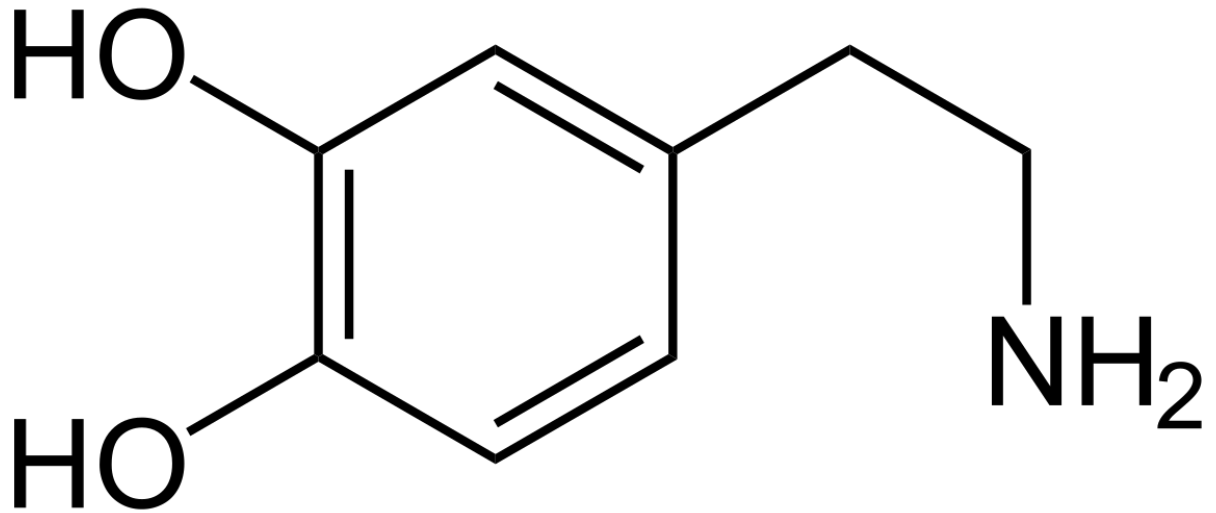


# PROJECT HTCYL

I would like to start by saying thank you for purchasing this guide. I tried to keep it short and straight to the point. I hope it will help you get your life back on track.



**Before we start, let me explain to you what dopamine is and how it works, as I'll be mentioning dopamine a number of times throughout the book.**



So what is dopamine? Dopamine is a neurotransmitter. It's a chemical responsible for transmitting signals between the nerve cells. When dopamine neurons become activated, they release dopamine. Dopamine is a major part of our brain's reward system. Whenever something good happens, our brain rewards us with a dose of dopamine. This is what gives you that great feeling after eating a delicious meal, achieving an important goal, having a pleasant social interaction or falling in love. We are motivated to do things because we seek dopamine rewards. Without dopamine, we simply lose our will to live.

Just to show how important dopamine is when it comes to motivation, let's go back to 2006 when a new weight loss drug called Rimonabant was first approved in EU. This drug was designed to suppress the appetite by inhibiting the sense of reward you get from eating. Rimonabant proved to be very effective during trials as many patients simply lost interest in food and no longer wanted to eat as much as they previously did. Unfortunately, they

also lost interest in everything else, became depressed and started contemplating suicide. Rimonabant was soon pulled off the shelves.

This should give you a quick introduction to dopamine and its importance. I'll go into more details later in the guide.

## **Building a strong foundation.**

If you attempt to build a house on weak foundation it will crumble and fall. If you want to build a better life you need to start by strengthening your two main pillars on which everything else stands. Your body and mind. Both need to function well in order to support each other. When one pillar falls, the other soon follows with everything else that was built on top. You don't need to be the world's most mentally stable person with a body of a Greek god. You just need to be healthy. There are a number of ways in which you can strengthen your two pillars without doing anything too extreme.

## **Mindfulness meditation.**

Now before you get all weirded out, mindfulness meditation is not some sort of religious or spiritual practise. It's actually a scientifically proven method of training your brain with measurable psychological and physiological results. Harvard University recently ran an MRI study which showed that subjects practising mindfulness meditation for just 8 weeks have had their brain's grey matter rebuilt. Think of mindfulness meditation as a gym for your brain. It

will strengthen areas of your brain responsible for stress, anxiety, focus, pain and depression.

The limbic system is one of the oldest and most dominant parts of your brain. It is completely automated. It's involved in many of our emotions and motivations when it comes to survival. It tells us to immediately pull our hands away when we touch something hot and it tells us to avoid intimidating and unpleasant tasks.

Our prefrontal cortex on the other hand is a newer and weaker part of brain. It allows us to process information and make decisions. Prefrontal cortex is what separates us from the rest of the species that simply follow their instincts. It is not automated like our limbic system. It requires mindful effort to work at its fullest potential.

When we have a big, intimidating task ahead of us our limbic system tells us to avoid it and without giving it much thought we make a decision to go do something more pleasant instead. While we are engaged in this pleasant activity we completely forget about the fact that we are suppose to be focusing on what's important. If we are not mindful, it's very easy to follow what our limbic system tells us instead of making a conscious effort to engage our prefrontal cortex and remind ourselves that we have an important task ahead of us, that we should sit down, create an action plan and execute it.

