

CONTENTS

Introduction . . . 9

1 | **Your Inner Mammal . . . 11**

2 | **Meet Your Happy Chemicals . . . 33**

3 | **Why Your Brain Creates Unhappiness . . . 59**

4 | **The Vicious Cycle of Happiness . . . 87**

5 | **How Your Brain Wires Itself . . . 117**

6 | **New Habits for Each Happy Chemical . . . 143**

7 | **Your Action Plan . . . 169**

8 | **Overcoming Obstacles to Happiness . . . 177**

9 | **Rely on Tools That Are Always with You . . . 197**

Keep In Touch . . . 213

Recommended Reading . . . 215

Index . . . 229

INTRODUCTION

When you feel good, your brain is releasing dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin, or endorphin. You want more of these great feelings because your brain is designed to seek them. But you don't always get it, and that's natural too. Our brain doesn't release a happy chemical until it sees a way to meet a survival need, like food, safety, and social support. And then, you only get a quick spurt before your brain returns to neutral so it's ready for the next "survival opportunity." This is why you feel up and down. It's nature's operating system!

Many people have habits that are bad for survival. How does that happen if our brain rewards behaviors that are good for survival? When a happy-chemical spurt is over, you feel like something is wrong. You look for a reliable way to feel good again, fast. Anything that worked before built a pathway in your brain. We all have such happy habits: from snacking to exercising, from spending to saving, from partying to solitude, from arguing to making up. But none of these habits can make you happy all the time because your brain doesn't work that way. Every happy chemical spurt is quickly metabolized and you have to do more to get more. You can end up overdoing a happy habit to the point of unhappiness.

Wouldn't it be great if you could turn on your happy chemicals in new ways? Wouldn't it be nice to feel good while doing things

that are actually good for you? You can, when you understand your mammal brain. Then you'll know what turns on the happy chemicals in nature, and how your brain can substitute new habits for old ones. You can design a new happy habit and wire it into your neurons. This book helps you do that in forty-five days.

You don't need much time or money to build a new neural pathway; you need courage and focus, because you must repeat a new behavior for forty-five days whether or not it feels good.

Why doesn't it feel good to start a new habit? Your old habits are like well-paved highways in your brain. New behaviors are hard to activate because they're just narrow trails in your jungle of neurons. Unknown trails feel dangerous and exhausting, so we're tempted to stick to our familiar highways instead. But with courage and commitment, you will build a new highway, and on Day Forty-Six, it will feel so good that you will build another.

Warning: This book is about *your* brain, not about other people's brains. If you are in the habit of blaming your neurochemical ups and downs on others, you will not find support here. But you needn't blame yourself, either—you can make peace with your mammalian neurochemistry instead of finding fault with it. This book shows you how.

We'll explore the brain chemicals that make us happy and unhappy. We'll see how they work in animals, and why they have a job to do. Then we'll see how the brain creates habits, and why bad ones are so difficult to break. Finally, we'll embark on a forty-five-day plan that explains how to choose a new behavior and how to find the courage and focus you need to repeat it without fail. This edition of the book contains a lot of new exercises and interactive features that help you take each step. You will like the results—a happier, healthier you!

EXERCISE: HOW WILL YOU USE YOUR TOOLS?

I will use these tools to make my new happy habit more comfortable:

THESE TOOLS WILL HELP YOU TRAIN YOUR BRAIN

Mirror: find someone with the habit you want and mirror them.

Balance: develop the happy chemicals you're not already best at.

Graft: build new happy circuits onto old happy roots.

Energy: save your energy for tough challenges.

Legacy: preserve your unique individual essence to please your inner mammal.

Fun: find the fun in a new behavior and you will repeat it.

Chunk: divide difficult challenges into smaller parts.

Satisfice: a satisfactory solution may be better than an endless quest for optimal.

Plan: start building circuits now so they're ready when you need them.

Visualize: your neural pathways are building even though they're not visible.