

Ep #239: Neurotransmitters



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With Your Host

Brooke Castillo

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Welcome to *The Life Coach School Podcast*, where it's all about real clients, real problems and real coaching. And now your host, Master Coach Instructor, Brooke Castillo.

Well hello, my friends. I have the remanence of a cold, so I'm going to have kind of a different voice today. I taught a class this week and it was, like, way huskier than this and we still slayed the class and had a great time, so I figured I would record this podcast.

I'm actually recording this podcast on a Sunday morning. And it's because, this week, I was sick and I decided to climb in my bed right after work every day and turn on the TV and put down the shades and not do any additional work and try to get better.

And I'm not convinced, that when you have a cold like this or the flu, that laying around helps you heal faster, but it sure does feel better. I do not like being out in the world when my nose is running. This is one of the laws that I have.

So anyway, I'm excited about today's episode. We are going to talk about neurotransmitters. Now, listen, I'm not going to get into the science. I'm not going to get into the words I can't pronounce. I am not going to try and teach you from a place that I don't even fully understand. And by the way, science doesn't even fully understand neurotransmitters yet. We're just beginning to understand them.

And even all the scientists will say, "We're not even sure yet how this stuff works." And that's what makes it so interesting as it applies to medications and diagnosis as psychiatrists are doing in trying to help us with our mental health and help us with our chemical balances in our brain.

And I have always been a huge proponent of medication, as long as the net is positive. And what I mean by that is – and this is just kind of a side note. I'm not going to talk about medication at all in this episode, but I just want to note that, I think, a lot of times there are chemical imbalances in our brains and medication can really help. I've watched that happen live, really,

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with a lot of my students and clients and family members, where the medication really helps.

So I think we understand it enough to help ourselves, but we also understand it enough, I think, to sometimes be dangerous. So I always recommend that everybody really make these decisions about taking medication and understanding our neurobiology the best way that we can, and then not beating ourselves up either way.

I've seen people not take medication just for the fact that they are trying to be tough, and I've seen people take medication and then feel guilty about it. I don't think either one of those are good solutions. I think the negative doesn't account for the benefits that we can get from medication.

So I just want you to be really conscious and thoughtful about your decision and know that not every person is obviously going to have the same solution, but that once you make a decision for yourself, that you stand behind that decision.

But in this episode, I'm not going to talk about medication. I'm not going to talk about how to medicate the brain because I, honestly, can't even begin to talk about that. I don't understand it enough. But what I can talk about are the basics of neurotransmitters and the basics of how they work.

And the reason I wanted to share this with you in, kind of, this real basic level is because my understanding of neurotransmitters has really changed the way I approach my relationship with my brain and with myself. And I think it can help many, many of you who end up in a battle of morality and worth with yourself, based on how your brain performs, when your brain is just doing what it has evolved to do.

And so, I'm hoping that this episode will help so many of you that tend to beat yourselves up for your brain's natural reactions and natural neurotransmitters and natural functions and you take it personally and make it mean something horrible about you. I hope that this episode will

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make you stop it. I mean it; stop it right now, so you can kind of understand it.

So, in the most basic of terms, your brain is filled with neurons and they communicate with each other through neurotransmitters. So there's a ton of really good videos on YouTube that shows neurons communicating with each other and it shows that the neurons don't touch each other. There's this little synapse between them, and the way that they communicate with each other is through neurotransmitters and chemicals.

And so, understanding just that basic premise, I think, is fascinating because you can also understand how each one of these neurochemicals has evolved and how sometimes they fire when we want them to, and sometimes they fire when we don't want them to. And sometimes, we create situations where we're over-firing too much of a neurotransmitter that we don't want to be over-firing, and sometimes we're under-firing it.

And we have so much control over this by the way that we decide to think and the way that we understand our brains, and also our own awareness. So I'm going to talk about five neurotransmitters today and how they have evolved and how they affect our brain in the most basic of terms.

And I don't want you to underestimate how powerful this knowledge can be, but I don't think it's necessary to understand all the intricate words and details to have this knowledge have an effect on you. It's often, like, when people are learning to garden. You don't really have to understand all of the exact terminology of the plants and their origins in order to put a seed in the ground, put some dirt on top of it, and water it. And that's kind of how I want you to think about this.

