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Health & Wellness Series



How to Be Healthy in a Dopamine-Seeking Culture

by Brad Stulberg

Our basic biology can steer us toward bad habits and compulsive behavior.

Overcoming these pitfalls requires effort and discipline.

Let's start with a simple question: If you are hungry, distracted, and rushed, and someone places two bowls in front of you, one of brown rice and baked potatoes, the other of peanut M&Ms and Swedish fish, which would you choose? If you're like most people, you'd probably pick the candy.

This is by no fault of your own. The candy is engineered—from the flavor to the texture to the bright colors—to appeal to your brain far more than the brown rice and potatoes. For over 99 percent of our species' history, we lived amid scarcity. Thus you, dear reader, like me and everyone else, evolved to seek out high-reward, low-energy-needed-to-acquire goods. This strategy worked well for hundreds of thousands of years. But now, in modern times of abundance, it's backfiring. Like so many things, what works, works—until it gets in your way.



The above analogy of brown rice and potatoes versus peanut M&Ms and Swedish fish is one that I used in my book, *The Practice of Groundedness*, to discuss the challenge of choosing deep-focus



work and connection over superficial distraction and stimulation. But since the book came out late last year, I've realized that the analogy extends far beyond just that.

In many areas of our lives, things that are not as satisfying now tend to be more satisfying and leave us better off later. If living a good life in ancient times of scarcity was about seeking fast-reward, lower-effort goods, then living a good life in modern times of abundance is about seeking slow-reward, higher-effort goods. Scientists call this the evolutionary mismatch—when strategies that were once adaptive to a species become harmful. ✱



A 1995 study published in the *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition* evaluated the diet of most people in developed countries. The lead researcher, Susanna Holt, concluded that “the results therefore suggest that ‘modern’ Western diets which are based on highly palatable, low fiber convenience foods are likely to be much less satiating than the diets of the past.” I suspect this

has only gotten worse in the past 25 years. Today many people focus on hustle culture, so-called optimization, and short-term profits, leaving less time, energy, and incentive for producing and consuming more nourishing foods. And it is no longer just the food manufacturers and engineers who are taking advantage of our hardwiring, but also social media designers, cable news channels, and even politicians. Cheap and superficial hits of feel-good vibes are everywhere in our society.

Here are just a few examples of the trade-off between brown rice and potatoes versus peanut M&Ms and Swedish fish that most people face every day: junk food versus nourishing food; deep-focus work versus distraction; scrolling social media versus reading a book; porn versus intimate relationships; retweets and likes versus building a strong community; heavy drinking versus abstinence (or at least drinking in moderation); day-trading speculative assets versus slow and steady investing in stable funds; immediate and cheap consumption of nearly everything versus living on a habitable planet.



What all of these examples have in common is that the former require less activation energy—the initial self-discipline and oomph to start something—and feel good immediately but crappy later on. The latter require more work up front and don't feel great immediately but feel wonderful in the future.

Once you become aware of the evolutionary mismatch, you start to see it everywhere. Overcoming it is key to being grounded in an increasingly frantic and frenetic world. ✱

The challenge is choosing the brown-rice-and-potato activities when doing so requires overriding basic biology that has evolved over millennia. This is compounded by the fact that Western economies are set up for short-term *profits*, not long-term fulfillment. As a result, we are bombarded with products, services,



and marketing aimed directly at the part of our brains that crave immediate-reward products, services, and experiences. Consumerism feeds off the evolutionary mismatch and traps us in a cycle of seeking shallow pleasures that have short half-lives. This may be good for the bottom line but not for our health and happiness. ✨

The big question, of course, is what can we do about it? How can we live a good, healthy, and wholesome life amid so much junk and candy?

Simply being aware of the evolutionary mismatch is a good start. When you can identify and name something, it gives you a certain kind of power over it. Next, you can take an inventory of your own work and life and begin sorting activities into the brown-rice-and-potato bucket or the peanut-M&M-and-Swedish-fish bucket. The goal is to increasingly shift your time and energy into more nourishing activities.



Another important thing to be mindful of is that in-the-moment willpower is rarely, if ever, enough. Trying to choose brown rice over peanut M&Ms is especially challenging if you've always got an open bag of peanut M&Ms in your pocket—and for many of us, an app-loaded smartphone is just that. Rather than try to overcome the evolutionary mismatch in the moment, it's better to anticipate it and avoid putting your brain in the position to consume the equivalent of candy all day. The more you can design your environment to favor brown-rice-and-potato activities, the better. (This is precisely why I have no social media apps or internet on my phone. This simple change—though quite hard at first—has had an enormous impact on my life.)



Unfortunately, choosing brown rice and potatoes over candy is made even harder because evolution also programmed us to experience fear of missing out (FOMO), especially in social situations.



