

Endorphins

Endorphins are neurotransmitters released by the brain that make us feel terrific. They are our own little rewards system and have addictive characteristics.

Unlike caffeine, nicotine, or cocaine, these chemicals are the rewards our bodies treat us to when we are doing something good for ourselves: exercising, laughing, helping others or falling in love. And, they are the reason why exercise can bring us out of a funk, laughing can become contagious and we go back to love even after our hearts are broken. The endorphin fix is hard to shake, because they are not only addictive but they make us happy, energized, feeling strong and alive.

They provide the same benefits as certain narcotics called opiates. They are feel-good chemicals that block pain and will make you feel better by elevating your mood.

Laughter, meditation, soothing music, dancing and singing, staying positive, restoring and fun activities, managing stress, aerobic exercise and healthy eating are all key ingredients to keeping your endorphin release at its highest. By doing this, you can also manage chronic pain through using your body's natural pain relievers.

In the book, *Meaning & Medicine*, (Bantam Books, 1991) author Dr. Larry Dossey tells us, "Altruism behaves like a miracle drug, and a strange one at that. It has beneficial effects on the person doing the helping - the helper's high; it benefits the person to whom the help is directed; and it can stimulate healthy responses in persons at a distance who may view it only obliquely."