So don't be intimidated by the fact that I'm going to talk about the brain because I'm not smart enough to talk about it in a way – and what I mean by that is that I recognize, I feel like I'm very smart, but I'm not smart in the sense that I'm going to get lost in the weeds here in my understanding of science.

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So I'm going to talk about dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin, endorphins, and cortisol. And hopefully, I'll talk about it in a way where you can see how these all interact with each other and how they affect us in our lives and in our behavior. And I think it also really helps to separate ourselves from our brains.

So there's the part of us that thinks with our brain, that is us. And then there's also the part of us that can separate ourselves from our brain and view our brain from the outside. And that is also part of us. A lot of times, when we get lost within the neuron-firings of our brain, we think that that's who we are, as the deepest essence. And that's simply not true.

It's just the software that we use to think, and it is programmed in a way that can end up making us feel like there's something really wrong with us and with the world. And it is created that way by design, because our brain is designed for survival.

Our brains are wired for survival; that's been our number one goal. And thank you, evolving brain, for being wired that way, because that's why we're all here. We had to survive in order to be here, right? So in order to survive, the brain's inclination is always to be looking for danger.

It's always looking for what is wrong. And that has served us. That has served us as a species. It is no longer serving most of us as a species because we are programmed to be so negative that we end up in a state that's not productive and that is actually doing the opposite of contributing towards our survival.

You guys have heard me talk a lot about this on the podcast; that what got us here is either going to kill us or we're going to have to change it and evolve to the next level to get to the next phase of our evolution because what got us here isn't going to get us there. In fact, what got us here is not causing us all sorts of trouble.

So our brain's built-in software, we can all it, something is wrong. I want you to imagine downloading a software called, something is wrong, and

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that is the software that we have in our brains. That is what is running the show.

Okay, so what that means is that our normal brain's default is looking for danger, which is the opposite of satisfaction and happiness. And I want you guys to think about that. The neurotransmitters in our brains that make us happy are not turned on by default.

And I think a lot of us believe that they should be, and a lot of us believe that normal brains are programmed that way; that we should always be feeling a sense of comfort and satisfaction and wellbeing, or something has gone wrong. And in truth, it's the opposite of that.

The brain's natural default state is discomfort and looking for danger. So any kind of wellbeing or sense of satisfaction or natural comfort is going to be something that we create and not the normal hummings of our brain.

And the way that I like to think about it and the way that really helps me understand this is that the neurochemicals in our brain that create the feelings of happiness and wellbeing are wired to reward survival. So they are released in our brain when we have done something beneficial to survive; not when we are simply sitting around in the cave.

And my understanding that, I think it's like, for me, "Oh, my brain is always going to be requiring me to survive before it gives me a happy neurochemical. It's not going to just provide that for me." And I understand why, because if I was just sitting in the cave constantly feeling happy and satisfied, I would probably be eaten because I wouldn't be on the lookout for survival. I wouldn't be looking for a reason to survive.

And so if something always seems wrong – if something always seems wrong with the world and if something always seems wrong with you, then it means your brain has evolved perfectly. It has evolved to the point where it is going to keep you alive. And it has served you up until this point.

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So, check in with me. Do you feel like something is wrong with the world, and do you feel like something is wrong with you most of the time? Okay, good, then you're doing it right. Your brain is healthy and it has evolved properly and you have a good functioning brain, with the software called something is wrong.

Now, let's talk about the neurotransmitters that are part of the design and are part of the software system. The first one we're going to talk about is dopamine. Now, I've talked a lot about dopamine as the desire neurotransmitter as the neurochemical in our brain that is responsible for creating that feeling of desire that happens before the reward.

For those of you who aren't familiar with my work, I talk a lot about dopamine in relation to addiction, in relation to our desire for alcohol, our desire for food, especially sugar and flour, anything that provides us with a false pleasure. I talk a lot about dopamine in those areas.

But I'm going to back up a little bit and talk about it more in general here. Dopamine is one of those neurotransmitters that energizes us to seek reward. And what's interesting about it is that it actually feels good. It actually creates power and it creates motivation.

