

iPAT

Institute of  
Personal Assistant Training®  
Power Behind Powerful



# How Neuroscience Work

SITUATION | BRAIN | CHEMICAL



#Neuroscience

## SITUATION | BRAIN | CHEMICAL

If you are slumped in your chair with your head hanging down and your body leaning to one side, and with your breathing high in your chest, there is no way that your mind will believe that at that moment you are feeling confident. In this position your mind will read your body language and will release the **cortisol hormone** that we need to keep at bay. When you have found what your non-confident state is, recognize it and avoid it.



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whenever you take on a powerful stance for two minutes - which is to stand like superman / superwoman, standing tall and straight, with head high, shoulders back, hands on hips, legs slightly apart and straight - this sends a signal to your brain to reduce the **cortisol level** and raise **testosterone**, which is the dominant hormone that helps make you feel stronger, less stressed and more confident.



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## SITUATION | BRAIN | CHEMICAL

When the negative gremlin starts to rise and you feel an **amygdala** attack coming on, you can do something about it. Sometimes you may just notice thoughts that flit into your mind every day: the ones where you put yourself down, such as 'I've lost that telephone number I promised to give to my boss - I'm stupid!



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## SITUATION | BRAIN | CHEMICAL

Whenever you focus on your negative feelings and really look at them from an objective point of view - becoming curious about them, allowing the pain to just be there without judgement - this act alone releases **dopamine** in the reward centre of your brain. Your feelings of frustration, anger or irritability will be replaced with contentment and an inner peace.



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Stress can be detrimental to your health and your relationships both at work and at home. In contrast, having controlled pressure helps to keep **adrenaline and cortisol** at healthy levels to get your brain working and provides you with the alertness and energy you need to cope with your role.



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Use the 'Pomodoro Technique' developed by Francesco Cirillo, which uses a timer to break down work into chunks of 25 minutes in length, separated by short 'brain breaks'. This method is brain-friendly because your **prefrontal cortex** runs out of energy at a maximum of 25 minutes when you have full-focused attention to a task.



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Recording everything stops you from worrying that you might forget something and keeps your stress hormones at bay. Tick off items as you complete them — ticking them off as completed lights up the reward system in your brain and produces feel-good hormones such as **dopamine**.





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## SITUATION | BRAIN | CHEMICAL

We need to keep stress, pressure and anxiety to the minimum in order to keep cortisol and **adrenaline** levels down. Stress also reduces the levels of dopamine and means we have less ability to think and act properly. It is no use reasoning with a person who is suffering from stress, because when stressed our **prefrontal cortex stops** working properly and we are unable to think logically and rationalize.



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## SITUATION | BRAIN | CHEMICAL

To keep **cortisol** levels healthy and under control, the body's relaxation response needs to be activated after the threat response occurs. You can learn to relax your body with various mindfulness techniques



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## SITUATION | BRAIN | CHEMICAL

when we are about to give a presentation, we may feel the **adrenaline** rising but view this as a positive thing as it enables us to have extra energy and a feeling of awareness and excitement, which helps us to be more effective in our delivery.



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## SITUATION | BRAIN | CHEMICAL

**Oxytocin** (the bonding hormone) is released to counteract the feelings of being stressed by helping you to strengthen relationships, enhance your empathy and make you more compassionate, caring and willing to support others. It motivates you to seek support and nudges you to tell someone how you feel instead of 'bottling it up'.



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## SITUATION | BRAIN | CHEMICAL

When in danger the **amygdala** will pick one of the above reactions to happen automatically, or we may even go through all of these stages before we settle on one.



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## SITUATION | BRAIN | CHEMICAL

Whatever makes you feel threatened and gives you the feeling of perceived danger - reframe it - make it into a question, which activates your reasoning skills in your **prefrontal cortex**, which in turn will stop your threat response from activating. For example, you may feel a threat response because you feel you are not going to achieve your deadline for a report you promised. Activate your problem-solution skills by asking yourself: 'What are my options to this deadline? What can I do about it?'



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Meditation is about getting beyond the analytical mind so that you can access your subconscious mind where all your bad habits and behaviours are that you want to change. Post meditative mindfulness will help you to feel calm and in more control and give you the ability to make better decisions. Studies of participants in mindfulness-based stress reduction showed not only reduced stress but also a smaller **amygdala** - the part of the brain that controls the intensity of negative emotions.



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## SITUATION | BRAIN | CHEMICAL

Once you complete the task, even if it is only one step of the task, you have a sense of accomplishment that makes you feel good, which is because your brain has released happy hormones such as **dopamine**.





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## SITUATION | BRAIN | CHEMICAL

'The saying goes: 'From the moment we are born our brains start working, and they do not stop until we stand up to give our first presentation.' It is true that when people have an `amygdala attack' through a threat response (and in this case the threat comes from thinking about delivering a presentation) their thinking brain does stop working temporarily and we have the `fight, flight, freeze, flock' automatic response.



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## SITUATION | BRAIN | CHEMICAL

There is a strong correlation between fatigue and performance. When you have been focusing and concentrating for 25 minutes then you must take a break to revive your **prefrontal cortex** otherwise you will be making decisions subconsciously, which may not serve you as well. By controlling fatigue you also prevent musculoskeletal discomfort, maintain mental alertness and maximize performance.



