

The background is a vibrant teal color, densely populated with small, shimmering gold confetti particles of various sizes. A large, white, circular graphic consisting of three concentric rings is centered on the page. The title text is overlaid on this graphic.

# The Healing Power of Hormones

Harness dopamine,  
oxytocin and serotonin  
to unlock your best life

**Dr Emilia Vuorisalmi**

**The  
Healing  
Power of  
Hormones**

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*For my children, so that the world may be  
filled with love and light like you two.*

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Harness dopamine,  
oxytocin and serotonin  
to unlock your best life

**Dr Emilia Vuorisalmi**

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# Introduction

In my home country of Finland I am known as the 'love doctor'. My mission started from my deep need to understand my own addictive behaviours and find my way back to health and balance. Shortly before I hit rock bottom, I had felt alive with every cell in my body, taking steps towards my dreams. I felt free, driving down Sunset Boulevard in LA with my windows down and the wind blowing on my face. I was going in the right direction, fulfilled and at ease.

But life's subsequent turns – getting divorced, moving back to Finland and my heart breaking in a short yet intense relationship – left me bereft and feeling out of place. I felt heavy, like my wings had been clipped before I really got the chance to fly. I returned to my native Helsinki and had to start again.

My life turned grey. Sleep evaded me. I looked from my small office window as the slush of November covered all of Helsinki under a heavy blanket. Where I once felt like I had followed my own path and lived a life where I truly felt inspired, suddenly I was drifting aimlessly, as if I had lost both my satnav and my anchor. Losing my direction turned me into a restless being.

Alongside my emotional crisis, a significant breakup left me heartbroken and screaming (literally) on the floor from the pain. This sensation stripped me of all joy. I could barely move, and successive doctors couldn't find a reason

behind my constant, agonising pain. My concentration was gone and my brain was so foggy that I forgot how to get back home from the grocery store, yet I was told that there was nothing wrong with me. It was as if losing what I then thought to be the love of my life had left my body and soul utterly broken. I wanted to feel like myself again. I sought to regain my bounce the only way I knew how – through finding love again.

I fell in love with falling in love. To be honest with you, I was a master of it. I became a love addict, always searching for a new man to merge my soul with. I felt energised under the influence of this drug of love – but the high never lasted. Soon I found myself needing more of everything: the sex, the touch, the dates. Love had become toxic.

Perhaps it takes falling to rock bottom before you can slowly and diligently carve your own path back to balance. My addiction to relationships made me dive deep into the science of love. I found that when dopamine, serotonin and oxytocin – the love hormones – are in balance, we can not only heal ourselves, but also find our way to a life filled with meaning, joy and adventure. And this, dear reader, is why I'm writing this book: so that you have the tools to build a life where you feel alive and to spare you from having to make all the wrong turns that I made while you find your way back to healing and health.

## Love Hormones as Our Guides

You might ask, what is so special about love hormones? Besides their leading roles in romantic love, the love hormones also work as *neuromodulators*. This means that love hormones are

chemicals that also manage how other hormones work. Think of your brain as a complex network, like a bustling city. In this city, the traffic (the messages *from* and *to* your brain) is constantly moving along roads (neural pathways) to deliver information from one place (neuron) to another. In a city, traffic flow isn't just controlled by the cars and roads themselves; there are traffic lights, signs and signals that tell cars when to go, stop or slow down. These are the neuromodulators.

Neuromodulators don't send messages on their own, but *influence* how messages are sent, received and processed. They can turn up the volume on specific messages (green light), turn it down (red light) or even adjust the sensitivity of the receiving station (adjusting the brightness of the traffic light, so it's easier to see). This way, neuromodulators help regulate everything, from your mood to how you learn and respond to stress. Just like how well-placed traffic signals make for a smoother, safer ride around the city, neuromodulators help ensure that your brain's messaging system works efficiently and effectively.

So, when you work on your dopamine, serotonin and oxytocin levels and learn to build a life where these powerful molecules flow sustainably, you also indirectly work with your entire hormonal system, helping your body, mind and soul to live in true balance.

Love hormones are our internal guides that take care of how our energy is dispersed. And throughout this book you'll see this means not just your physical energy, but emotional – and spiritual – too.