Thousands of years ago, FOMO worked to our advantage, ensuring we'd always be in the know and never miss an opportunity to share a meal with our tribe or hear about lurking predators or a warring faction nearby. Now, however, FOMO keeps us glued to our screens, addicted to news, relevance, retweets, and likes—all of which, when consumed heavily, have little (if any) marginal benefit and cause anxiety and restlessness.

Fortunately, the brain is good at learning. Once we start to shift more of our time and energy toward brown-rice-and-potato activities, especially if we can make it through the first month or so, we start to feel pretty good. This effect is compounded if we undertake the journey with others, perhaps by agreeing as a group to limit social media consumption or by organizing a group hike. This is a big part of why groups like Alcoholics Anonymous are so effective. The mix of gradually feeling good and socially supported—which counters FOMO—makes it easier to overcome the evolutionary mismatches that are all around us. Just as doing shallow and superficial activities can create a vicious cycle, doing deep and meaningful activities can create a virtuous one.

- Source: <https://reurl.cc/dmK0m2>
- Another recommended article: [The Science Behind Dopamine Hacks and How They Work](#)



| 心靈補給站 - 情緒與壓力調適 |



短影音上癮是他搞鬼？多巴胺是什麼？3個練習教你「反掌控」多巴胺



「抑制多巴胺，就抑制了獎勵的吸引力」多巴胺其實不會讓你快樂？多巴胺負責了我們腦中的「獎賞系統」——當身體認為完成某件事後可能會獲得獎勵，便會釋放多巴胺帶給我們動力——但過度刺激多巴胺也會造成「上癮」的反效果，有效學如何「反掌控」他，能讓你更快樂！



多巴胺是什麼？多巴胺其實不會讓你快樂

你一定聽過多巴胺，多巴胺（Dopamine）是一種在人體內起重要作用的神經傳遞物質。它在大腦中的多個區域扮演關鍵角色，通常與愉悅和報酬相關，對於調節情緒、動機、學習、動作控制和獎賞系統都具有重要影響。多巴胺不僅在生理學上扮演重要角色，也與心理健康有關。一些精神健康疾病，如抑鬱症、精神分裂症等，與多巴胺系統的功能異常相關。

多巴胺的好處

我們每天早上需要一杯咖啡，可能是渴望咖啡香；當我們賺到六位數，就會想著如何賺到七位數——當你期待一件事的時候，多巴胺給你動力去達成他。多巴胺掌管的是動機，驅動人類的渴望，讓我們得以生存下去。



多巴胺的上癮危機

但當事件結束時，大腦會快速平衡多巴胺，這個激素的波動會讓人們感到痛苦。也就是為什麼，我們會不斷看短影音，去避免痛苦的發生。多巴胺的上癮危機可能涉及以下幾個方面：

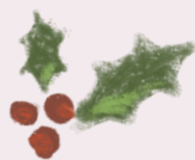
1. **物質濫用：**多巴胺系統與物質濫用（如毒品、酒精）有關。長期物質濫用可能會導致多巴胺系統的異常，使人需要越來越多的物質來體驗相同程度的愉悅，這可能導致成癮。
2. **行為成癮：**某些行為，如賭博、購物、遊戲、社交媒體使用等，也可能與多巴胺系統有關。人們可能因追求這些行為所帶來的愉悅感而陷入行為成癮，因為這些行為也能刺激多巴胺的釋放。
3. **耐受性和戒斷症狀：**多巴胺上癮的人可能會經歷耐受性，即需要更多的刺激才能體驗到相同的愉悅感。此外，當他們無法獲得刺激時，可能會出現戒斷症狀，包括焦慮、抑鬱、情緒不穩和生理不適。
4. **影響生活品質：**多巴胺上癮可能會對一個人的生活品質造成負面影響。成癮行為可能導致社交隔離、工作和學業問題、家庭問題，以及身體健康問題。





反掌控多巴胺的3個練習

既然我們可以讓他不斷分泌，現在就來說說如何「反掌控」他。結合研究和個人經驗，簡單來說可以做3個練習。



一. 按下暫停鍵

當你想要避免刺激後帶來的失落，例如衝動嗑掉一桶炸雞再來怕自己變胖。先覺察到自己的渴望是衝動，讓自己等待10分鐘，大概就不會這麼渴望了。

二. 享受放空與規律

白話文說，保持日常生活的規律並給自己「放空的時間」，例如吃飯就好好吃飯不配影片或滑IG，減少干擾你的訊息。



三. 製造你的精心時刻

刻意製造精心時刻，例如運動、寫作、和家人聊天，同時避免一心多用。用刺激血清素和催產素，幫助平衡多巴胺。



文章來源：<https://reurl.cc/p5QpXe>

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