Mindfulness meditation improves our emotional intelligence. Negative emotions are often the root cause of procrastination. We avoid tasks that bring up unwanted emotions. Such behaviour often turns into a habit that many people don't even realize exists. An emotionally intelligent person is able to recognize those emotions and consciously chose not to avoid them.

Mindfulness meditation will help you manage your emotions better instead of just running with them.

Mindfulness meditation helps with impulse control. If your friends will call you while you are working on something important and ask you to join them for a game of pool, you'll be able to control your initial impulse to ditch the work and join them. If you go shopping and spot something that you want to buy but should not, you'll be able to recognize that you are being impulsive and avoid purchasing this unnecessary item.

Those who regularly practise mindfulness meditation are more aware of their actions, make better decisions, feel happier, have better sleep, are able to deal with stress better and overall have better health. Having an agile and flexible mindset will help you become more successful at pretty much anything you decide to do. Having reduced stress will save you from countless negative side-effects, increase your lifespan and help you deal with anything your life throws at you. It's essential that you start working on your brain because this is where all your decisions, ideas and drive originates.

So how do you start practising mindfulness meditation?

It's actually very easy, enjoyable and only takes 10-30 minutes per day. Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. Sit down with your back straight in any position you feel comfortable. You can sit on the floor with your legs crossed or on a regular chair the way you would usually sit. It does not matter. Just make sure your back is straight so that you won't fall asleep. Take a few deep breaths through your nose. Try to breathe with your stomach and not your chest. So that your stomach expands when you breathe in. Now start breathing comfortably at your own pace. Feel the air going into your nose. You might feel cool air under your nose, your nostrils or at the back of your

throat. Now close your eyes, focus on that sensation of air entering your nose and let your mind wonder. It is impossible to shut your brain up so you will soon start having different thoughts and sensations. Simply observe those thoughts and sensations without judging or analysing them. Label those thoughts or sensations and let them go. Go back to focusing on that feeling of air coming into your nose and wait for more thoughts to appear. You can imagine that you are a mountain and all those thoughts and sensations are uncontrollable clouds freely flowing through you.

So let's say you are focusing on that feeling of air coming into your nose and you suddenly remember something embarrassing that happened to you. You observe this thought like if it was a cloud flowing through you, label it as “embarrassing memory” and let it go. Then your foot might start itching. You observe that sensation, label it “itchy foot” and let it go. You will eventually find yourself a little carried away with your thoughts. One thought might lead to another and you will realise that you are just sitting there thinking about stuff. Then you simply go back to focusing on air entering your nose. Once you are done (You can set an alarm clock if you want) simply open your eyes and take a deep breath. That's all there is to it. You are not trying to shut your brain up. You are not trying to think about nothing. You are not trying to achieve some sort of euphoric enlightenment. Your meditation sessions are not going to be perfect. You might get frustrated or lost in your thoughts. This is absolutely fine. Your main objective is to just stick to it and meditate consistently every day. The longer sessions you have the better but even a few minutes per day is better than not doing it at all. Start with 10 minutes per day and see if you can improve on that. You might experience positive effects right away or it might take you a few days. Just stick to it and within a few weeks your brain will improve so much that it could show on an MRI scan.

**Your first task is to start practising mindfulness meditation.**

## **Sleep.**

A growing consensus among research scientists, from sleep experts to specialists in the fields of endocrinology, psychology and the neurosciences, says that good quality sleep is essential to health and emotional well-being..

Sleep has a natural rhythm. Our brains releases melatonin, a hormone which signals our bodies it's time to sleep. During healthy sleep, a person goes between various stages of sleep, following a predictable pattern of time and order. Each stage promotes different changes in brain activity and other physiological functions.

Poor quality sleep has a harmful effect on both the endocrine system and glucose modulation. There is an association between sleep debt, obesity and diabetes. Sleep deprivation also affects leptin levels and increases appetite. In recent studies, sleep deprivation caused a 30 percent slower response to both the Glucose Tolerance test and acute insulin response, raised the 24-hour cortisol profile, and resulted in 30 percent lower levels of leptin.

Lack of good quality sleep produces a signal mimicking negative energy balance, inducing people to eat and thereby predisposing to obesity. People who slept four hours a night were always hungry and craved starchy, sweet, and salty foods, and those in the short-sleep group of one study were more insulin-resistant.

A 2017 study suggests that night shift workers may stop their bodies from repairing daily DNA damage and have a higher risk of developing cancer.

Sleep deprivation affects mood more than it affects cognitive skills or physical performance.

In other words, poor sleep often impairs decision making, cognitive performance, motivation, focus, energy and promotes binge eating.

Everyone needs different amounts of sleep and that amount could vary day to day. It's pointless trying to force yourself to go to bed at a certain time if you just don't feel like sleeping or try and guess how much sleep you would need on a given night. You should however start waking up at a specific time each day. It does not matter when. What matters is that you pick most convenient time for you to wake up and stick to it. Eventually your body will get used to the new routine. It will tell you when you need to go to bed in order to get enough sleep by making you feel tired and sleepy in the evening. You will even find yourself waking up at that specific time without using an alarm clock. Your sleep cycles will normalize. You will wake up a lot more rested and energetic. Most importantly, your brain will function the way it's supposed to.