Let's now take a closer look at what we actually mean when we talk about *hormones* and *energy*. Hormones are chemical messengers in the endocrine system – our body's messaging system, which is made up of glands. These glands

release special molecules – hormones – which act as messengers, travelling through the bloodstream to different body parts. For example, the thyroid gland releases hormones that control how your body uses energy; the pancreas releases insulin, which helps your cells use the sugar in your blood for fuel; and the adrenal glands release stress hormones that help you respond to challenges.

Imagine your body being your home. Every household has an electric switchboard that distributes energy around the home, and your hormones are like the different switches and controls that keep everything running smoothly. Think of hormones as messengers that help your body to distribute energy and take care of its energetic balance; they work together to regulate different processes and functions, whether it's for growing new cells, processing food, having sex or fighting against an infection.

When it comes to the love hormones, dopamine gives energy direction; it wants to take you towards your purpose. (*Am I listening to my true voice? Am I connected with my joy? Am I using my creativity and superpowers – my own unique gifts that will lead me in the right direction – for common good?*) Serotonin protects this energy. (*Do I feel safe and valued? Do I value myself?*) And oxytocin connects you with other people and everything else around you. (*Are you connected to your deeper self? Do you feel that you are taken care of and that you belong?*)

When you have lost your direction in life, can't find meaning in what you do and how you spend your days and stick with the familiar out of fear or a sense of duty, these are often signs that you are slowly moving away from your soul's path. This lack of alignment with your deeper self can cause subconscious stress – as if your soul is communicating with you through mental and physical symptoms.

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As I look back at the lowest time of my life, it's clear that I had lost my connection to my deeper self. I wasn't following my own path but was relying on other people to fill my life with a sense of meaning and to show me my direction. Instead of feeling safety within myself I was relying on other people's touch to calm down my restless mind. And I felt so detached from everything and everyone around me that it was hard to feel that I truly *belonged* anywhere. The source of the pain that I was trying to escape from through relationships came from the fracture of my own relationship with my deeper self.

Learning how to balance your nervous system is crucial for your entire love hormone balance, as stress hormones and love hormones are built from the same building blocks. This means that if all the blocks are used to create stress hormones, there are none left for dopamine, serotonin and oxytocin production. Your autonomic nervous system is an information highway that orchestrates where energy will be used in the body, when the stress response is activated – and thus, how your love hormones function. When you go on your journey within (as we will do in this book) you will find ways to let go of past pain and trauma that often cause subconscious stress – and build a strong base for your hormonal balance.

I've spent the last decade diving into research to understand the deeper meaning and wisdom of the love hormones. Over the years, I've realised that hormonal balance can be achieved through living aligned with your deeper self and by truly following the beat of your own heart. Every time you look to other people to set your direction in life, instead of finding your own purpose, this affects your dopamine base level. Every time you say 'yes' when you know deep down you should have said 'no', you affect your serotonin levels. Each time you feel restless, alone and separate from the people

around you, your oxytocin levels are affected. So, every time you listen to your deeper self and make positive changes in how you use your energy, you end up changing your love hormone balance to provide you with more positive energy, meaning, connection and joy.

In an age where many of us tread through life without ever really drawing a full breath – drained by work, afraid of our own darkness, our days slipping away in a haze – envisioning a life that feels more energising and empowering seems far-fetched and out of reach. Financial worries and fears about the future haunt our nights. We are thirsty for intimacy but feel disconnected even in our closest relationships. We are more anxious, alone and disconnected than ever – life is passing us by and we can't seem to get a grasp on it. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), rates of anxiety and depression have risen by 25 per cent since 2020. We have never been more connected globally, yet more isolated, untethered and lonely.

Alongside this emotional depletion, many of us are at times in our lives when our hormones are imbalanced. We're so used to putting ourselves last, so we have simply given up even trying to get back to equilibrium. Feeling out of kilter has become our new normal. The days roll into weeks, then into months and we live our days in a constant fog, waiting for things to become brighter.

