

# MY SELF-CARE CARDS

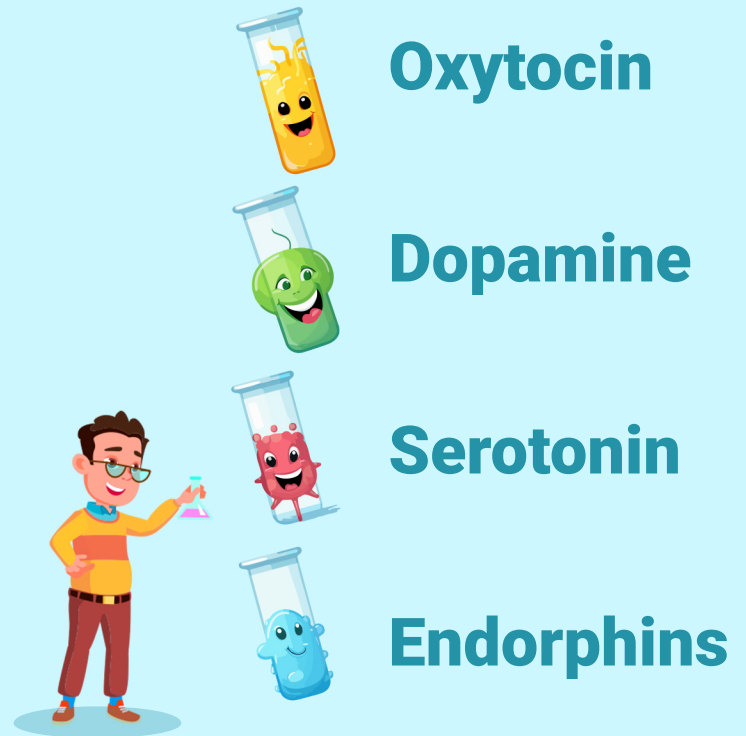


## What are They?

Different glands in your body produce chemicals that travel through the bloodstream. These chemicals act as messengers and help regulate your mood.

Certain chemicals promote positive feelings, such as happiness, joy, and pleasure. Four primary chemicals drive the positive emotions you feel during the day. These chemicals are called 'The Happy Chemicals,' and they include dopamine, oxytocin, serotonin, and endorphins.

## The 'Happy Chemicals'



## Oxytocin

### The Love Hormone

Oxytocin is the happiness chemical that helps us feel loved and connected to others. Known as the love chemical, oxytocin is released during human contact, such as hugging and kissing. It is also released when we feel trust. Social trust feels good because social alliances promote survival.



# Dopamine

## The Reward Chemical

Dopamine is known as the reward or pleasure chemical. This chemical is released during activities that are considered pleasurable, such as exercise or eating, rewarding us with a hit of happiness when we expect a reward. It's the exciting feeling we get when we are about to be rewarded. Dopamine acts across several brain areas and affects functions such as memory, learning, behavior, and movement.



# Serotonin

## The Mood Stabilizer

Serotonin is a key hormone linked to emotions and mood. It is associated with satisfaction and optimism and affects physical health. Serotonin flows through the brain when we feel significant within ourselves and others. For example, when we feel confident and take pride in our achievements, serotonin flows.



# Endorphins

## The Pain Killer

Endorphins are natural pain relievers and mood boosters. They are released during laughter, exercise, listening to music, and eating chocolate. Endorphins act on the brain's opioid receptors, reducing pain.

When released, endorphins create an energized, excited feeling. They are also released during physical pain, providing a brief moment of excitement as a survival mechanism. Laughing and crying release small bursts of endorphins.

# Dopamine

## Exercise



## The Brain's Response



Engaging in activities like running, lifting weights, dancing, or cycling helps to immediately increase dopamine levels. Simply raising your heart rate boosts dopamine production.

## How to



Go for a power walk outdoors, join a local gym, or do some aerobics, dancing like no one is watching in your living room. Numerous studies show that people's happiness levels increase after exercise. You can start a journal to track your moods before and after exercise.

# Endorphins

## Acupuncture



### The Brain's Response

There is some evidence that acupuncture can raise endorphin levels, as it stimulates pain receptors by targeting pressure points, and promotes a sense of calm, making you feel relaxed and uplifted.

How to 

This is best performed by a professional. Try acupuncture and rate your mood before and after the session to see if it has a positive effect on you.


# Endorphins

## Eat Spicy Foods



### The Brain's Response

Did you know that spicy food can raise endorphin levels? Do what you like to do, such as eating something spicy makes your mouth and nose receptors react, mimicking the sensation of being under the sun's heat. The body responds similarly to pain, releasing endorphins.

How to 

Next time you dine out, try a spicy dish or visit a restaurant known for bold flavors. The endorphins from the heat can enhance both your mood and dining experience.

# Endorphins

## Art



### The Brain's Response

Doing activities we enjoy can trigger the release of endorphins, relieve stress, and lower cortisol levels.

Creating or observing art is fun, engaging, and creative. It also provides a way to express emotions when verbal communication isn't possible.

How to 

Try activities like face painting, drawing, working with clay, or creating art to boost your endorphin levels.