**Your second task is to figure out the best time for you to wake up and wake up at that specific time every day.**

**Eating habits.**



You are what you eat. The food you put in your mouth will have a huge impact on your body and most importantly your brain.

Refined carbohydrates are simple sugars that are usually found in junk foods, such as candy and soda, as well as in everyday foods, such as fruit juice, syrup, and jams, have by far the biggest impact on your mood, mental performance, dopamine and general health.

A famous study examined more than 1,000 parole decisions made by eight judges in Israel over a 10-month period. In each parole request, a prisoner appeared in front of a judge, and the judge could either accept or deny the request. The judges heard between 14 and 35 of these cases per day. Each case would have a different severity of the crime committed under different circumstances. It turned out that judges gave parole to 64.2% of the prisoner right after having a meal and almost nobody got accepted for parole when judges became hungry. This study suggested that judges made an easier decision to not grant parole due to mental fatigue caused by lower glucose levels. If highly trained and experienced judges were willing to keep somebody in prison just because they have not had a lunch break, imagine what kind of decisions a regular person would make after stuffing themselves full of sugary drinks and fast food. Would they decide to sit on the sofa watching YouTube or get themselves together and finish that paper they need to write?

In order to ensure survival of the species human body has a natural built in reward system for eating a healthy and varied diet to make sure this behaviour is reinforced and repeated. Eating sweet foods gives us a lot of pleasure for a reason. Sweet foods such as honey, berries and fruit are full of energy and such foods were hard to get, especially out of season.

On top of that eating something sour would mean it's not yet ripe and eating something bitter would potentially be dangerous. Sweetness indicated ripeness and therefore eating sweet food gave an extra dopamine reward.

Humans have another built in mechanism that makes sure we eat a varied diet. Have you noticed how you get bored of eating the same thing every day and it no longer tastes as nice? You then get something different and get a lot of satisfaction out of it? This is important because human body needs a wide range of vitamins and minerals to function properly. Eating the same food over and over again will not produce the same amount of dopamine. There is however one exception. Refined carbohydrates. Have you noticed how you never get tired of eating sweets? The more sugar you eat, the more you want it. This is because sugar works in a similar way to drugs, stimulating the same areas of the brain and giving you huge dopamine boosts. This is why so many people find it difficult to stop eating sugar.

During the last couple of hundred years a multibillion sugar industry was born. Artificial carbs became more potent and readily available. A recent historical document review published in JAMA Internal Medicine revealed a decade long battle by the sugar industry to blur the sugar's role in heart disease and obesity, pointing the finger at fat.

The bottom line is, eating fat doesn't make you fat, eating sugar does. Our bodies were not designed to eat man made refined carbohydrates. Sugar causes a wide range of diseases such as tooth decay, diabetes, heart attacks, accelerated ageing. It suppresses our immune system and most importantly it over-stimulates our reward system. Everything we do, we do because we seek a dopamine reward. Sugar gives us that reward almost instantly making our distant rewards we would get from achieving a difficult task less desirable.

Now with sugar out of the way let's talk about diets in general. Different diets can be very effective depending on what you are trying to achieve but if you want to stay healthy in the long run you will have to change your eating habits and make a healthy diet part of your lifestyle. This is why it's important to keep things simple. The most important thing you can do is make sure your body receives a wide range of nutrients and you don't sabotage yourself by eating junk.

Here is a very simple solution for your dietary needs that does not involve counting calories or fasting. Simply follow the advice any doctor would give you. Fill half of your plate with fruits and vegetables, fill a quarter of your plate with healthy protein (lean meat, eggs, beans, fish) and fill the last quarter of your plate with healthy complex carbohydrates (Whole Grain bread/pasta, rice, oats, potatoes). Avoid eating foods containing sugar. Replace those with fruit, berries and nuts. Eat fresh and avoid processed food. Feel free to cheat on special occasions. Nothing bad is going to happen if you eat a slice of cake at a birthday party or a fast food burger while commuting. Problems start when you consistently make poor decisions and junk food/sugar becomes part of your lifestyle. People don't get obese and destroy their bodies over a month. It takes years. So it's OK to cheat once in awhile as long as you go back to eating healthy the following day. Mindfulness meditation I've mentioned earlier will help you be more mindful of your diet too. You will catch yourself falling off track and recognize the tell tell signs of your diet going out of control much earlier, giving yourself a chance to get back on track before things snowball out of control.

Once a healthy diet becomes part of your lifestyle, you will start feeling healthier, more energetic, more motivated and focused.

**Your 3<sup>rd</sup> task is to make a healthy diet part of your lifestyle.**

## **Exercise.**

Everyone heard about the benefits of exercise, how it can help you burn fat, improve your cardiovascular health and even boost your immune system. However there is one aspect of exercise that often goes unnoticed. The latest research on exercise and better understanding of our neurochemical mechanisms is proving that there is a very powerful link between movement and our brain functionality. Exercise has been shown to improve our focus, mood, studying, motivation, sleep as well as a wide range of other cognitive functions. Exercise activates our brain's pleasure circuit and gives us a pleasant dose of dopamine.

