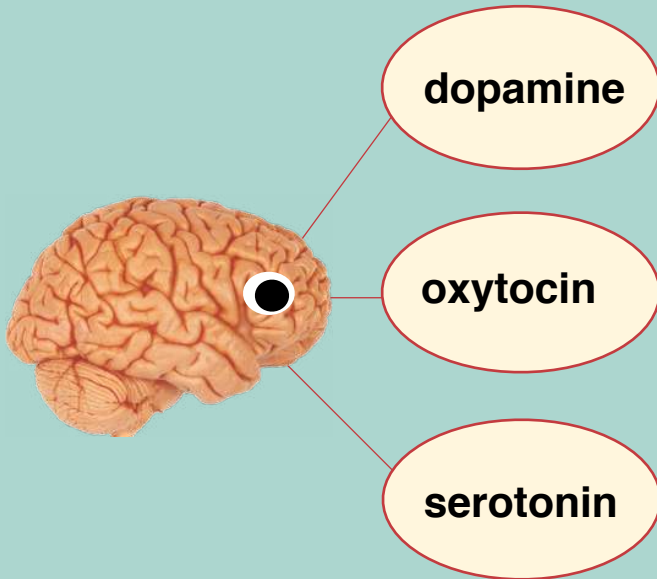


You Have Power Over Your Brain

Your brain looks for ways to turn on the happy chemicals



dopamine

Find new rewards that meet your needs.

oxytocin

Find social support and strengthen it.

serotonin

Become special in the eyes of others.

Happy chemicals are released in short spurts and you have to do more to get more.

They evolved to reward survival behavior, not to be on all the time.



You Have Power Over Your Brain

Your brain defines your survival needs in a quirky way



**it cares about
the survival of your genes**

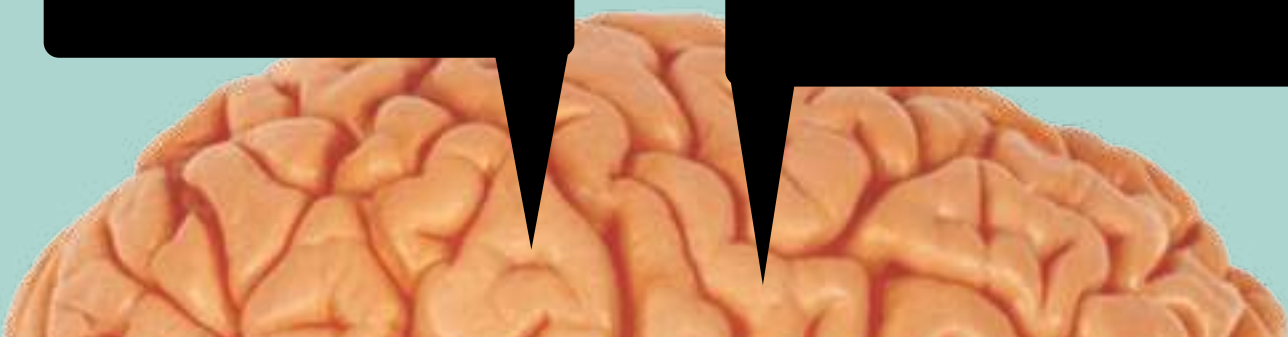
Your brain rewards you with a good feeling when you do something good for your genes: for your mating prospects or your children's prospects.

**it learn from
the experiences of youth**

Whatever met your needs in youth built neural pathways that turn on your happy chemicals today, regardless of what you remember.

Your happy chemicals are inherited from earlier mammals. They motivate an animal to do what it takes to meet survival needs.

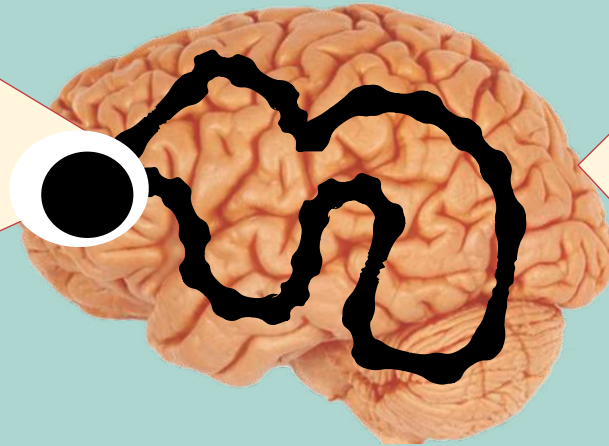
Your happy chemicals are controlled by neural pathways you built long ago. You can build new pathways if you try.



