

USING DOPAMINE

The dopamine system largely drives everything we do, both good and bad. It's part of who we are, and there's no way to opt out. Fighting it isn't an option, so we need to work with it, not against it. It's like a flowing river: you can't stop it from coming, but you can divert it to irrigate your crops. To take charge of dopamine, you need to acknowledge what it wants and supply it constructively. So, what does dopamine want?

What it wants is neutral; it's neither good nor bad. What it wants is also very generic; it wants novelty and possibility. Our task, then, is to direct these cravings toward something healthy. Failing that, it'll spin its wheels in its own frustration. If it doesn't get good, it'll get bad.

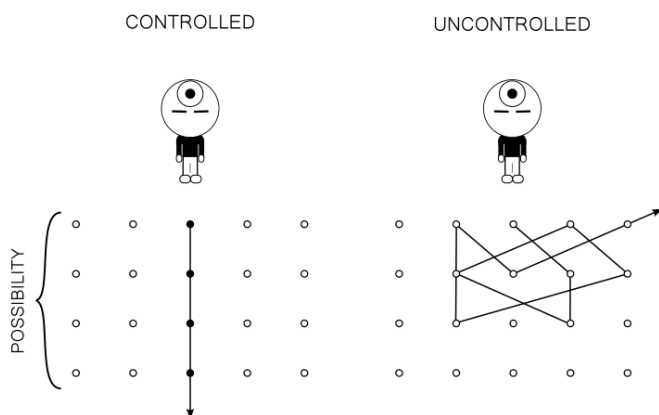
This leads us to the differentiation between cheap dopamine, rich dopamine, and everything in between. Cheap dopamine is dopaminergic behaviour that has no productive value or is outright destructive. It might be 'pleasurable,' but engaging in it results in entropy: confused thought, degraded health,

depletion of resources. Rich dopamine, on the other hand, is productive. It results in increasing order: more resilience, better health, more resources.

Slowly, then, you need to redirect from cheap to rich dopaminergic activities. You also need to do this at a pace that doesn't cause rejection at the subconscious level. In fact, in the beginning stages, it's more a case of redirecting to more manageable forms of cheap dopamine before inching toward the rich. You just need to engage in enough dopamine to quench its thirst. Do that, and it won't be looking for trouble elsewhere.

This is how you gradually get dopamine to work for you, not against you. You use it to push (or pull) you towards your ultimate goal, but you do so wisely. If you treat recovery as one large dopamine drive, the scope for things to go awry is wide. The task is too big, and there's ample space for uninvited dopamine to lure you off track. Instead, break it down into tiny dopamine steps—steps that are tightly defined, controlled, clear, and manageable. That takes you to the same place, but **you're the one calling the shots.**

DOPAMINE



Think of it like this: instead of pushing you toward random behaviours, dopamine is pulling you toward sobriety with breadcrumbs of possibility. You lay the breadcrumbs. Each breadcrumb along the way slowly advances the goal. The final destination is total recovery—the ultimate expression of the possible. All you ever actually need along the way is to stretch ever so slightly into the possible from wherever you are. This is enough to **keep** you **moving** and **stay on track**.

At each stage in the plan, you'll find breadcrumbs of the possible. Piece by piece, you can chip away at whatever comes next, aiming for the furthest by taking on the nearest. When dopamine has done its job, it hands over to the subconscious while it moves on to the next. Each step reveals new possibilities, and dopamine has a **new frontier to explore**.