So for any of you who have had this experience with food or with alcohol, dopamine is the neurotransmitter that motivates you to drive to the store in the middle of the night, even though it's freezing outside, to get a cake or a bottle of chardonnay. It motivates you to hurry to the bar to get a drink or hurry to the pantry to get some food.

And it's almost like nothing else matters in that moment because the dopamine is driving us and driving that desire and creating that urge to get that reward. And what I talk a lot about is that our dopamine is an imperative important part of our evolution. It's a very important neurotransmitter that has been misguided by many of the false rewards and the intensified rewards that our brains have yet to adapt to. And therefore, our brains think that these false rewards are associated with our survival.

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And that's why, sometimes, we feel like we're eating or drinking or doing drugs against our own will, because our brain has literally taught itself that those false pleasures are more important than anything else that isn't as intensified.

So one of the things that is really important to remember is that dopamine is what we experience before we get the reward. And when we get the reward, the dopamine stops. The pleasure of the reward is a different type of pleasure than the pleasure of anticipating that reward. And that's why we can eat something and get a reward from it and have another fit of dopamine right after it that requires us to get the other reward.

So it's not like, especially with false rewards, it intensifies our dopamine unnaturally, so we feel like one cookie's not enough. We need two, we need three, we need eight. I like to compare it a little bit to the natural reward of touch that we get from – and I'm going to talk about oxytocin in a minute, but let's talk about the difference between eating a cookie and getting a massage.

So the anticipation of getting a massage is a steady flow of dopamine, right? So it's the anticipation of the reward. It's the motivation to drive to the spa, to drive to the place where we're going to get it, to set the appointment, all of those things. We're motivated to do that because we want to get the massage. The same is true with the cookie.

Now, notice though, when we get the reward of the massage, it is a natural reward of touch. It's not intensified beyond what our brain has learned how to accommodate. So we've experienced touch all through our evolution. So when we get a massage, that is natural – or maybe we make love with our partner, that is natural – there is a level of satisfaction and oxytocin that happens that relieves that desire and that dopamine for that moment.

When we do a false reward that is intensified, it's almost as if it doubles us down on our dopamine for that reward. So we go and have a cookie and then we have to have another one immediately. Have you ever gone in and got a massage and then said, "I have to go have another one immediately."

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Can I get four massages today? Can I get five, six? I want a massage binge.”

Has anyone had a massage binge? Probably not, unless the touch or the association is intensified, which happens to some people with porn and sex addiction, or with food or with alcohol, because it's so intensified, then the reward in and of itself relieves the need for more of the reward. And that's where we've gotten out of touch with our own dopamine.

So steady dopamine, the steady flow of dopamine that motivates us to evolve, that motivates us to go to the next level, is steady and it actually produces steady success and steady rewards. It's a powerful fuel that we want to regulate through our natural system of consciously deciding how we want to evolve and what rewards we want.

What most of us are doing is we're misusing our dopamine. So if dopamine is created to encourage us, as humans, to achieve rewards, then we will always be seeking the next thing, which is a beautiful thing because we'll always be wanting the next. Because what we get used to, as satisfaction in our life, becomes the normal regular thing for us, and then we don't create dopamine in order to achieve it, unless it's deprived of us, right?

So for example, think about a hot shower when you go camping. You're not, like, every day, generating a bunch of dopamine so you can go take a shower. But if you haven't had one in a long time, then you will. And so, what's beautiful about dopamine and why we love it is that it creates a lot of motivation for us to keep achieving next level things in our life, and motivation feels good. Dopamine feels good. It's a beautiful thing.

And so many of us are extinguishing our natural dopamine for achievement and for accomplishment – we're wasting it all on false pleasure and we're overexerting dopamine by rewarding ourselves with false pleasure, which actually creates our dopamine receptors in our neurons to down-regulate. And so then the only dopamine we are generating is for the false pleasure.

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And so it's kind of like you have this currency that will motivate you to achieve things. You have this currency of dopamine that will provide you with powerful energy and excitement towards a reward, but you're extinguishing it by rewarding yourself constantly and consistently with false pleasure.