You Have Power Over Your Brain

Your brain sends new inputs through old pathways

the
electricity
in your brain
flows like water
in a storm, finding
the paths of
least
resistance



you
keep
repeating
old responses
unless you
build new
path
ways

You can build
a new path by
repeating a
new behavior
for 45 days
without fail.

It won't feel good at first because your
brain equates the old path with survival.
But if you persist, electricity will flow
down your new path, and you will turn on
your happy chemicals in new ways.



You Have Power Over Your Brain

#1 Know the job of each happy brain chemical

dopamine

**the joy of
expecting
a new reward**

- meets a need
- “I can get it!”
- novelty

The brain habituates to rewards, which is why we keep seeking new and improved.

serotonin

**the pleasure
of gaining a
one-up position**

- social importance
- getting respect
- pride

We easily see this in others but we hate to see it in ourselves.

oxytocin

**the comfort
of social trust
given or received**

- safety in numbers
- social support
- touch

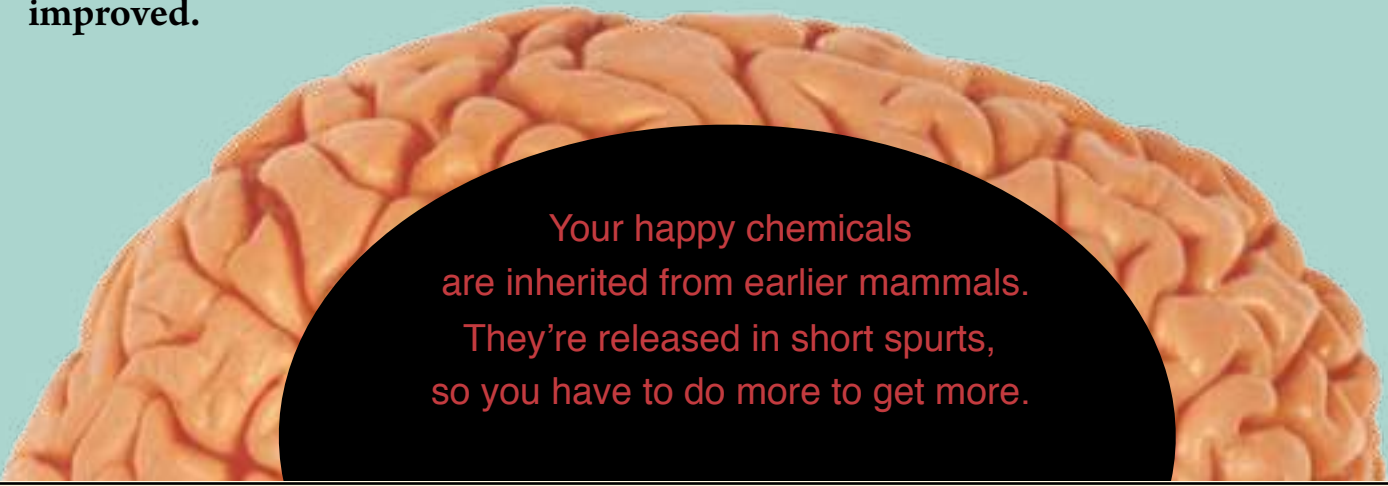
The brain releases trust cautiously to promote survival and avoid harm.

endorphin

**oblivion
that masks
physical pain**

- evolved for emergencies
- exercise, laugh

Do not inflict pain to get it: it's a bad spiral. Belly laugh & stretch daily.



Your happy chemicals
are inherited from earlier mammals.
They're released in short spurts,
so you have to do more to get more.



You Have Power Over Your Brain

#2 Tough choices are the task your brain is meant for

oxytocin vs **dopamine**

A step toward tighter social bonds may be a step away from your individual goals; and vice versa. You get to weigh and choose.

serotonin vs **oxytocin**

A step toward higher status may be a step away from your social bonds; and vice versa. Outcomes are never certain but you get to choose.

dopamine vs **serotonin**

A step toward your personal goals may be a step away from higher status; and vice versa. You can't get it all but you can choose your steps.

cortisol vs **happy chemicals**

Every step toward meeting your needs could bring risk and stress. But if you don't take a step, that's a risk too. Your brain is designed to manage this!

Frustration is natural.