I have been through this darkness. However, I have learned that every twist in life is a portal to something new. My journey from rock bottom to you holding this book in your hands or listening to it has taken me through toxic relationships, hormonal imbalance, debilitating physical pain and losing the direction in my life and the connection to who I truly am. This journey has also led me through healing and finding my way back to balance. I hope this book brings you

hope and gives you practical steps for how you can learn your way back to your deeper self – and true health and healing.

You don't need to be in a relationship to reap the health benefits of the love hormones. When you learn their deeper meaning, you can understand what activities and behaviours can stimulate the production of them in a sustainable and healthy way. You can begin to increase your levels of these hormones when you need them and start living more in a state of love.

Throughout this book, my aim is simple: I want to help you get to know the nature of each love hormone on a deeper level so that you can interpret the wisdom they share every day. You will be able to more easily tune into the whispers of your own body and respond to its needs immediately and with the right kind of nourishment it craves. So, instead of wandering through your days feeling empty, disconnected, unmotivated and depleted, you will have the tools to invite more joy, ease and freedom into your life, and make the right choices.

## How to Use This Book

*The Healing Power of Hormones* is your guide to harnessing the immense power of your brain and body for health, healing and true balance. When all three love hormones are in balance, you have the potential to unlock next-level experiences in life. You will find that the more aligned you are with the source of your energy and purpose, the more likely you are to step boldly into your power, have the drive to achieve your ambitions and not be crippled by the fear of failure. You will be free to make soul-enriching, spine-tingling connections that bring

technicolour vibrancy to your life and have the innate confidence and trust to love deeply and live loudly. Finding this balance is an invitation to more magic in your life. You will create an upward spiral of energy, purpose and belief which enables you to manifest even your wildest dreams.

Although I have separated the hormones out so that we approach them individually, it's worth knowing that they essentially work in harmony with each other, and that certain behaviours and habits will contribute to an uplift in more than one hormone. But for the purposes of this book and being able to access tools that you can easily apply to your life, we will look at them one by one:

- **If you ever feel like you have lost your mojo and you find it hard to take action**, learning how to balance **dopamine** will help you feel more motivated and confident.
- **If you want to feel more at peace and regulate your moods**, focus on **serotonin**, the hormone that is your foundation for finding long-lasting calm and equilibrium.
- **Balancing your oxytocin will bring you back to your deeper self and create a sense of connectedness** with the world around you.

The book is structured in three parts. Part One is a deep dive into the world of **dopamine**. Dopamine is associated with drive, rewards and an overall sense of well-being and energy. I see dopamine as the hormone of direction; it can help you to get back to your soul's unique path and fill your days with purpose. In this section, you'll learn about how modern life has leaned heavily on the instant beguiling rush of dopamine, creating a dependence on 'fast', unsustainable forms of this

powerful hormone, such as gaming late into the night, online shopping, addictive processed food and other drugs, both legal and not, which hit our bliss points in unhealthy ways and leave us grappling for more and more! This often creates a pattern of peaks and troughs, where the highs become less enjoyable and the lows become ever lower. Throughout Part One, you will build your understanding of how this neurotransmitter works its magic on your system and find different ways of incorporating more of the healthy, desirable sources of dopamine into your life. You will gradually learn how to replace your reliance on unhealthy dopamine spikes with more sustainable, equally uplifting forms of dopamine which will enable you to feel more joy and motivation day to day, without the crashes that often follow. With the wisdom of dopamine, you can find your way back to life where your days are filled with gladness and meaning – and where you are following your dreams.

In Part Two, we roam through the compassionate world of **serotonin**. We need this incredible neurotransmitter to ensure that we feel physically and emotionally healthy – it is a key hormone that helps us to feel safe so that we have the courage to take the leap and shine our light. When serotonin is at normal levels, you feel more focused, emotionally stable, happier and calmer. Depression and anxiety are the most common result of a reduction in serotonin, alongside sleep problems and digestive issues – a general feeling of being slightly off kilter. This part will walk you through ways you can create a more stable serotonin system by learning how to protect your energy and build a strong sense of safety from within.

