

# DOPAMINE MENU

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## Appetizer

Quick Bites

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## Sides

Task Enhancers

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## Entree

45+ Minutes

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## Dessert

Enjoy in Moderation

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----- TIME LIMIT: \_\_\_MINS

----- TIME LIMIT: \_\_\_MINS

----- TIME LIMIT: \_\_\_MINS

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## Specials

Requires Planning

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# INSTRUCTIONS

Instructions: Fill this out on a day when you are feeling regulated and clear-headed. Think about the things that genuinely make your brain feel good. Don't write down things you think you should do—write down what actually works for you.

\*Pin this on your fridge, set it as your phone background, or keep it at your desk.

## APPETIZERS (5-10 Minutes)

Goal: A quick hit of energy to break out of a freeze or transition to a new task.

## SIDES (Task Enhancers)

Goal: Things to pair with boring tasks (like chores or emails) to make them tolerable.

## ENTREES (45+ Minutes)

Goal: Deeply engaging activities that leave you feeling recharged and satisfied.

## DESSERTS (Enjoy in Moderation)

Goal: Easy, high-stimulation activities. (Pro-tip: Write down a time limit next to these!)

## SPECIALS (Requires Planning)

Goal: Bigger investments of time or money for a major nervous system reset.

Emergency Protocol: When I am too overwhelmed to even look at this menu, the ONE thing I will default to is:



# EXAMPLES

## 🥕 Appetizers (Quick Bites: 5-10 Minutes)

Goal: A fast, accessible burst of dopamine to break a freeze state or transition tasks.

- Petting or playing with the cats
- Drinking an ice-cold glass of water
- Stepping outside to get 5 minutes of direct sunlight on your face
- Doing 10 jumping jacks or 15 air squats to wake up the nervous system
- Listening to exactly one hyper-fixation song at maximum volume
- Washing your face with very cold water
- Doing a 5-minute brain dump (writing down every swirling thought on a scrap of paper)
- Stretching or doing a quick yoga flow
- Making a cup of coffee or tea (focusing entirely on the physical steps)
- Brushing your teeth (the mint provides a surprisingly good sensory reset)
- Standing on a balance board or using a wobble cushion
- Doodling or doing a mini-puzzle (like Wordle or a quick crossword)
- Doing one tiny, easily completable task for the "done" high (like taking out the trash or wiping one counter)

## 🥗 Sides (Task Enhancers)

Goal: Paired with boring, under-stimulating tasks (like chores or emails) to keep the brain engaged.

- Listening to an engaging audiobook or true crime podcast
- Having a partner or friend sit in the room as a "body double"
- Lighting a favorite, strong-smelling candle before opening your laptop
- Putting on a heavy bass or high-tempo playlist
- Using a fidget toy (spinner, putty, or cube) during a long Zoom meeting
- Chewing strong mint or cinnamon gum while doing paperwork
- Working from a standing desk or walking pad
- Wearing noise-canceling headphones to block out distracting household hums
- Turning on ambient background noise (like a coffee shop simulator or thunderstorm sounds)
- Putting on a "work uniform" or shoes, even if you work from home, to signal it's time to focus
- Setting a visual 15-minute sand timer to create artificial urgency



### Entrees (Deep Engagement: 45+ Minutes)

Goal: Deeply engaging, active choices that leave you feeling genuinely recharged and satisfied.

- Restoring or painting a piece of antique furniture
- Hiking a rugged wilderness trail
- Getting out of the house for a game of pickleball
- Learning to make something complex and hands-on, like high-end chocolate bonbons
- Producing a song or creating music using an app
- Diving into a home renovation or DIY project (like installing new hardware or building a door)
- Deep-cleaning or organizing one specific "hyper-focus" area (like a single junk drawer or closet)
- Baking bread or cooking a highly involved, multi-step meal
- Gardening or repotting house plants
- Lifting weights or going for a long run
- Getting lost in a genuinely captivating fiction book
- Doing a large jigsaw puzzle while listening to an album straight through
- Doing a creative brain-dump session for a passion project

### Desserts (High Dopamine, Low Nutrition)

Goal: Easy, high-stimulation activities. These are fine in moderation, but require strict time boundaries so they don't cause a crash.

- Scrolling TikTok, Instagram, or Reddit (with a 20-minute app timer set)
- Binge-watching a reality TV show or a new Netflix series
- Playing video games or phone games
- Online window shopping (adding things to a cart without clicking "buy")
- Going down a massive Wikipedia or YouTube rabbit hole on a random topic
- Eating highly processed, sugary, or salty treats purely for the sensory hit
- Laying on the couch staring at the ceiling (sometimes you just need to rot for a minute, and that's okay, as long as it's a choice!)



## Specials (Out of the Ordinary: Requires Planning)

**Goal: High-cost (time or money) activities that provide a massive nervous system reset.**

- Taking a hands-on local class (like pasta making, pottery, or glass blowing)
- Going on a quiet weekend beach retreat to completely unplug
- Booking a professional massage or sensory deprivation float tank
- Attending a loud, high-energy concert or live sports game
- Going to an amusement park or riding a roller coaster
- Redecorating an entire room
- Taking a day trip to explore antique shops or thrift stores in a brand new town
- Trying a completely novel, slightly terrifying new hobby (like rock climbing or a martial arts class)



# DOPAMINE EXAMPLE MENU

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## Appetizer

Quick Bites

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TEN MINUTES  
CLEANING/ORGANIZING

MAKE COFFEE IN THE  
FRENCH PRESS

STRETCHING FOR  
FIVE MINUTES

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## Sides

Task Enhancers

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PUT ESSENTIAL OIL IN A  
DIFFUSER

LISTEN TO AUDIOBOOK

POP IN SOME PEPPERMINT  
CHEWING GUM

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## Entree

45+ Minutes

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WORK ON HOUSE PROJECT

GO OUT INTO THE GARDEN  
AND WEED

WORK ON A PUZZLE

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## Dessert

Enjoy in Moderation

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DO WORDLES      TIME LIMIT: 10 MINS

SCROLL FB      TIME LIMIT: 20 MINS

SCROLL PINTEREST      TIME LIMIT: 15 MINS  
FOR KITCHEN  
ORGANIZATION

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## Specials

Requires Planning

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GO CAMPING WITH KIDS

ESCAPE ROOM

DAY OUT - ANTIQUE SHOPS