When you can't have it all, don't blame the world. Natural selection built a brain that seeks more. Celebrate your choices.



You Have Power Over Your Brain

#3 Your brain is always trying to get rewards and avoid pain

move away from pain

move toward rewards



bad feelings

good feelings



Unhappy

brain
chemicals
warn you to
pull back from
possible threats
to meeting your needs

- cortisol

Happy

brain
chemicals
are released
when you see
a way to meet a need

- dopamine
- serotonin
- oxytocin
- endorphin

**mammalian
limbic
system**

Your brain defines your needs
in a quirky way. It cares about the
survival of your genes as much as your body;
and it relies on pathways it built in youth.



Inner Mammal Institute
making peace with the animal inside

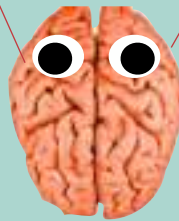
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Habits of a Happy Brain
innermammalinstitute.org

You Have Power Over Your Brain

#4 Your brain defines pain and threat in a quirky way

**it anticipates pain
based on past pain**

The cortisol spurts of your past connected neurons that turn it on today when similar patterns reach your senses.



**it confuses social pain
with physical pain**

Social isolation and status setbacks threaten the survival of a mammal's genes, so the mammal brain treats social threats as survival threats.

Cortisol is pain, fear, stress, and anxiety. Without effort or intent, it alerts you to scan for familiar threat signals.

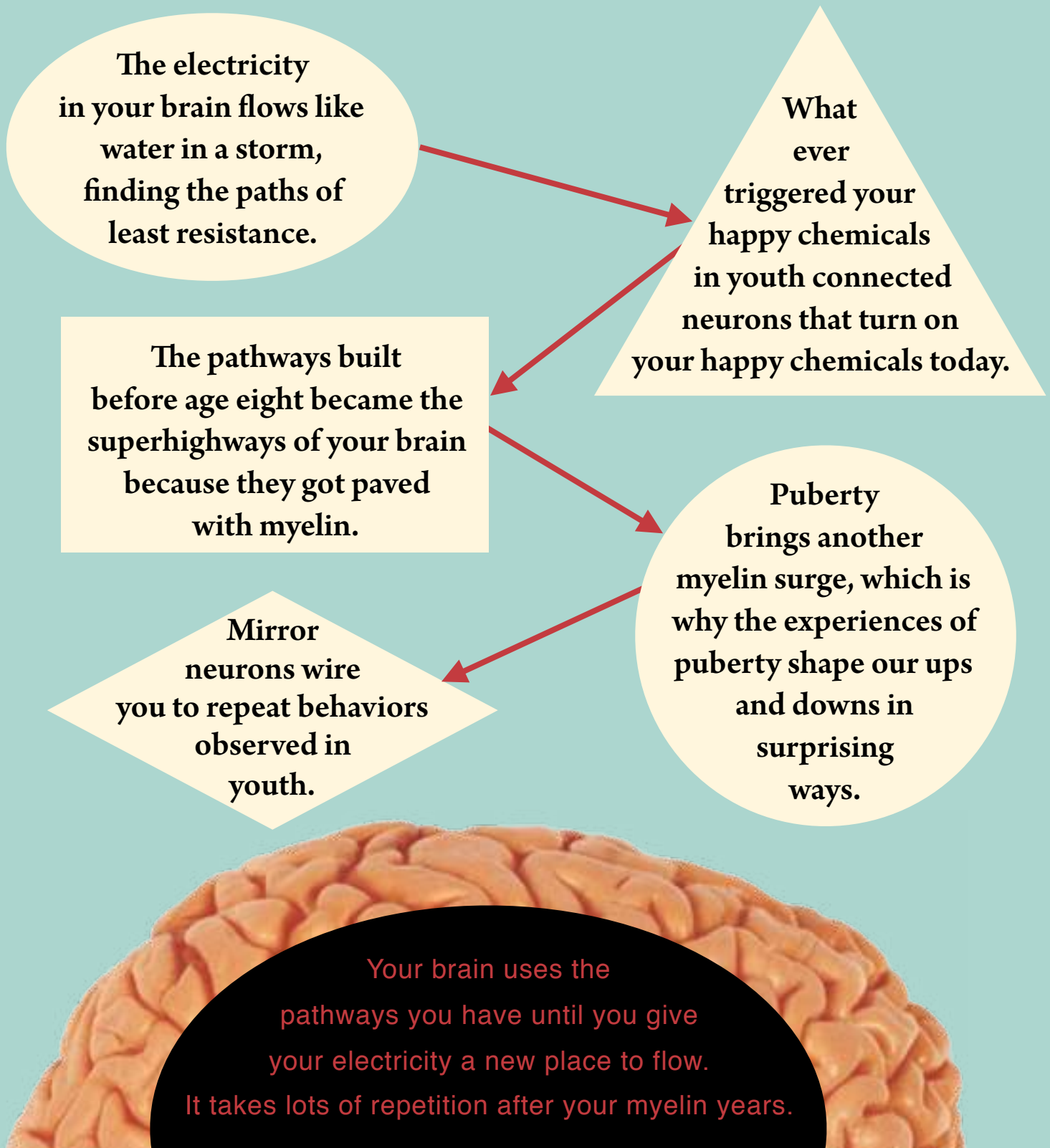
Consciously, you know a social disappointment won't kill you, but your mammal brain scans for potential social threats and turns on the cortisol alarm.

