

《硅谷流行起奇葩新风潮：多巴胺戒断》

dopamine

[ˈdɒpəˈmiːn]

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It's the latest fad in Silicon Valley. By reducing the brain's feel-good chemical known as dopamine – cutting back on things like food, sex, alcohol, social media and technology – followers believe that they can "reset" the brain to be more effective and appreciate simple things more easily.

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Some even go so far as avoiding all social activities, and even eye contact.

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The exercise, dubbed "dopamine fasting" by San Francisco psychologist Dr Cameron Sepah, is now getting increasing international attention. But what exactly is it? And does it work?

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As someone who studies the brain's reward system, I'd like to share my knowledge with you.

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Dopamine is a neurotransmitter – a chemical messenger produced in the brain. It is sent around the brain conveying signals related to functions such as motor control, memory, arousal and reward processing.

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For example, too little dopamine can result in disorders like Parkinson's Disease, involving symptoms of muscle rigidity, tremors and changes in speech and gait. One of the treatments for Parkinson's is the drug L-DOPA, which can cross the blood-brain barrier and be converted into dopamine to help ease the symptoms.

??L-DOPA????????????????????????????????

Dopamine is also important in the reward system in the brain. It is activated by primary rewards like food, sex and drugs.

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importantly, the brain's reward system can "learn" over time – cues in our environment that we associate with potential rewards can increase the activity of dopamine even in the absence of an actual reward. So just being in a sweet shop and thinking about sweets can activate our brain's dopamine.

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This expectation and anticipation of rewards is called the "wanting" in neuroscience language. As one of the main symptoms of depression is "anhedonia" – the lack of wanting, interest and pleasure in normally rewarding experiences – dysfunctional dopamine regulation has also been linked to this disorder.

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Some treatments for depression, such as the drug bupropion, are designed to increase dopamine levels in the brain.

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Nicotine indirectly causes a release of dopamine in the brain.

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