

Dr. Tiffany Explains Dopamine Activation

Remember that this pathway is a dopamine pathway. Which means that whenever becomes active, dopamine is released in the Nucleus Accumbens. Scientists can measure how much dopamine is released to determine how motivating something might be. So, things in our environment that can activate this pathway, causing dopamine release, will likely be things that we like and likely be things that we are motivated to pursue. So, what kind of things can activate this reward pathway? Basically, anything that we like. Food, particularly salty fatty or sugary foods, physical touch, sex, music, winning games or competitions, playing video games, getting money. These are all rewarding. Things like food and sex are called natural rewards, because we don't have to learn to be motivated for them. Things like money are called learned rewards, because our environment teaches us that it is rewarding. Some of these are really necessary for our survival. We need to want to eat, reproduce, and even compete in certain circumstances. In our modern world, we also need to earn money to survive, but you could also quickly see how too much motivation for any of these could be harmful.