A study published in 1999 in the Archives of Internal Medicine in which three groups of depressed patients were studied. One group participated in an aerobic exercise program, another group was put on an antidepressant, and a third group did both. After 16 weeks, about 60-70 percent of patients in all three groups were no longer classified as having major depression. Educational bodies all over the world report a strong correlation between levels of student physical activity and academic results, showing that students who exercise regularly get better test scores.

A 2007 study looked at how high impact running improved learning. It showed that participants learned new vocabulary 20% faster after an intensive physical exercise compared to those participants who remained sedentary.

From evolutionary perspective our brains were always more active when we were moving around. We had to watch out for predators, learn about our surroundings, memorize places that contained food and figure out best ways to navigate difficult and unfamiliar terrain.

Even as an infant our developing brains have a strong link to movement. Movement is what promotes learning. When babies wiggle around and move their limbs they begin to feel and learn about their environment. When they move their heads, the picture that they see changes. Their brain then signals babies to keep going. Eventually babies become strong enough to push themselves up and when they do so, they are able to look around the room and see things they have never seen before. Movement and learning go hand in hand from the day we are born.

In order to learn our brains need to physically grow. Our brain cells change shape as our neurons grow and create new pathways. Brain-derived neurotrophic factor, or BDNF is a protein that supports the survival of existing neurons, and encourages the growth and differentiation of new neurons in areas of the brain responsible for learning, emotion, memory and motivation. Numerous studies have shown that even moderate exercise greatly increases the production of BDNF.

There is another very important mechanism our brains have, which is designed to help us deal with stress. Historically speaking, stress always played a very important role in our survival. In dangerous situations our bodies produced stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol to raise our blood pressure, elevate our heart rate and boost our energy supplies in order to help us fight or run away from danger. We would then fight the attacker or run away by exerting increased levels of energy. It is that physical exertion that then signalled our brains to lower the levels of stress hormones and

stimulate the production of endorphins, chemicals in the brain that are the body's natural painkillers and mood elevators. It's a perfect system if you think about it. Our brains give us energy to help us deal with danger and once we are safe our brains calm us down, elevate our mood and give us some natural painkillers in case we sustained injuries. What has changed dramatically is that nowadays we still get tons of stress yet most of us don't do the running away or fighting part, not allowing our bodies to easily get rid of all the stress hormones. It's the stress hormones that then cause a variety of negative issues.

Thankfully, we don't have to be Olympic level athletes to experience all the benefits of exercise. A 20 minute jog 3 times per week or an hour long brisk power-walk once a day were proven to do the trick.

**Your 4<sup>th</sup> task is to start moving because movement is life. Start gradually. Even a fast walk every day will make all the difference.**

Before we move on from preparation stage, there is one last study I'd like to tell you about, which should bring all of the above mentioned steps together.

Study lead by Dr. Golam Khandaker, of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom was recently published in the journal of Molecular Psychiatry. This study suggested that immune system and inflammation plays a role in cognitive, behavioral, and emotional well-being.

Inflammation is the result of the immune system's response to injury or infection, whereby immune cells release proinflammatory proteins - such as

cytokines - to help fight harmful pathogens. Elevated levels of such proteins are often found in people suffering from depression.

In the recent study, anti inflammatory drugs were given to patients suffering from depression who did not respond to normal treatment. It was concluded that anti-cytokine treatment greatly improved depressive symptoms.

It was always known that inflammation causes a wide range of diseases from arthritis to cancer but what the latest research is suggesting is that inflammation also has a big impact on our mental health.

Guess what naturally decreases inflammation? Mindfulness meditation, quality sleep, exercise and a healthy diet. Guess what greatly promotes inflammation? Sugar and highly processed foods.

## **Binging on dopamine.**

Dopamine always served a very important purpose and it was essential to our survival as human beings. It motivated us to find food, reproduce, make bonds with other humans and achieve everything needed to improve our chances of survival. Our society has changed dramatically during the last couple of hundred years. Technological advancements made it possible for us to artificially overstimulate our brain's reward centres by simulating the activities we are wired to seek. Let's take a look at a few examples.

Humans enjoy solving problems. We like a challenge and we love seeing progression. Our brains have a built in mechanism that rewards us for figuring out solutions to various problems we encounter in our lives. You

might have noticed how great you feel after sorting out a problem that has been bothering you for a while. That's your brain rewarding you with dopamine, leaving you with a long lasting satisfaction and a feeling of accomplishment.

We can now simulate this feeling with computer games, an activity that almost 2 billion people partake in worldwide as of 2017. We beat a difficult boss, outsmart another human opponent or reach a new level and our brain is tricked into giving us a dopamine reward as if we just solved an important life problem. Studies have shown that our dopamine levels double during play time. This dopamine high however is very short lived. You are not going to be waking up for weeks or even months to come, with a great sense of achievement like you would after achieving a real life goal. Computer gaming gives us a lot of joy but it does not make us happy in the long run.