# Endorphins

## Dance



### The Brain's Response

Physical activity, such as dancing, prompts the brain to release endorphins, especially when movement reaches a certain intensity. Dancing can be as effective as exercise but often feels more enjoyable.

How to 

Dancing at home is a great way to boost your heart rate and endorphins, making it an effective way to lift your mood and ease negative emotions.

# Endorphins

## Play



### The Brain's Response

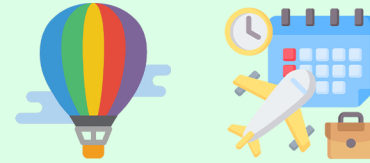
As we get older, we often forget how enjoyable it was to pause our tasks and play again. Playing your favorite card game, board game, sports game, or simply being silly with your kids can reduce stress, exercise your brain, boost creativity, strengthen relationships, and even make you feel younger.

#### How to

Set aside time in your day to play. Call your friends for a game night or, when you hear your kids playing, stop what you're doing and join in with them.

# Endorphins

## Time Travel



### The Brain's Response

Taking a trip down memory lane by looking at old photos and videos can boost your mood. Reliving your favorite memories reminds you of the wonderful experiences and times you've had.

#### How to

You might come across a photo or video of a moment that made you happy. You could try recreating that time or reconnecting with someone from that period. They can remind you of what you enjoyed before you grew up.

# Oxytocin

## Connect online



### The Brain's Response

Social media can be a great way to stay connected with friends and family you haven't seen in a while or those living far away. Both in-person and online human connections are part of our needs that help keep us happy.

#### How to

Go through your social media friends list and reach out to someone you haven't spoken to in a while. Share what you've been up to and ask them how they are. Rekindle that friendship.

# Oxytocin

## Use the 'L' word



### The Brain's Response

Oxytocin, often called the "love hormone," plays a key role in bonding. Expressing love to others boosts your oxytocin levels, deepening your connections and increasing your desire for more meaningful relationships.

#### How to

Tell the special people in your life that you love them. You can say it in person, over the phone, in a letter, or through a text message.

# Oxytocin

## Hot bath



### The Brain's Response

Increasing temperature and warm touch have been shown to raise oxytocin levels. Taking a warm bath can trick your brain into improving your mood.



Boost your oxytocin levels by adding essential oils to your bath while listening to relaxing music. You'll feel like a new person.

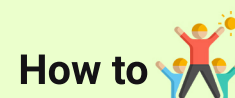
# Oxytocin

## Play with a pet



### The Brain's Response

Connecting with people is important, but connecting with a pet or a friend's pet can also raise oxytocin levels. Playing with a pet for just a short time can make you feel happier.



Spend time playing with your pet, or ask a friend if you can play with theirs. Activities like playing ball, going for a walk, or grooming them can boost your mood.

# Oxytocin

## Share your feelings



### The Brain's Response

Expressing your feelings, love, and affection to those who matter most can increase oxytocin levels. Showing affection often leads to kind gestures in return, like a hug or a cuddle.



If you have a friend who makes you feel good, tell them how much you appreciate their friendship and the memories you've shared. Sharing your feelings strengthens your bond.

# Oxytocin

## Be Kind



### The Brain's Response

Acts of kindness and selflessness are powerful triggers for the release of oxytocin. Helping others not only benefits them but also gives you a sense of fulfillment and happiness.



Perform a random act of kindness. Offer to assist a neighbor, donate to a cause you care about, or cook a meal for someone in need. Even small acts can make a big difference in how you feel.

# Oxytocin

## Cuddle



### The Brain's Response

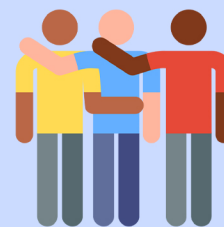
Physical touch, whether it's a simple hug, holding hands, or a kiss, is one of the quickest ways to increase oxytocin. This type of connection instantly makes you feel closer to others and boosts your mood.



Aim for eight hugs a day. Hugging a loved one several times throughout the day can elevate your mood and significantly increase your oxytocin levels, helping you feel more connected and content.

# Oxytocin

## Friends



### The Brain's Response

Spending time with friends helps you feel supported, connected, and less isolated. When you feel alone, your oxytocin levels and mood can drop.



Call your friends and organize a catch-up. It doesn't have to be a big event—maybe just share a cup of coffee, go for a walk, or go shopping together.

# Dopamine

## Small Wins



### The Brain's Response

Every time we make progress or accomplish something, our brain's reward center is activated, releasing dopamine. This sense of achievement motivates you to strive for more.



Make a list of the small things you've achieved today. It can be as simple as making your bed, washing your hair, replying to a text, or completing a small task.

Celebrate these small wins to keep your dopamine levels up.

# Serotonin

## Remembering



### The Brain's Response

Thinking about positive memories helps shift focus away from negative events and increases serotonin production. Positive moods boost serotonin, while negative thoughts lower it.



Write down your top 10 happy memories. You could choose memories from work, school, holidays, family gatherings, or special moments with friends.

