oxytocin on the other hand is more “idealist”. It creates strong bonds that go beyond hierarchy. Lovers create a lot of oxytocin at the start of a relationship to bond. Parents and babies give off very large doses of oxytocin right after birth to create a very strong, almost unbreakable, bond.

Oxytocin creates a feeling of belonging. It creates trust between individuals and groups. I say Endorphins are more pragmatic, because they’re more selfish. Endorphins get released when you win. They have a very low risk other than possible overconfidence. Oxytocin is more idealist because you put yourself more at risk with it. When you bond strongly with a lover and they cheat on you, that hurts you. When you trust someone, they can betray that trust.

In the long run they both come with the same amount of risk though. Winners create envy. The alpha chimp always has to be careful the other chimps don’t conspire against him.

It’s good to look at these two hormones from an ingroup-outgroup perspective. Endorphins let you climb the hierarchy. They make you more secure against outgroup threats, but more vulnerable to ingroup threats. Oxytocin on the other hand makes you safer from ingroup threats because it allows you to bond with your ingroup and form alliances. On the flipside of this process, oxytocin is also seen as responsible for outgroup hatred. Things like nationalism and discrimination are thought to be caused by oxytocin.

The most important thing for you to know about oxytocin is that it’s an important feel good hormone that you get from bonding with others. Having strong bonds with others, and spending time with loved ones, decrease your need for dopamine hits.

Take time to be social. Bond with your family and friends. Go on dates and adventures with your partner and make sure you spend plenty of time with your kids. Doing these things are crucial for your mental well being and will decrease your need for quick dopamine fixes.

Go take a walk with your girlfriend instead of watching a movie. You’ll get a healthy dose of endorphins and oxytocins that will help you lose the need to go netflix binge.

# Coffee

Coffee deserves a special mention here. It's been completely embraced by our society and is generally seen as a harmless stimulant (that even has health benefits!).

However, coffee is often a big issue for those that drink it. The problem is though, they don't even realize it.

See coffee, or I should really say caffeine, works by attaching itself to your adenosine receptors. Adenosine is the chemical that your body releases to signal to your conscious mind that you're tired. Caffeine makes sure that your adenosine can no longer attach to the receptors. Thus, you won't feel tired.

There's a few issues with this however. First of all, just because you don't feel tired, doesn't mean you aren't tired. It's like getting a sedation to stop the pain after breaking a bone. The bone is still broken, you just don't feel it anymore. Drinking coffee means you'll spend energy that you don't really have. Borrowed energy so to say.

Secondly, you'll sleep worse with coffee. So not only did you spend more energy, you're also recovering less well. Chances are big that you wake up tired often if you are a coffee drinker.

Thirdly, and this is the big issue, your body reacts to the caffeine. Your body realizes that it's messages aren't getting through to your conscious brain. So what does it do? It creates more adenosine receptors.

Which means you need to drink even more caffeine for it to work. Which means your body is going to create even more receptors. Etc etc.

Now there are some issues with that. One, you can't keep drinking more and more coffee forever. This means eventually the receptors will catch up with you and any positive effect coffee might have had, gets lost.

Two, and this is the main one, you can now no longer live without coffee. You've become physically & mentally addicted.

Now you may think, so what? I can quit coffee, get a few headaches, be a bit tired for a few days, and I'll be fine again. Unfortunately that's not true. Getting rid of the excess adenosine receptors can take months. During that time, you'll be dead tired because now suddenly your body is signalling the tiredness at a 5-10x intensity. Remember, there's no more caffeine to prevent the adenosine from attaching.

I can tell you from first hand experience that caffeine withdrawal is no joke. I quit drinking coffee last year. I had gone up to 8 cups of coffee and realized I couldn't continue like that.

So I cut down to 4 cups a day in one go... And spent the next 2 weeks completely out of it. I'd wake up very tired, maybe get 2 hours of work in, and then have no focus or energy for the rest of the day.

Which got me researching, wondering why the hell I could suddenly be so tired when all I did was cut down on coffee. Turns out my experiences weren't out of the ordinary at all. Many people reported the same extreme tiredness when they quit coffee.

Coffee was literally holding me hostage.

I realized this couldn't go on, so in the next 4 weeks, I built down my coffee intake until I eventually reached the point where I quit completely. Those 4 weeks were slightly better than the 2 weeks before that, but I still could only work for about 3-4 hours a day before being out of it.

And I still got all the symptoms of going cold turkey, despite the fact that I had built it down already. Headaches, energy crashes, feeling grumpy, I had all those for about 2 weeks. Plus I was still tired a lot those two weeks.

However, I did also sleep better than I had done in 12 years. For the first time since I started to drink coffee, I no longer woke up tired each morning. After the first two weeks, the energy crashes had also mostly disappeared. For years, I would feel my energy dip dramatically between 2 and 3 PM, only to go back up after around 7PM. Now I was finally rid of that tiredness.

The sad thing about coffee, is that you don't even realize how much of a negative impact it has on you, until you quit it. For me the changes have been massive. More energy, feeling better, better sleep, no more cravings, and on top of that, it saves me around \$10-20 a week. Not a huge amount I know, but annually that does stack up to \$500-1000 saved on something that was bad for me anyhow.

So I'd suggest you try it out as well and stick with it for at least a month. Your results might not be as dramatic as mine, you might not have such a big caffeine intake like I had, but I promise you, you'll feel better afterwards. Not going to lie though, the first 2-8 weeks will suck (depending on how much coffee you drink).

How to best quit coffee? What worked best for me was reducing my intake by 1 cup a day per week. So week 1: 4 cups a day, week 2: 3 cups a day, etc. Slow build down prevented most of the worst symptoms for me. Although they were unavoidable after I had fully quit.

Also know that caffeine isn't just found in coffee (although that is the most concentrated form). Energy drinks, Tea, sodas, chocolate, or anything chocolate/coffee flavored. I'm not saying you can never have any of those, but do know that if for instance you drink energy drinks each morning, that's no better (in fact it's much worse) than drinking coffee each morning. Don't quit coffee just to replace it with chocolate cravings.

Finally, understand that coffee is often just as much about the habit as it is about the coffee. For most people (myself included) drinking coffee had become a staple of my mornings. A sort of mental switch. As soon as I had my first coffee, I felt ready to go to work.

When you quit drinking coffee, this can leave a void. It's not even the coffee itself that makes you want to go back, it's missing that morning habit. The first cup of coffee to get your day started. Personally I fixed this issue by getting myself chicory coffee. Which is a plant based alternative that doesn't have caffeine in it. It doesn't taste exactly the same, but it's close enough to make it work and kick my mind into working gear. Another alternative you can consider is switching over to decaf. Just know that decaf isn't completely caffeine free, but at 3 milligrams per cup, it's still a lot better than the 80-100 milligrams that are in a regular cup.

## Closing Remarks

If you manage to rewire your brain and learn how to control your hormones, there is nothing left stopping you from getting the life that you want. As with anything worth doing, your transformation will take a while. Depending on your starting point this could be anywhere from a few weeks up to a few years. Just know that it's worth doing.

Completing this process is like waking up from the matrix. You were sleeping throughout your entire life and now you can finally start living. You can finally start going after the things you want. Achieve the things you want. Create the things you want. Live the life that you want.

This book acts like a foundation. Once you have your foundation in order, you'll find new ways of improving yourself even further. Ways unique to you. You'll find your own methods and habits propelling you to success.

So go out and conquer!

Niels