I will tell you personally, when I removed the false pleasure of excess food, sugar, and flour from my life and when I removed the pleasure and the excess false pleasure of alcohol from my life, I had so much more dopamine that I was able to generate to focus on the rewards that had a net positive effect in my life; the rewards that I keep achieving in my life that are meaningful and matter and don't extinguish, and in fact, keep generating more and more excitement towards accomplishing more and more that I'm able to contribute to the world.

And so, I think understanding the way dopamine works is so important so you don't waste it, and so you understand that the steady flow of natural dopamine will feel amazing and it will motivate you towards achieving more in your life, which will keep that steady flow of dopamine and the steady flow of success in your life, which, I think, is the way the brain can be utilized for its highest good.

So it's kind of like you have a computer and it has this energy that is generated in the computer and you want to maintain it at a steady level so you can utilize it for the long term. And that's how I think about dopamine.

And so it's a beautiful thing that the dopamine always needs bigger and better rewards in order to keep the flow going. You just want to make sure that it's directed in the right direction, because if it's directed towards cake, you're just going to need bigger and better cakes. If it's directed towards chardonnay, you're just going to need bigger and more and stronger chardonnay in order to get the same effect of the reward.

Okay, let's move onto the next one which is serotonin. And serotonin is a very interesting neurotransmitter. Most people have heard of it because low

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serotonin is associated with depression. And I think there's been a lot of talk about it in relation to depression.

But the way that I want to talk about it here is that serotonin is really the neurotransmitter that rewards you when you gain a social advantage. And this is kind of a touchy subject, because a lot of us don't like to think about us as being creatures that seek social advantages.

But if you look at all of the animal kingdom and you look at groups of animals – and we are animals – and how they all function in herds, there is that hierarchy. There is the social advantage. There is the gauging who's in charge and who's winning and who should we fight and who should we regress from, who's in charge?

And that's always been how our brain has evaluated social situations. So this idea of status and social rivalry is built into our brains. So when we go into social situations, we are not going in with the moral attitude of everybody here is equal and everything should be fair.

Even though that may be what we want to do, our brains are always looking for, what's the hierarchy here? And we always want to be special, and that's why we have these competitive urges, and that's why we're always comparing ourselves to other people. And that's why we have this inclination to fight and to win and for justice.

And for some of us, what that looks like is we go into social situations and we want to dominate, so we fight in the way that we try and dominate the situation. And for others of us, we go in with a different energy of fighting against the dominators. But it doesn't matter which way we're directing the fight; there's always the fight. We want to win.

We either want to win against evil or we want to win towards success and there's that comparison and that competitiveness. So for some people, it's who are the good guys and who are the bad guys? Who are we going to fight against? For others, it's who's the strongest here? Can I dominate? Can I be the one who wins the game and can I get ahead?

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And whenever I coach people on their comparison and their desire to win and feeling like other people are dominating them or feeling threatened by other people, we're always playing around with serotonin. And a lot of times, when we feel completely defeated and we feel like other people have won and that we are the loser, quote en quote, then we feel as if that inferiority that we experience creates a depletion of serotonin.

And that's where we feel completely exhausted and defeated and like there's no way for us to win in this big bad world and that our status is at the bottom. And when we feel like we're winning and doing well and we have lots of approval and justice has been served and we feel special and we feel like we have been heard, then we feel as if we have the serotonin flowing.

And I think that a lot of times, we don't get this sense of satisfaction. We don't get that sense because we give up before we've given ourselves a chance to win because we feel guilty for any sense of wanting to win or wanting to compete.

And I always try and explain that the brain is programmed this way. So when I coach – a lot of times, I coach mothers on their children. And as children, when we go into, like, middle school, this dominance and this hierarchy is part of our mammalian brain trying to seek status.

And a lot of times, we want to vilify the bullies and we want to save the people that are the victims, the children that are the victims of the bullies, and talk about it as if some evil thing is happening and this should not be happening and that something's gone terribly wrong. And yet, this happens in every single grade in every single school across the world.

And it's because of the way we have socially been programmed, literally, to evolve; in a herd, basically, in a herd of people, in a herd of animals. And so when we say "The world is getting worse. People are becoming more dominant. There's more competition. We shouldn't have any of this stuff." It's because we feel as if we should have evolved past our brains.