Cortisol creates
a bad feeling that motivates you to
“do something fast!” to make it stop. But it's
metabolized in 20 minutes if you don't re-trigger.



You Have Power Over Your Brain

#5 Your brain relies on pathways built from early experience

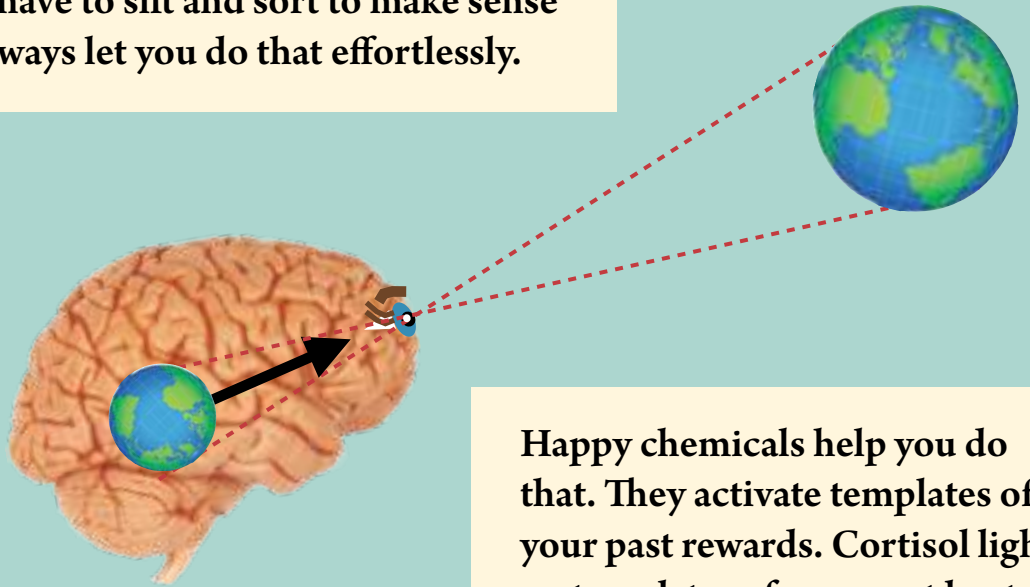


You Have Power Over Your Brain

#6 Your Pathways Give Meaning to the World Around You

The world constantly floods your senses with more detail than your brain can process. You have to sift and sort to make sense of things. Your existing pathways let you do that effortlessly.

You have ten times more neurons going **TO** your eyes than **FROM** your eyes. Your brain tells your eyes what to look for instead of just receiving.



Happy chemicals help you do that. They activate templates of your past rewards. Cortisol lights up templates of your past hurts.

Your brain chemicals are managed by structures that all mammals have in common (like the amygdala, hippocampus, hypothalamus). They help you respond to sensory inputs as “good” or “bad.”

Your mammalian limbic system and your cortex are always working together to interpret the world so you get rewards and avoid pain.



You Have Power Over Your Brain

#7 Repetition can build new pathways in your brain

We all end up with some pathways that lead where we'd rather not go.

You can rewire your brain to feel good when you do things that are actually good for you.

Choose a new behavior or thought pattern and repeat it daily for 45 days.

But electricity will zip down a new path to your happy chemicals if you persist without fail.

It will feel unsafe at first because your brain linked your old path to survival.

InnerMammalInstitute.org can help. We have books, videos, social media, blogs, and slides that will help you step toward the brain you want.

