

RESTORING RHYTHM IN A DOPAMINE-SATURATED WORLD



***Small shifts to change your relationship
with reward — over time***

***This guide is for education and reflection. It isn't medical advice and isn't a
substitute for personalised care.***



Restoring Rhythm

01

Small shifts that build capacity over time — without fixing or forcing.

Modern life is designed to be stimulating. High-novelty, high-reward experiences are everywhere — and our nervous systems respond exactly as you'd expect a protective system to respond: they adapt.

If you've noticed a stronger pull toward scrolling, snacking, switching tasks, shopping, or constant noise, I don't see that as a personal failing. I see a system trying to regulate itself in a high-intensity environment.

A simple idea from neuroscience

In Dopamine Nation, Dr Anna Lembke talks about how pain and pleasure share circuitry — and how repeated spikes in reward can be followed by dips that feel like restlessness, irritability, flatness, or craving.

This guide isn't about removing pleasure or "resetting" your brain. It's about restoring rhythm — gently — so you can build a more stable relationship with reward.

You might recognise this as:

- "I reach for something without thinking."
- "I can't tolerate boredom."
- "I feel 'wired and tired'."
- "I'm always seeking relief."

You are not weak or broken. You are responding to an environment.

02 Noticing the Pull

Before we change behaviour, we learn the pattern.

I often find that what people call “lack of discipline” is actually a nervous system pattern: a protective response to discomfort, uncertainty, or depletion. When we understand the pattern, we can work with it — rather than fighting ourselves.

A 60-second check-in



1) When does the pull get strongest for me?

(circle any that fit)

Morning / Afternoon / Evening / After work / Before bed / When I'm alone / When I'm stressed / When I'm in pain / When I'm bored

2) What does the “dip” feel like in my body?

(restlessness, tight chest, heaviness, agitation, fog, numbness, fatigue, tension, pain flare - or your own words)

3) What do I reach for most often?

(quick reward, novelty, distraction, productivity, reassurance, comfort)

A gentle reframe

The pull toward dopamine isn't random. It often shows up when the system is:

- under strain
- under-stimulated
- over-stimulated
- or craving safety and predictability

This is why I treat “craving” as information, not a moral verdict.

If your nervous system is reaching for something, what might it be trying to regulate?

03 Small Shifts That Restore Rhythm

Not a detox. Not a reset. Just experiments you can repeat.

The aim isn't to remove the pull. The aim is to change your relationship with it — slowly — through small architectural adjustments.

These are not rules. They're options. Try one. Repeat it. Let your system learn

Choose **ONE** to start this week

The 5-minute pause

When you feel the urge, pause for five minutes before acting. Not to resist — just to notice what's happening.

One low-stimulation pocket

Create one short part of your day with reduced inputs: no phone, no background noise, no multitasking.

Single-task one ordinary thing

Make a cup of tea. Shower. Eat one snack. No phone. Just one task.

Swap intensity for steadiness (once)

Replace one high-reward hit with a slower reward: a walk, a book, a stretch, music, a chat, sunlight.

Delay the first dopamine

Before your first scroll/check, do one regulating action: open the curtains, step outside, drink water, breathe slowly.

What to expect

If you reduce stimulation even slightly, you may notice discomfort at first — boredom, irritation, restlessness, the urge to “fill the space.” That doesn't mean you're failing. It usually means your system is adjusting to a different rhythm.

Understanding changes physiology — especially when it's paired with repetition.

What did I notice when I tried one shift?



What felt surprisingly helpful?



This isn't about becoming "better." It's about building a life your nervous system can live inside.

If you're living with significant distress, dependency, or mental health symptoms, support matters. You deserve help that's personalised and safe.