Historically, humans have always found their strength in numbers. Our chances of survival were always higher as part of a larger group. We were able to hunt large animals, fend off attackers, look after each other and protect our offsprings. This is why socialising has become such a big part of our lives. We seek new friendships and connections with other humans. Our brains encourage such behaviour and reward us with dopamine whenever we spend quality time with our friends and create new bonds.

With the introduction of social media we gained ability to have virtual interactions with other humans without ever having to leave our rooms. Posting a funny comment that generates a lot of likes will most likely bring you a lot of joy. That's your brain rewarding you with dopamine for connecting with other humans. Except that it's a simulated interaction and even though being liked on social media makes you feel good it is not going to make you happy in the long run. Numerous studies have shown that people



who quit social media become happier and more satisfied with their lives while those who continue using social media become more depressed.

In a recent interview, Facebook co-founder Sean Parker said that FaceBook is designed to exploit human vulnerability with its social-validation feedback loop which gives you a small dopamine hit each time somebody likes or comments on your post.

Reproduction is essential to human survival. This is why we have such a big urge to seek romantic relationships. This is why having sex is one of the most pleasurable experiences we can have. Our brain's reward us with huge amounts of dopamine in order to encourage and reinforce such behaviour. We can trick our brains into giving us this dopamine reward by watching pornography. Once again it brings us a lot of joy in the short run but it does not make us happy like we would be in an intimate relationship with a person we love.

Remember, we feel motivated because we seek dopamine. If we can bombard our brains with huge doses of instant dopamine on daily basis we are going to have very little motivation to work on boring or difficult tasks in order to achieve something in the future. Tricking our brains into giving us quick dopamine highs by playing games, watching pornography, bingeing on sugar and going on social media satisfies our dopamine cravings in the short run and makes us less likely to seek the real thing.

In a study published in the Journal of Neuroscience, funded mainly by the Wellcome Trust, researchers led by Professor Ray Dolan have shown that people with increased levels of dopamine are more likely to opt for instant gratification, rather than waiting for a more beneficial reward. The

researchers found that every subject was more likely to behave more impulsively, choosing the 'smaller, sooner' option, when levels of dopamine in the brain were boosted.

Remember how when you were a kid, the simplest of things used to keep you excited and entertained for hours, whether it was riding a bike, throwing rocks into the lake or watching ants crawl around the pavement. Now that you've grown up, you have an endless supply of instant dopamine from a wide variety of sources which gives you that dopamine high you crave so much. All those simple pleasures you used to enjoy so much as a kid now feel outright boring.

When you remove the stimulus, your dopamine receptors remain desensitized and your body starts craving dopamine just to feel normal again. Generally speaking, this is the same mechanism behind any addiction. The reason why you procrastinate, avoid and struggle to focus on boring tasks is because these tasks simply don't stimulate you enough while your body craves more and more dopamine from other, more "enjoyable" sources. You then drop whatever you are doing and indulge yourself with something a little bit more exciting. This only over stimulates your dopamine receptors further and makes you crave more dopamine.

There is a variety of amphetamine based prescription drugs for ADHD sufferers that stimulate focus by increasing dopamine levels. People take these drugs, their dopamine levels go up and all of a sudden they can sit down and spend the next half a day quietly working on most boring tasks while being very content. It's because they start to receive dopamine while focusing on something not so thrilling and their brains no longer try and get them to switch to another, more "rewarding" activity eg. playing a computer game. The downside however, is that these prescription drugs are incredibly

addictive and have numerous side effects. It makes sense. Our bodies are designed to seek dopamine. We replace all those fun activities that give us dopamine with a pill and now we are addicted to the pill. This is why healthy people must avoid taking such stimulants unless prescribed by your doctor.

Thankfully, there is another way to get your dopamine receptors in order without taking pills, doing anything extreme or having to quit all the pleasurable activities I talked about earlier. You just need to be prepared to be bored for a couple of days.

When you remove the stimulus your desensitized dopamine receptors will slowly start to revert back to normal sensitivity. For most people the withdrawal stage lasts between 1 to 3 days. You will gradually start to notice improvement in mental clarity, focus and willingness to focus on boring tasks you would usually do anything to avoid. As time goes by you will see further improvements to your general mood.

All you need to do is get bored for a few days. Cut out all thrilling activities. You can go for walks, read books, meditate, nap, play a musical instrument, clean your home, do some work but you must stay away from watching movies, playing games, eating sugar, watching porn, browsing the internet and doing anything else that gives you a lot of instant pleasure. Once you start noticing the positive changes you can go back to doing whatever you enjoy except this time, and this is very important, you must save all the fun for the evenings. This should not be hard now that your dopamine receptors are normal again.

One of the oldest proverbs you will encounter in almost every culture is a variation of “Do your work first, play after”. People have figured out the importance of doing the work first a long time ago. They just did not know

the neurochemistry behind it. It's the dopamine that keeps us motivated. If you start your day by bombarding your brain with dopamine you will have no motivation to do any work later and even if you do force yourself to do it, you will most likely be bored out of your mind and unable to fully focus.