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We shouldn't have this bullying and we shouldn't have this competitiveness and everyone should just get along and everyone should just be equal. And on a prefrontal cortex kind of moral basis, we can agree – many of us can agree – that that is what most of us would like.

But when you look at the way that the brain is wired and you understand that it's wired for this competitiveness, it can help us all kind of step back and take a deep breath and understand the dynamics instead of vilifying and then fighting against the fighters. It's almost like we end up bullying the bullies because we're trying to seek justice.

But what's fascinating about that is it's just the same need for serotonin directed the complete opposite way. We're still fighting. We're still trying to win. We're trying to win over the bully or the bully is trying to win over us, but it's still just that fight and that need for that getting ahead, that social status, that need to feel special and important and like we matter.

And so, stepping back from that and understanding that's the way the brain is programmed, it helps us understand the smaller relational social circles of children, but it also helps us understand the political circles of adults and the social justice fights that we get into and the need to win and the need for justice and the need for everyone to be considered special.

It's important that we understand that this is something that is wired into us. This is something that our brain is constantly seeking. And if we aren't conscious of it, it can be very misguided and we can miss the ultimate goal that we have for ourselves personally when we are just at the effect of that need in our brain to seek justice and status and competitiveness. So being aware of it will help us make better decisions.

The third neurochemical that I want to talk about is oxytocin. And this is the one that's a neurotransmitter that we experience around connection and feeling a part of a group. So if serotonin is about social status within the group, oxytocin is about the trust and the connection that we have when we feel a part of.

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And I love this one because I think it's so fascinating, what we do at our own expense, for the benefit of the neurotransmitters, the juices that will flow in our brains, right? So if you think about how important it is to feel a connection, isolation in our evolution has often meant death, right?

We are stronger in groups and we are protected in groups – especially if we're in the very inside of the group – from predators. And when we are isolated and by ourselves outside of the heard, outside of the group, we are very vulnerable. And so what we like to experience and what we are rewarded with oxytocin for experiencing is that connection with groups.

And so most of us would think that connection with other people and connection with a group is a beautiful thing and we should always seek that and want to be a part of that. But what also happens now that the survival of our species, the physical survival of us being close to each other, isn't as important for survival as it used to be, we've now created this social connection and being part of a group socially and not being isolated socially as being the most important thing.

And the problem with that is, a lot of times, we will go along with groups. We will go along with peer pressure. We will go along with the group-think and the agreement and the adoption of group beliefs because oxytocin is more important to us than anything; than being alone, than the isolation.

We would rather experience the benefit of that happy neurochemical than we would the isolation and the cortisol of being left out. And I'm going to talk about cortisol in a minute, but it's important to understand that it's not all peaches and roses being part of a group.

I coach so many of my students on caring so deeply about what other people think about them and caring so deeply about approval and caring so deeply about acceptance that they think more often about the group, the generalized group, than they do about their own opinion. And this is not because you're weak and this is not because there's something wrong with you. This is because this is how your brain is wired.

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Your brain is wired to be part of a group and to never isolate yourself with a separate opinion, with an independent thought, because that would mean isolation, and ultimately, death. And that is how we experience it.

So a lot of times, we adopt beliefs and care about other people's opinions so we can feel that oxytocin connection. And one of the things that we see a lot in our social dynamics is this creating of the common enemy and the common threat in order to feel that oxytocin connection.

And it used to be that there were predators that were hunting us and that we needed to identify as a predator and a common threat in order to feel that connection. We bonded in our common enemies in order to survive. And that tendency has evolved now into an us against them kind of feeling.

We don't realize that a lot of the reason why we are bonding together against a common enemy is because it feels good. Fighting a common enemy makes us feel closer. And even though the fight against the enemy may create a lot of negativity and may create a lot of cynicism and problems for us, we are willing to do it in order to feel that connection. Even when it may not make a lot of sense, we still bond over it.

And I'm fascinated with this in terms of cults and in terms of group-think, in terms of belief systems, especially really outdated belief systems. Like, if you think about groups with leaders that have been able to get people to do things that they never would do individually, but because of the group-think and the group belief systems, there is so much violence that can come from that and so much self-violence that can come from creating that connection. I think it's important to step back and say, "Where am I selling myself out for oxytocin? Where am I agreeing or going along with the group in order to feel connected, when really, I want to go a different way?"