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## SITUATION | BRAIN | CHEMICAL

Always remember to smile as it not only brightens up your face but increases **serotonin levels** and makes you feel happier. When you smile people smile back and the bonding begins. If you want to feel happier and dispel any first-time nerves when networking, simply smile — you can't feel sad with a smile on your face!



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## SITUATION | BRAIN | CHEMICAL

Give the person your full attention and never look over their shoulder to see who else is in the room - that is simply bad manners and they will feel rejected and possibly start an **amygdala hijack**.



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Praise as often as you like — this will trigger the reward response of the brain as well as several other areas, and **dopamine** will be released making them feel good and appreciated. **Dopamine** is heavily involved in reinforcing behaviours as it helps them to remember how good they felt and it also has positive effects on the **prefrontal cortex**, helping them to think clearer, more creatively and increase their problem-solving and memory capabilities.



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## SITUATION | BRAIN | CHEMICAL

If an assistant has consistently been working overtime to reach a specific deadline then offer them some time off in lieu. This is another form of appreciation and it will release **oxytocin**, which counteracts stress and creates trust, generosity and empathy. This motivates us to act in other people's interests, which is of course the crux of the job of an assistant. **Oxytocin** is also known as the 'bonding' hormone.



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## SITUATION | BRAIN | CHEMICAL

When a boss ignores, blames or accuses an assistant they will immediately have an **amygdala** hijack, meaning that their threat response will come into play and they will want to run and hide, stand there and say and do nothing, argue back or go and find someone to talk to about it. This threat response produces **cortisol and adrenaline**, both of which can be harmful in continued doses. They have a direct effect on efficiency, productivity and memory that will in turn affect your productivity.



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## SITUATION | BRAIN | CHEMICAL

### **D is for DOPAMINE and it's also for DRIVE**

Dopamine literally drives our brain's reward system, urging us to seek pleasure and motivating us to achieve goals. It also regulates our emotional responses, enabling us not only to identify where rewards might be, but also to take action to move toward them.

Low levels of Dopamine can result in a lack of enthusiasm & motivation and in self-doubt & procrastination and it can also lead to obsessive and/or addictive behavior.

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**How can we increase  
Dopamine in the brain?**







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## SITUATION | BRAIN | CHEMICAL

### **How can we increase Dopamine in the brain?**

Most types of reward increase the level of Dopamine in the brain, which is why when we improve a skill, achieve a goal and/or receive recognition or praise, we feel good.



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SITUATION | BRAIN | CHEMICAL

**O is for OXYTOCIN and it's also for ONENESS**

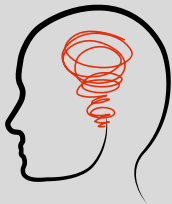
Oxytocin is also known as the 'hug' or 'love' hormone, because it makes us feel loved. It plays a role in empathy, intimacy and trust and it regulates social interaction, enabling us to instigate, build and maintain satisfying relationships.

Low levels of Oxytocin can result in enhanced fear and distrust, isolating behavior, and feelings of loneliness which has been shown to reduce life expectancy.

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**How can we increase  
Oxytocin in the brain?**





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SITUATION | BRAIN | CHEMICAL

**How can we increase Oxytocin in the brain?**

**Most types of connection increase the level of Oxytocin in the brain, which is why when we hug a loved one (or a pet) and interact, spend time or collaborate with people we like, we feel good.**



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SITUATION | BRAIN | CHEMICAL

## **S is for SEROTONIN and it's also for STABILITY**

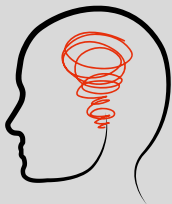
Serotonin regulates sleep, appetite and digestion, as well as anxiety, helping us feel more emotionally settled, maintain mood balance and engage more comfortably in social behavior. It also regulates memory and learning, enabling us to focus better and to both retain and recall information.

Low levels of Serotonin can cause anxiety, irritability, insomnia, pain, panic and depression as well as difficulty focusing and memory loss.

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**How can we increase  
Serotonin in the brain?**





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SITUATION | BRAIN | CHEMICAL

**How can we increase Serotonin in the brain?**

**A healthy mind and body increases the level of Serotonin in the brain, which is why when we get enough rest and sleep, eat whole foods, drink adequate amounts of water and look after ourselves, we feel good.**



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SITUATION | BRAIN | CHEMICAL

## **E is for ENDORPHINS and it's also for EASE**

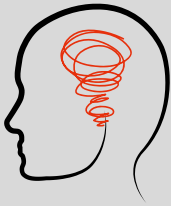
Endorphins regulate emotional responses by interacting with the opiate receptors (our natural painkillers) in the brain, enabling us to cope more effectively with stress and anxiety. They also regulate physiological responses, enabling us to cope with physical ailments and both physical and emotional pain.

Low levels of Endorphins can manifest in lethargy, reduced tolerance to pain, anxiety and a myriad of physical disorders.

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**How can we increase  
Endorphins in the brain?**





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**How can we increase Endorphins in the brain?**

**Physical exercise, laughter and foods like chocolate and chillies secrete endorphins, enhancing feelings of pleasure and increasing immunity, which is why when we do those things, we feel good.**