**Your 5<sup>th</sup> task is to go on dopamine “detox” and start prioritizing work for the first half of the day, play after.**

### **Things you need to know.**

Before we get to planning and executing stage there are a few things you need to know.

It's actually much easier than ever to become successful nowadays. Just a few hundred years ago an average American worked over 70 hours per week, with minimal paid leave and almost no other benefits. It's just something most people had to do in order to support themselves and their families. The reason why we are here today is because our parents and their parent and so on, were able to provide for their children. We are no different to them. Our bodies and minds are still able to carry out the same volumes of work. Most people now days earn more money than ever for doing the least amount of work, while enjoying numerous benefits and comforts, yet they still find things to complain about. You don't need to turn into a workaholic and start cranking out 70 hour weeks like your great grandparents did in order to become successful. If you were to invest just one hour per day into your own learning and development you will soon be better off than an average person because most people are not even doing that. It would have been a lot harder if everyone was giving it 110%. Competition is weak nowadays, with most

people going through their lives without ever giving it more than half an effort. There is so much more our bodies and minds are capable of!

The problems you encounter in your life, the barriers that you hit are there to stop other people from stealing your dreams from you. If it was easy to get into great physical shape, buy a sports car or become successful in a certain field, everyone would do it and there would be nothing special about it. If everything was easy, there would be no dreams. You don't dream about eating an apple and you don't get any sense of achievement after eating an apple because anyone can easily do it any time they want. We need to struggle. We need to solve problems and we need things to work for because overcoming problems is what gives our lives meaning. Humans are designed to solve problems and overcome difficulties. Our brains reward us for doing so. This is why the sense of accomplishment makes us happy and give us such a long lasting mood boost. This is why so many people chose to solve problems or compete for fun. (Crosswords, puzzles, sports, computer games etc.). Start looking at various problems as puzzles that you were designed to solve and you enjoy solving. Look at them as barriers that stop other people from easily achieving whatever you dream to achieve.

Now for some eye opening bad news. You are all alone in this. You might be lucky enough to receive some help from your friends or family but for the most part you are on your own. Nobody is going to work for you. There won't be any miracles and a briefcase filled with cash is not going to appear on your doorstep. You need to start taking full responsibility and take action because nobody is going to do this for you.

**Creating a plan.**

If you ask somebody whether they want to be rich, most people will answer yes without hesitation. When you ask them how exactly they are planning to become rich and what steps they have taken so far, most of them will have nothing to say. If you want to achieve something you first have to come up with an exact plan and then execute it. Almost everyone wants to become rich yet I don't know a single person who sat down with a pen and paper and spent a day researching highest paid professions, figuring out what skills they need to get and formulating an exact step by step plan.

First things first, you need to find meaning in your life, figure out your purpose. This will give you a general direction to follow. Your purpose can be anything, no matter how big or small. Some people make it their purpose to start a family, have children and help them become better humans. Some make it their life's purpose to cure an incurable disease. Others just want to put smiles on people's faces. There are countless problems that need to be solved in our world and there is equally as much suffering. Try and figure out your purpose. Maybe you know a problem that's affecting lives of your close ones you could solve. Maybe you could help your parents retire or make sure children in remote African villages get access to clean water. It doesn't matter what it is. Your purpose may well change in the future but it's very important that you have one.

Back in the 70s a famous experiment was carried in which rats were given a choice of two different drinks to have. One was regular water and the other one had cocaine mixed into it. After trying out both drinks 9 out of 10 rats would continue to drink cocaine containing water over and over again until they were dead. It was later noted that these rats were stuck in tiny cages on their own with nothing else to do but to take drugs. So the experiment was repeated but this time around rats were given huge, comfortable rat parks filled with food, toys, mazes to explore and other rats to make friends with.

They were given a purpose, no matter how primitive. Some rats started mating, others ran around playing and exploring. After trying both types of drink most rats stuck to regular water. Less than a quarter of cocaine infused water was consumed and none of the rats died. Obviously, when it comes to psychology, you can't make a direct comparison between humans and rats but what this experiment has shown is that the environment and having a purpose makes a huge difference even for the simplest of creatures.

Research shows that procrastinations comes in the number of stages. First stage appears when you start working on something that has no meaning and does not quite connect with you. This is when we start telling ourselves "What's the point anyway? It's a waste of my time and effort". You can avoid this stage by making sure whatever you are doing is meaningful to you.

**Your 6<sup>th</sup> task is to spend a day figuring out your purpose in life. Pick something that hits close to your heart.**

Now it's time to create an action plan. The way you create your plan is by starting at absolute bottom and working your way up. Figuring out the barriers that stop you from achieving your goals and coming up with ways to overcome those barriers. If you get stuck, seek advice. If you lack some information, do some research.