So many of us do this with our families. We want to feel the connection and the approval of our family, of our parents, of our siblings, of our friends, so we don't go off and do that separate career that might make us feel more isolated. We don't have a differing opinion, maybe in terms of religion or politics or a view of the world, because we don't want to feel that isolation.

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And when you understand, “Wait a minute, that’s just my brain. I’m not really isolated. I’m not really out there on the prairie going to die by myself. My brain is making me feel that because of the way that it’s evolved.” It will make you feel as if you can be more courageous because your brain will freak out, but you can tell your brain to calm down. Everything’s fine. Just because you’re not going along with a group, doesn’t mean you’re going to die.

And I’ve seen so many of my students be able to live a more authentic life in line with what they truly believe without feeling like they have to go along with a crowd as a way of feeling socially isolated. And you’ll see this with groups too that are afraid of this that actually do this.

So, like, if you’re a part of a group and you start to disagree, people may attack you for disagreeing. People may attack you for having different political beliefs or different religious beliefs. They may reach out and attack you, but that’s because of their fear of being isolated.

We actually generate that, “We’re connected and if you’re not with us you’re against us...” energy – it’s actually because that feels good because of oxytocin. Isn’t that crazy, y’all? I think it’s fascinating. I like to look in my own life, where am I selling myself out for oxytocin?

The next one I want to talk about is endorphins. And this is really the neurotransmitter that is kind of the counter to pain. It, like, masks pain and it evolved for emergencies. Whenever you look it up on the internet, it always shows a zebra getting eaten by a lion, and it basically says the zebra is feeling no pain because of endorphins.

And it basically allows injured mammals to avoid the pain enough so it can do what it needs to protect itself. It doesn’t get totally bombarded down with the pain that it can’t run away or take care of itself.

So it’s a temporary experience. A lot of us experience it after very intense exercise. And you will notice – I have noticed a lot of this really intense hardcore extreme form of exercise as a way to create endorphins and as a

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way to kind of work with the brain to generate endorphins on a regular basis.

And searching for endorphins can go wrong when we put our body in so much pain intentionally – maybe not consciously, but intentionally – in order to get the experience of the endorphin on the other side, which is so messed up, right? But our brains can go wrong that way.

I've worked with people before that have done the cutting and they've caused themselves pain, and in their mind it's actually a release of the pain because of the play of endorphins in there. And so I think it's important to understand that there is a reason why some of us inflict pain on ourselves.

And when you look at the play of dopamine and serotonin and oxytocin and endorphins, it helps us understand why, as a species, we are so negative, why, as a species, we hurt ourselves and each other on the regular. And it's because of the way our brain is wired.

It's not because our soul is defective. And separating out the essence of who we are and the meaningfulness of who we are from our brain's natural tendency to seek survival at all costs lets us take a deep breath and recognize our worthiness is 100% even though our brain has evolved to do things that are no longer relevant or useful to us.

But what happens is, a lot of times, our brain is seeking the neurotransmitters of happiness in misguided ways. And when we do those actions to create those results for ourselves, we end up beating ourselves up for trying to be special, trying to seek approval, trying to get status, being competitive, going along with the group even though we don't agree with everything that they're saying, constantly over-satisfying our need for rewards by overeating or overdrinking or addiction, and then using all of that natural tendency of our brain against ourselves.

I just want to offer that we don't have to do that anymore. We can have so much compassion for the animal that is our own selves, right, for what's going on in our own brains.

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So the last one I want to talk about is cortisol. Cortisol is one of the neurotransmitters that is talked about a lot. And I think most of you probably know that it is the stress chemical. It is released when we anticipate pain.

So it's kind of like the sister to dopamine, which is released when we anticipate reward. So what's really important to understand between those two that I think is kind of fascinating is cortisol is not released when we're actually experiencing the pain. It's released in anticipation of it. And dopamine isn't actually released or it isn't started when we get the reward. It's started in the anticipation of it.

So it's always a mental construct. So if you're at home in the middle of the night and you hear a loud banging, you will have a thought in your head that will release a lot of cortisol.

