

## **Dr. Tiffany Describes Mesolimbic Pathway**

In the case of neurons, they use chemicals to talk between each other. Neurons can use many different types of chemicals, but one of these is particularly important for the reward pathway. The reward pathway is considered a dopamine pathway, because dopamine is the primary chemical used to communicate between these cells. Many different names are used to describe the reward pathway, but one of the more common names is the Mesolimbic pathway. Let's break this name down for just a moment. "Meso" refers to where the pathway begins. "Meso" comes from the Greek word "mesos", meaning middle. This term is used, because the pathway begins in an area of the brain called the midbrain. More particularly the pathway starts in a specific group of cells within the midbrain. These cells are called the Ventral Tegmental Area. The pathway name ends in the word "limbic". This is because the pathway ends in multiple different structures within the limbic system, including the Hippocampus and the Amygdala that we saw before. This figure adds an area that is particularly important for understanding reward in the brain, the Nucleus Accumbens. So, the cells of the mesolimbic or reward, start in the Ventral Tegmental Area and end in the Nucleus Accumbens. Remember that this pathway is a dopamine pathway. Which means that whenever becomes active, dopamine is released in the Nucleus Accumbens.