Let's say you found out that ambulance drivers make good money and it's an exciting career that you want to be involved in. You then need to do some research and figure out all the requirements. OK, so it turns out you will need to obtain a CPR certificate, complete an advanced driving course and get emergency medical training. You need to find out how and where you can get

this done. Work through every step. Your driving skills are not good enough? Find ways to get some driving lessons. Can't afford driving lessons? Find ways to earn some cash working part time, ask for help from your close ones or ask your boss for extra work. Are you scared of blood? Seek help for getting over your fear. You can't find the right course in your area? See if you can do it online or figure out a way to find free time to go to another city. If you get stuck, find out where you can get some advice. Remember, in order to succeed, you need to find solutions, not excuses.

The second stage of procrastination happens when we know what to do but we have no idea how exactly we should do it. It becomes very easy to just put our dreams on the back burner. By figuring out an exact plan of action we can avoid the second stage of procrastination.

**Your 7<sup>th</sup> task is to spend a day writing down your exact action plan, one step at a time, splitting everything into small, manageable chunks.**

## **Writing a schedule.**

It turns out that chronic procrastinators are not worse than others at keeping track of time, as multiple experiments have shown. Schedule has a number of benefits other than time keeping that many people don't think of.

Research shows that we have a limited amount of mental energy and small, everyday decision such as "What should I have for lunch?" and "What task



should I focus on next?” have a big impact on willpower and cognitive function by draining that limited mental energy we have in a given day. A schedule allows us to remove some of that unnecessary decision making. With a schedule you will know exactly what to do and when to do it.

A schedule will allow you to keep track of your progress. You are not going to stick to your schedule all the time and there is nothing wrong with that. You might stick to 10% of it one day and maybe 90% the next day. But you will immediately notice if you start spending too much time on pleasure and not enough time on work.

Studies have shown that a concrete schedule written on paper pushes us towards action because we make an intention to do specific tasks at specific times. Abstract plans with no clear schedule on the other hand belong in an imaginary land of the future and we are yet to make a decision to act upon those plans. This results in the third stage of procrastination when we keep on postponing an important task until it's often too late.

There are countless phone apps and websites that will help you keep a schedule. Any one of them will do the trick. Take your time to setup a realistic schedule with free time for leisure as well as any other responsibilities you might have. Think of a perfect day you would like to have and plan it out. It does not have to be set in stone. Feel free to change later if you feel like it's not working out for you.

**Your <sup>8th</sup> task is to set up a schedule.**

**Getting started.**

A lot of people suffering from procrastination have problems starting a task but once they start, they can keep on going. It's that first step that is usually the hardest. There is a good exercise that you can do to help you practise starting.

Come up with a "call to action" phrase that you do not commonly use. For example "Let's do this!" or "Forwards without fear!". Now find a task that you've been avoiding, say your call to action phrase out loud and start that task. Except that you don't actually spend longer than a minute on that task.

Just to give you an example. Let's say you have a pile of dirty dishes that need to be washed and you've been avoiding this task. All you have to do is say your action phrase and go spend just one minute washing the dishes. You might only do 1 plate and a spoon in that time. Which is fine.

Maybe you have a huge report that you need to write and you could not get yourself to start. All you need to do is say your action phrase and start writing your report for just one minute. You might have just enough time to open a new word document and write a title.

Once a minute has passed feel free to drop whatever you were doing and go do something else.

Get into the habit of saying your action phrase before starting any new task, whether it's for pleasure or work.

With enough practice a number of things will happen. Starting new tasks will be done on autopilot as soon as your action phrase is said out loud, you will no longer feel the resistance associated with starting new tasks and you will

feel an urge to keep on going after your one minute is up. Most people notice the difference as soon as they try this method but it gets better with time.

### **It's all in the process.**

A person who enjoys the process of jogging does not see jogging as a chore. This person does not look for excuses not to go jogging. Quite the opposite, he/she tries to find time to do something he/she enjoys doing. This person does not focus on the goal of becoming fitter. They simply focus on the process of jogging and by doing so, their body gets all the benefits of exercise.

A person who enjoys to work does not see work as something uncomfortable they must do every day. This person looks forward to going to work and as a result money comes naturally to them as a “side effect” of them doing something they love.

A person who enjoys learning new songs on a musical instrument does not get frustrated when things don't work out. Even if a new song proves to be a lot more difficult than they have originally anticipated, they still learn how to play that piece of music eventually, unlike most other people who would simply get frustrated with the lack of results and give up.

A person who enjoys cooking fresh meals does not avoid cooking. This person cooks for pleasure and gets all the benefits of healthy eating as a result.

You should start to notice a pattern here. If you enjoy something and focus on the process and not the results, the results will come naturally without any

kind of struggle, resistance or frustration. If you force yourself to start going to the gym and lifting weights, you would see it as a struggle. After a while you might notice that your progress is slow, which will most likely make you feel frustrated and disappointed. You might feel like you failed and all the pain you had to go through was for nothing. You would have very little motivation to continue. If on the other hand you enjoyed the process of lifting weights and did not care about the results, you would never fail. You would not see your trips to the gym as pain. You would enjoy them and the results will follow naturally.