If you get a phone call that tells you that you've won the lottery, you will feel that anticipation – or maybe you've gotten a job offer or something – that anticipation of that reward will release a bunch of dopamine. And I think that's a really important distinction because, a lot of times, we think that the good feeling stuff is always happening during the reward or the bad feeling stuff is always happening when the threat is being executed onto us.

Most of the cortisol that we experience in anticipation of pain is unnecessary because the pain never comes. So much of the cortisol that we release and that we create is based on a false threat. The anticipation of death, right – our brain is always looking for danger and there's very rarely real danger there.

And what we have associated and created in our current environment is actually quite safe as it applies to our survival, and yet, we are still looking for danger as if danger is imminent. So we have evolved to anticipate pain so we would be motivated to act to avoid it, and that's what cortisol does for us.

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So we are always anticipating pain, even though pain and danger and true physical pain and danger is actually quite rare comparatively and relatively. So we have now generalized our anticipation of pain to social threats, to work, to getting work done, to accomplishment, to approval.

What used to be survival and predators is now, like, our boss and the guy that cuts in front of us in line and the person who is gossiping about us in our group, that threatens our connection and our isolation. That is what has now double pumped our cortisol throughout our brains and is having us anticipating pain when there will be no pain. It's all manufactured in our brain.

So it's kind of like the difference between there actually being a predator at the door, there actually being a lion behind the bush, versus there just being a noise, versus there just being a bang. And how often there's actually a predator is so rare, but how often we're anticipating the predator is so frequent. And until we step back and understand that our brain is not mature enough or sophisticated enough or evolved enough to understand that we are more safe than we are threatened, then we won't be able to turn off the cortisol.

And what's amazing about all of these neurotransmitters is that we do have the ability to manage them by increasing our awareness and understanding them. And being able to know that when someone jumps out from behind the bush and yells boo, that yes, we're going to be freaked out and we are going to feel like we are threatened in that moment, but we can immediately calm ourselves down and say, oh, that's just our friend.

And we can do that more and more in our lives when our brain is afraid that getting fired means we're going to die or that being blocked from someone's Facebook feed means that we are going to die, or that having a different opinion or taking a different career than our family would like us to do does not mean complete isolation and death.

It means that we can manage our mind to handle those situations and understand that they are no longer a matter of survival. And in fact, not

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following our dreams and not paying attention and not telling ourselves the truth is actually what will eat us up inside and cause us more pain and more health issues than the survival of being out in the world ever will at this point in our environment and our evolution.

So I really hope that understanding these neurotransmitters just on this basic surface level has helped you kind of get a perspective of what's going on in your brain and why and just separate you out from your natural tendencies and your natural inclinations because the brain is motivated by neurochemicals.

And it's motivated to take action based on those little, you know, kind of synapses. And those little releases of those chemicals is what drives all of our behavior and what causes all of those neurons to fire is what we think. And this is why The Model is so important. And it's so important to separate out what are our circumstances and what are our thoughts about them and are they in line with what is true in our current world? And what is really the threat? And how often are we just responding to our desire for dopamine, our need for serotonin, our need for oxytocin, our need for endorphins?

How often are we trying to manufacture those artificially instead of just understanding them and actually utilizing them for our benefit? And when your brain is freaking out because you're going to walk on stage, because it thinks you're going to die, because it thinks people will make fun of you and you will be isolated, you can remind your brain that no, that is not impending death, it's simply standing on a stage in front of people who really genuinely want to succeed.

Then, you can take a deep breath and take action in your life that would otherwise have you be immobilized and have you be filled with cortisol. And instead, you can use your need for dopamine and serotonin and oxytocin to your benefit. Use your neurotransmitters. Don't be at the effect of them.

So I hope that's been helpful for you. It was tremendously helpful for me because it helped me understand why I have the urges that I do, why I want to fight sometimes, why I want to win sometimes, why I want to feel

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connected at my own expense sometimes, why I sometimes put what matters to me on the back burner in order to be aligned or connected with someone else.

And it also helped me know that I have a choice and that I don't have to be at the effect of my very old brain. And I can take my newer brain and my newer understanding and my newer knowledge and create the exact life I want, not at my own expense, but actually for me and for the evolution that will be required of my brain in order to get to the next level of humanity.

I hope it helps you as well. I'll talk to you guys next week.

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