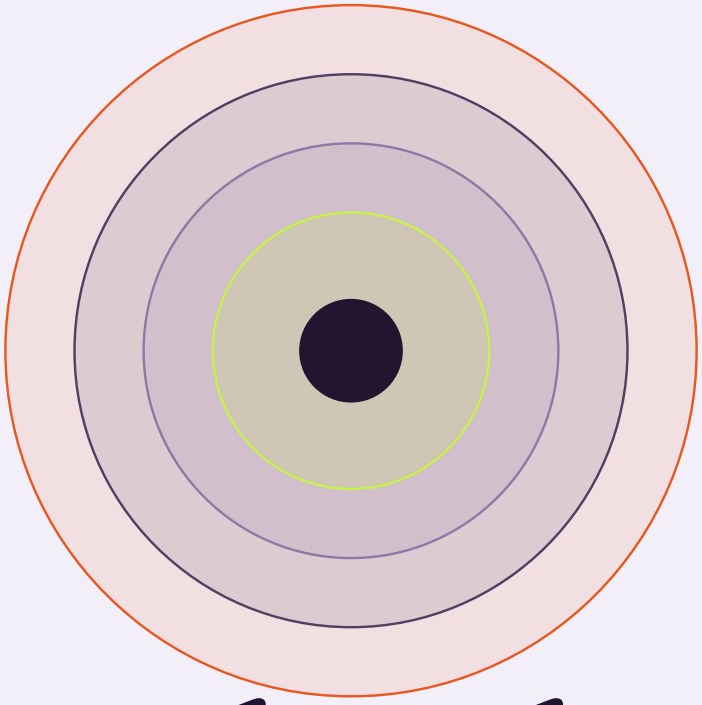


The Molecule of More: How a Sin-gle Chemical in Your Brain Drives Love, Sex, and Creativity—and

Will Determine the Fate of the Human Race

A reading of the book by Daniel Z. Lieberman and Michael E. Long (2018)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of The Molecule of More: How a Single Chemical in Your Brain Drives Love, Sex, and Creativity—and Will Determine the Fate of the Human Race, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Daniel Z. Lieberman is a psychiatrist and professor at George Washington University, and Michael E. Long is a writer who teaches at Georgetown. Together they argue that dopamine is not the brain's pleasure chemical but its chemical of anticipation: it pushes us toward what we do not have yet, from a new partner to a new idea. They set it against a group they call the Here and Now chemicals, such as serotonin, oxytocin and endorphins, which let us enjoy what is already in front of us. The book follows dopamine through love, drugs, creativity, politics and human progress, using brain research alongside stories of patients, couples and inventors. It ends with a case for harmony: a life that uses both systems instead of letting one run the other.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Dopamine is less about pleasure than about wanting what you do not have yet.

The authors push back on the idea of dopamine as the pleasure chemical. Its job is anticipation: it fires for the possibility of something better, the thing still out of reach. Once the thing is in your hand, dopamine has done its work and starts looking elsewhere.

2

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

The thrill comes from the surprise, not from the reward itself.

The book leans on reward prediction error. Dopamine responds most when something turns out better than expected. When the same reward becomes predictable, the response fades, even though the reward has not changed. That is why the new car, job or phone soon feels ordinary.

3

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Passionate love runs on dopamine; lasting love runs on the Here and Now.

The book opens with love. Early romance feeds on anticipation and on how much about the other person is still unknown. As they become familiar, the rush fades. Couples who last move toward companionate love, built on closeness and care, which the authors tie to the Here and Now chemicals.

4

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Dopamine deals in what is out of reach; the Here and Now deals in what is within it.

The authors split the world into peripersonal space, what you can touch right now, and extrapersonal space, everything beyond your reach, including the future and abstract ideas. Dopamine governs the far side. The Here and Now chemicals govern the near side.

5

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

One dopamine circuit wants; another one plans.

The book describes a desire circuit that pushes you toward rewards and a control circuit that lets you plan, think abstractly and wait. Both look to the future. The control circuit turns raw wanting into strategy, and the desire circuit gives the plan its fuel.

6

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

More is never enough, because the system is built to keep looking.

Having something ends the anticipation, so the brain moves on to the next thing. That loop drives effort and progress, and it is also how drugs, gambling and endless shopping catch hold. The authors describe patients whose dopamine-boosting medicine for Parkinson's disease was followed by compulsive gambling or spending.

7

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

The drive that fuels creativity can also tip into restlessness.

A whole part of the book looks at creativity and madness. Abstract, future-minded thinking makes invention possible, and in excess it can pull people away from the present and from other people. The authors treat it as a trade-off, not a gift or a curse.

8

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A life lived only in the future can look successful and still feel empty.

Someone who always chases the next goal may achieve a lot and rarely enjoy any of it. The reverse is a problem too: contentment with no forward drive goes nowhere. The book does not ask you to pick a side.

9

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Balance comes from things that ask for both systems at once.

The book closes on harmony between the two. HourLife reads it this way: look for pursuits like a craft, a sport or cooking, where you plan ahead and still feel what is in your hands. They give the wanting system a goal and the present something to enjoy.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Sort one ordinary week
- [ ] Write your next-thing list
- [ ] Move one novelty trigger out of reach
- [ ] Choose one Both activity
- [ ] Plan for the fade

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Savour before you chase
- ◯ Do one thing with no next step
- ◯ Bring something new to someone familiar

30 days · Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

☐ SETUP 1

Sort one ordinary week

List what filled last week, with rough hours.

Mark each item More (wanting, planning, chasing), Now (enjoying what is here) or Both. The balance check on this page does the sums.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 2

Write your next-thing list

Write down three things you are waiting to get: a purchase, a promotion, a trip.

Next to each, write what you expect to feel a month after you have it.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 3

Move one novelty trigger out of reach

Pick the feed, app or shop you open most for something new.

Log out of it, move it off your home screen, or turn off its alerts for this week.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 4

Choose one Both activity

Pick a craft, sport or cooking project that asks you to plan and also to pay attention with your hands.

Put the first session on your calendar.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 5

Plan for the fade

Before your next big purchase or change, decide what you will do when the shine wears off: who you will share it with and how you will use it.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Savour before you chase

Before you start on a new goal, spend two minutes on something you already have: a meal, a view, a person.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Do one thing with no next step

Once a day, do one thing fully present: eat without a screen, walk without a podcast, talk without checking your phone.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Bring something new to someone familiar

Once a week, try something neither of you has done before with a partner or close friend: a new walk, a new recipe, a new question.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
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December 2026

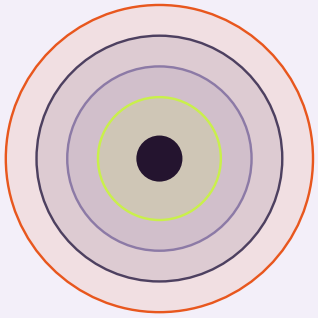
MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
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21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



Want the next thing if you must. Then stay long enough to have it.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER LIEBERMAN AND LONG

Read it on-line, and vote on the take-aways: hourlife.com/books/the-mol-e-cule-of-more

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