You can choose to love something just as you can choose to hate something. It's all in your head. Most people who love beer hated it when they first tried it. Most people who love jogging hated to run to begin with. When you fall in love with a person you don't usually love them from first sight. In most cases you don't even care about them. You fall in love with them gradually, over time, as you get to know them. People who end up with jobs they love don't usually like their jobs to begin with. Once they get better and see that they are being valued, that what they do matters, they start developing a sense of pride and accomplishment. They start to love what they do. There are countless athletes and military operatives who become comfortable with being uncomfortable. They learn to love the process of pushing their bodies to their maximum ability. They learn to love the pain they have to endure.

While in the process of working towards something, try and stay focused on that process, not the results. Learn to love different aspects of what you do. If it's something unpleasant or painful, be proud that you are able to push yourself and overcome this pain. Be proud that you are able to keep on going while everyone else would quit. You will soon learn to love the process and results will follow naturally.

Mindfulness meditation we talked about earlier will help you be mindful of your thoughts. You might start to notice that you start developing negative thought prior to even starting an uncomfortable task. As you anticipate this task you might start telling yourself that it's going to suck and you are going to hate it. You are already starting to stress and condition yourself about something that has not even happened yet. Remember, love and hate is in your head. Tell yourself that you are going to love the task no matter how uncomfortable or difficult it might be and you are already halfway there.

## **Discipline.**

Motivation comes and goes. Discipline stays. Eventually you will have a day when you have to get up early in the morning but it's cold outside and you have not had much sleep and you are feeling under the weather, your body aches from yesterday's workout and all you want to do is stay in your comfortable warm bed and go back to sleep. You will have zero motivation to jump out of bed and crack on with whatever work that needs to be done. This is where discipline comes in. It comes in all sorts of shapes and sizes. There is financial discipline, emotional discipline, physical discipline and many others. It's the discipline that will get you out of that comfortable bed in the morning, get you out of debt and will make you keep going when you want to quit. Discipline will bring you freedom and happiness. Discipline is like a muscle that needs to be trained regularly. Discipline starts small and keeps on growing, like a snowball, and as long as you keep on rolling that snowball you will become unstoppable.

You will find discipline at the core of every military training program. A great amount of time and money is being spent figuring out the optimal way

in which regular people can be tuned into disciplined operatives capable of performing incredibly difficult and often risky tasks under pressure. Even though different training programs can vary, they all have one thing in common. It does not matter if you are training to be a submariner in Russia, a navy seal in US or a fighter jet pilot in Australia, the first thing you will be required to do upon waking up is to make a perfect bed the exact way you are being taught. It might seem like a pointless task but it's actually an important part of a training program.

Research shows that discipline can have an upwards spiral just like it can have a downward spiral. You might have noticed that if you get lazy and spend a day procrastinating you will feel even lazier the next day and the tasks you were avoiding yesterday might appear even less appealing today. In contrast, if you have an exceptionally productive week you will find it easier to keep on going and the smaller chores you might have been avoiding in the past may no longer seem like a big deal.

By making your bed first thing in the morning you are taking your first step on an upwards spiral. It's a small accomplishment that will give you a little bit of pride and push you towards your next task. Accomplishments, no matter how big or small, are fuel for our progress.

Let's face it, you probably have very little discipline in your life. If you had discipline, you probably would not be reading this guide. Remember, discipline is like a muscle. You can't expect to turn up for your first ever training session at the gym and start bench pressing 200 kg weights. You start with lighter weights and slowly move your way up. The same thing with discipline. You are not going to become disciplined within a day, no matter how much you'd want to. Start by making your bed every morning and watch your discipline improve over time.

## **Pomodoro.**

Back in the 90's a famous entrepreneur Francesco Cirillo has developed a productivity technique he called "Pomodoro". Pomodoro technique has been proven to be very effective at tackling overwhelming tasks one chunk at a time while maintaining focus, avoiding distractions and preventing yourself from burning out. This technique is very simple. You split your big task into small, manageable work sessions that take between 20-40 minutes. Figure out what works best for you. You then time each session with a timer and once the time is up, you take a small break. Usually around 5 minutes. You can take a longer, 30 minute break, every 4 cycles. There are countless free Pomodoro apps available for both android and iOS that will help you time your work sessions if you don't want to use a regular timer.

## **Useful software:**

[FocusMe](#) allows you to block distracting websites and programs at specific times or limit the amount of time you spend on these websites or programs. It's very hard to uninstall and if you decide to turn it off you will have to copy a string of random characters which could take quite some time and it's incredibly boring. This feature prevents you from easily cheating. You should be able to get a free trial.

[F.lux](#) makes the colour of your screen adapt depending on the time of day. Staring at bright screens before going to bed tricks your body into thinking it's daytime which prevents it from producing melatonin. Melatonin is a

hormone produced by your pineal gland and is responsible for regulating your sleep. If you use your computer at night, this awesome free software will help you sleep better.

**Brain Focus Productivity Timer** is a free pomodoro time management app which will help you keep track of your pomodoro sessions and remind you when it's time to take a break. It also keeps track of your progress. You can search for it on android or apple store.

**You should now have all the tools to help you start taking control of your life and make positive changes. I hope you found this guide helpful. If you have any questions, feel free to get in touch with me. [admin@howtochangeyourlife.club](mailto:admin@howtochangeyourlife.club)**