Twitter Thread by David Mendes



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Thread - The most dangerous threat to a man's potential is his fried dopamine receptors:

I'll be talking about a problem that most of us deal with in the modern world.

Dopamine imbalance.

I'll be sharing insights and actionable advice that I personally used that have helped deal with this problem.

But first, let us dive into the problem itself.

"Why cook a healthy meal when I can just Uber Eats?"

"Why go meet girls and have real sex when I can just jerk it to porn?"

"Why do meaningful work when I can just hop on social media, create "content" and get validation in form of likes/retweets?"

"Why level up in life, when I can just hop on Runescape and get to level 99 in all skills?"

Now, logically speaking, these questions make no sense.

The reasons as to why you'd do the first instead of the second are obvious...

But, your brain works backward.

The only question your brain asks is "How can I satisfy this desire as quickly as possible with the least effort possible?"

As a result, when the desire/urge is there, your animal instincts take over and it becomes a lot harder to actually make the correct choice.

It wants the dopamine spike right now.

So you pick the second option.

Then you feel bad, because you know you're doing a behavior that is harmful to your health/goals.

But for some reason, despite all of that guilt, the next time the urge comes, it becomes harder to resist.

Engage in this sort of behavior long enough and you'll end up with your dopamine receptors completely fried.

As a result, things like:

- Delaying gratification.
- Resisting shiny object syndrome.
- Being able to focus on one thing for a couple of hours straight.

Will require huge amounts of mental energy to execute. (Something that your brain doesn't want to spend)

Now the reason I know about this is that I struggled with this a lot myself.

It sucks.

But there are some things that really helped me move the needle in this regard.

I'll now share them with you.

1) Self-Awareness.

You can't solve a problem if you're not aware that you have one.

Now, when I say self-awareness what I really mean is self-analysis before and after you engage in these sorts of behavior.

When you're on your guilt trip (after doing the shit that you know is bad for you) is the best time to actually do this.

This is due to the fact that you're feeling the pain/discomfort from the guilt.

Things that you learn when you're feeling pain/discomfort are much more easily engrained in your brain.

So what you want to do is take a pen and a notepad and write down the following:

1 - What sort of emotion were you feeling when you felt the urge to engage in that behavior. (Example: You were feeling lonely so you turned your computer on and jacked off)

2 - What sort of emotion did you feel after engaging in the behavior. (Example: Felt guilt/remorse after)

The reason we want to know the first is so that we can better identify what are the triggers that cause you to engage in these behaviors. (And create better alternatives)

The reason we want to know the second is so that we make ourselves more aware that these are actually bad behaviors that don't help us move the needle forward AND that the rewards are actually bad things despite our brain perceiving them as good.

This 1st step is absolutely mandatory.

If you don't this one, the others will become incredibly more difficult.

2) Alternatives, rewards, and punishments

Okay, now that we have awareness, what do we do with it?

We create an alternative system and a reward/punishment system.

- In our alternatives system we'll write a list of alternatives that we can fall back on when something triggers us and we feel the urge to engage in bad behavior.

- In our reward system we'll create a list of rewards/punishments for when we do the right/wrong thing.

The reason we create these systems is so that we don't have to exert mental energy every time we find ourselves in these positions.

We can just look at them and know exactly what to do for each situation.

Now, here's how we execute.

Every timea something triggers you and you engage in the alternative, you reward yourself.

(This is something of your own choice, but I'd recommend picking an healthy alternative that actually helps you move the needle in someway.)

Every time something triggers you and you engage in the unhealthy habit, you reflect on what just happened and "punish" yourself.

(Again, this is something you'll define yourself)

Operate under the assumption that our brain recognizes 1s and 0s.

What we're doing here is signaling to our brain that healthy alternatives are rewarded and unhealthy habits are punished.

When we get rewarded/punished enough or brain starts finding the rewards more enticing and wants to stay away from the punishment as much as possible.

If you do this consistently, slowly but surely you'll make a habit out of doing the "right" things when triggered by a certain emotion or event.

When the good behavior becomes your default, your dopamine reward center starts to heal.

When it does, things like delayed gratification, resisting shiny object syndrome, and being able to focus for a lot of hours straight become a lot easier.

3) Create friction/ease.

The key here is to create friction between you and the bad behavior and create ease between you and the good alternative.

Harder to eat the cookies if there are no cookies at home.

Harder to order Uber Eats if you don't have the app installed.

At the same time

Easier to eat healthy if you have prepped your meals on Sunday.

Easier to go to the gym if it's right next to your house.

Easier to journal it out when you're feeling overwhelmed when the journal and pen are right in your desk.

The more friction there is, the more work it takes.

The more work it takes, the less likely you are of doing it.

The same applies the opposite way.

Create friction and ease.

4) Prioritizing health.

Approach your health as a non-negotiable.

Good sleep, hydration, working out and eating clean.

When these are not in order, your hormones get out of wack.

Cortisol levels rise, stress increases, testosterone decreases, so does risk tolerance.

When you're in this state it becomes 100x easier to fall into bad behavior and shitty habits.

So, prioritize your health and make it as routine as humanly possible.

You go to bed at X and wake up at Y every day.

Go to the gym on the same days of the week.

You prep your meals every Sunday.

Make this as systematized as possible.

Do all of these, for long enough, your dopamine receptors will heal over time.

When those are balanced, discipline is no longer hard, doing meaningful work is no longer hard, and moving the needle is no longer hard.

And this is the end of the thread,

Honestly, there are a lot of "productivity hacks" that you can do, or even a dopamine detox etc...

But those are quick fixes, bandages for a deeper problem.

For long-term sustainability, I found these to have helped me the most.

Hope it's useful to you in some way.

Thank you for reading,

With love, David. ■