# Serotonin

## Set goals



### The Brain's Response

Achieving goals makes us feel happy, and reaching a goal can cause a serotonin rush. The larger the goal, the greater the serotonin boost, but even smaller goals can release serotonin and be more manageable.

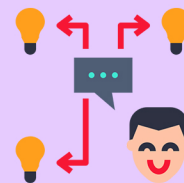


#### How to

Write a list of weekly goals and break them down into daily tasks. Achieving smaller goals will help you work toward bigger ones.

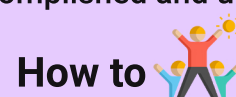
# Serotonin

## New things Do your thing



### The Brain's Response

Trying something new is a powerful way to boost your serotonin levels. When you step outside of your comfort zone and accomplish something unfamiliar, your brain rewards you with a serotonin surge, making you feel accomplished and uplifted.



#### How to

Experiment with a new recipe, or try cooking something completely from scratch. Pick up a hobby you've always wanted to explore or challenge yourself to master a skill you've never quite gotten the hang of.

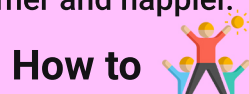
# Serotonin

## Aromatherapy



### The Brain's Response

The soothing scents of essential oils like lavender, bergamot, and lemon can do more than just smell good they can actually lift your mood by triggering serotonin release. The power of scent connects directly to the brain, helping you feel calmer and happier.



#### How to

Use essential oils in a diffuser, light scented candles, or spritz them around your space. You can also rub a bit of oil on your pillow before bed, or wake up to the calming aroma in the morning to start your day on the right note.

# Serotonin

## Gratitude



### The Brain's Response

Gratitude is like a shortcut to happiness. By focusing on the things you're thankful for, your brain's reward system kicks into gear, releasing serotonin and filling you with a sense of well-being.



#### How to

Each day, take a moment to write down three things you're grateful for. This simple practice can dramatically improve your mood, elevate serotonin levels, and even reduce feelings of depression over time.

# Serotonin

## Massage



### The Brain's Response

Massage isn't just a treat it's a serotonin booster! The physical touch involved in a massage can raise your serotonin levels by up to 30%, leaving you relaxed and in a better mood.



Ask a friend, family member, or partner to give you a 15-minute shoulder rub, or invest in a massage roller for quick relief. You can even book yourself a professional massage for that ultimate serotonin lift.

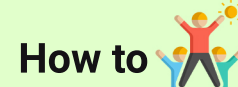
# Serotonin

## Laugh



### The Brain's Response

Laughter is one of the best ways to reduce stress and raise your serotonin levels. Laughing triggers your brain's relaxation response, loosens muscles, and slows your heart rate, making you feel lighter and happier.



Watch a funny movie, read jokes, or laugh out loud. Even "faking" a smile for several minutes can increase serotonin levels, so don't hesitate to laugh at yourself!

# Dopamine

## Mindfulness



### The Brain's Response

Studies show that regular meditation can lead to a 65 percent increase in dopamine levels. Additionally, even after meditation, dopamine levels remain within a healthy range, providing a natural high without the risk of a crash.



Practice mindfulness by fully engaging in the present moment and avoiding distractions. Use grounding techniques, like deep breathing, to center yourself and stay focused.

# Dopamine

## Eat Chocolate



### The Brain's Response

Chocolate contains tyramine, which comes from the amino acid tyrosine. Tyrosine is the precursor to dopamine, and when tyrosine levels increase, so do dopamine levels. This activates the brain's reward center, making you feel good.



While chocolate releases dopamine, it's important not to overindulge. A small amount of chocolate occasionally can lift your mood, but it won't maintain those elevated levels long-term.



# Dopamine

## Sunlight



### The Brain's Response

When your skin absorbs sunlight, it produces vitamin D, which triggers the production of dopamine. Spending time in the sun can naturally increase dopamine levels and boost your mood.

#### How to



Spend time outdoors to soak up sunlight. Try activities like walking, having a picnic with friends, swimming, or even reading a book outside for 30 minutes.

# Dopamine

## Diet



### The Brain's Response

Protein is an essential building block of amino acids, which play a key role in maintaining dopamine levels. Including protein in your diet helps stabilize dopamine over time and keeps levels balanced.

#### How to



Incorporate high-protein foods such as cheese, unprocessed meat, yogurt, eggs, fish, and milk into your daily diet to support healthy dopamine levels.

# Dopamine

## Sleep



### The Brain's Response

Getting enough quality sleep helps regulate dopamine levels in the brain. A good night's sleep ensures your brain has the best chance to maintain a healthy "dopamine reserve" for the next day.

#### How to



Establish a nighttime routine to support good sleep. This may include turning off devices 30 minutes before bed, sticking to a regular sleep schedule, using calming essential oils, or drinking warm water before sleeping.

# Dopamine

## Music



### The Brain's Response

You know that feeling when you hear an uplifting song and want to sing it over and over? That's your dopamine levels rising. Research shows that dopamine is released more when we listen to pleasurable music compared to sad or neutral tunes.

#### How to



Create a feel-good playlist with all your favorite upbeat songs. It's a simple and powerful way to boost your dopamine levels and give yourself a quick mood lift.