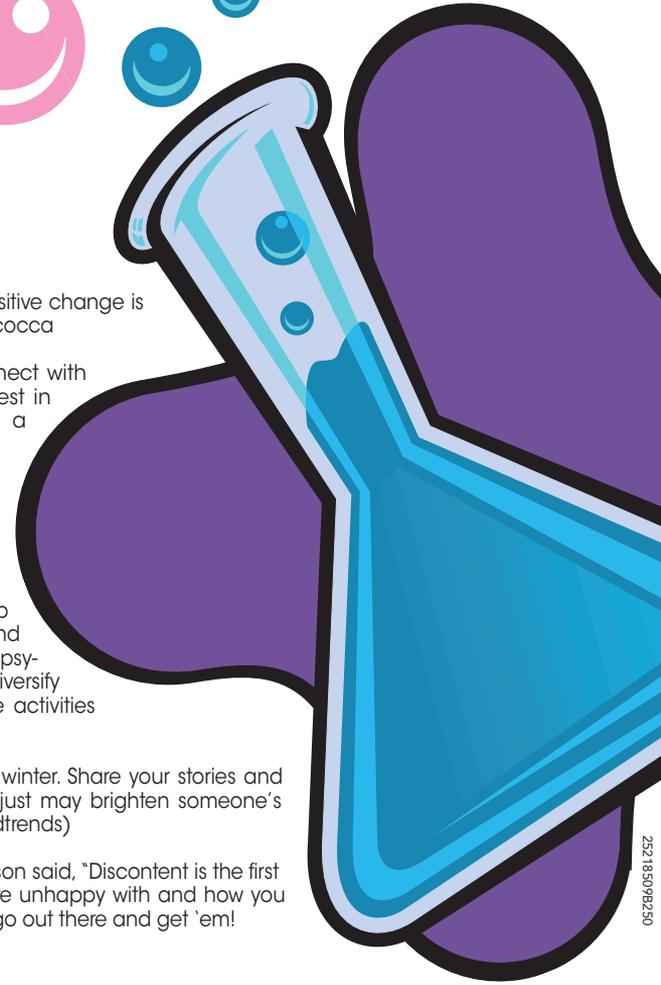


# Dopamine Boosters



## What Everyone Ought to Know About Happiness and Winter

By Christopher J. Ryan

People tend to slow down during the winter months, but why? One theory: low dopamine levels affect concentration, reduce motivation, and can cause anhedonia (inability to experience pleasure), which is something nobody wants! Here's how to keep the spirits high when the weather ain't so hot:

**1.** Ever hear of the runners high? It's an endorphins rush that is present during exercise, excitement, pain, eating spicy food, love and orgasm. Cold weather tends to put people in hibernation mode but the point is to keep the blood flowing.

"That's why they call it the American Dream, because you have to be asleep to believe it." — George Carlin

**2.** Find a television show that you like, with a laugh track. Laughter is infectious. This is why TV comedies use laugh tracks. Malcolm Gladwell calls this "priming," in which exposure to a stimulus influences human behavior. Want to be happy? Think happy thoughts. Also, watch standup comedy.

"Some of us think holding on makes us strong, but sometimes it is letting go."  
— Hermann Hesse

**3.** Declutter. Whether it's cleaning up your apartment, letting go of an ex or finding a better way to work — do it. In his poem "Advice to Writers," American poet Billy Collins, United States Poet Laureate, said it best, "Spotlessness is the niece of inspiration."

"The thing that lies at the foundation of positive change is service to a fellow human being." — Lee Iacocca

**4.** Invest in others. Get creative and connect with people. If you must invest in yourself, invest in life experiences, which are more than a material value.

"Study without desire spoils the memory, and it retains nothing that it takes in."  
— Leonardo da Vinci

**5.** Learn something new. Even better: do it for free. Coursera.org offers classes from top universities like University of Pennsylvania and Stanford. As Dr. Gayatri Devi, neurology and psychiatry, NYU School of Medicine, calls it, "Diversify your cognitive portfolio. We need to rotate activities weekly to fire up different brain regions."

We hope this gets you through the winter. Share your stories and happy thoughts on Facebook. You just may brighten someone's day. ([www.facebook.com/longislandtrends](http://www.facebook.com/longislandtrends))

Pro Tip: What's your next move? Thomas Edison said, "Discontent is the first necessity of progress." Identify what you are unhappy with and how you can make changes — small or large. Now, go out there and get 'em!