Part Three is all about snuggling up in the warm, loving arms of **oxytocin**. Oxytocin, often referred to as the cuddle

hormone, is the hormone of affection and touch, the key ingredient for parent–child bonding, giving us fuzzy feelings of deeply connected human relationships – but you will find that it’s so much more than that. This is the neurotransmitter that facilitates human bonding, social connection and helps to regulate our emotional responses. When oxytocin is optimum, you feel connected to your partner and your close circle of friends, empathy is higher, communication is more effective, overall stress levels are reduced and well-being is heightened. On top of this, oxytocin is the hormone of connection – with both your deeper self and everything around you. In this part, you will find ways to reconnect with yourself so you can notice the good in life, feel calm and at peace again in every cell of your body and held by everything around you.

Within each of these three parts I will look at specific, proven ways of seeking a healthy balance of these hormones. All the tools are grounded in medical understanding of biology and science, tied with ancient wisdom and quantum medicine. In each chapter I will guide you through some inner work to excavate the deeper blockages or deeply rooted pain you might be experiencing right now that may prevent your love hormones from flowing freely in balance. I want to embolden you to travel further into your deepest, most intimate and private spaces guarding your spirit, and here I will offer holistic, spiritual and somatic practices, such as breathwork and meditation, that can unlock the next stage of your transformation. It is often here, in that space just outside your comfort zone, that the real truths are revealed for you to move forward and actually live the life you have dreamed of.

There are also ‘Over to you’ boxes throughout the book, designed to provide you with space to pause, breathe and

reflect on how the themes in each chapter are resonating within you. These are opportunities to ask yourself thoughtful questions and consider what steps you might feel able to take right away. I wrote this book to enable you to deep dive into your own immense potential, as well as to be a practical guide from where you can pick up practices for your daily life. When you apply the elements that resonate most with you and your life, you are curating your own personal recipe for transformation, blossoming into the person you were meant to be.

Remember as you work your way through this book that it is unrealistic to expect that we should feel happy, content and energised *every moment of every day*. However, you *can* increase your chances of feeling this way more of the time, increasing your emotional resilience and overall well-being.

### Why me?

I've been a private practitioner for over a decade, creating space where I can be a doctor in my own way. For too long I tried to squeeze myself into the traditional role of a medical doctor, treating only the symptoms and not having the time to truly *be* with my patients. Fighting against who you really are is a draining battle and never results in empowering outcomes. The moment I had the courage to jump out of the box and express myself and my superpowers without fear, not only did my work life change, but my whole life.

Today, I help people find true balance on different platforms. Together with a team of other like-minded holistic visionaries, we are now building a clinic that not

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only provides patients with a holistic model of care, but also creates a space where doctors can truly connect with their patients using a holistic approach to help them heal. I have written two bestselling books about love hormones that have been translated into multiple languages. I have had my own TV show and podcast and, through my one-to-one and online coaching, I have helped thousands of people towards better balance. I have been the team doctor and co-owner of the men's basketball team Helsinki Seagulls, and also played a lead role in a primetime Finnish romantic comedy. I try to live as I preach – doing things that bring me joy and give me energy, and living a life where I have the courage not to put myself into a box! What I've learnt is to never underestimate what you can achieve when you have the courage to follow your dreams, are connected with your true self and surround yourself with great, like-minded people.

In this book I have blended my scientific knowledge and years of practice as a doctor with my own experience of transformation and growth from despair to fully thriving. In my work my aim is to build bridges and bring old and new wisdom together. I also want to be on the frontiers, asking questions and bringing people new perspectives on life and health. I hope that you, too, will find your way to your deepest most authentic self and the magic it can bring.

I want your main take-homes from this book to be an understanding of the key elements of each hormone and the wisdom that they all carry so that you can tap into the distinct

## INTRODUCTION

needs within your body or mind and know what you can do to help your love hormones to flow sustainably. This way, you'll finish the book with your own bespoke toolkit for living a life of meaning, creativity and deep-rooted joy – feeling happier, more energised and vibrant, every day.

May this book be a lantern in the dark, guiding you to your own path of transformation and fulfilment. I can't wait to go on this journey with you!

Please take care of yourself as you move into this journey of inner work and introspection. I am a medical doctor, but this book does not offer guidance around clinical depression, anxiety or medication for supplementing any physical or mental symptoms. If you are suffering from mood disorders, chronic anxiety, depression or pain that require deeper levels of intervention, please reach out without delay to your healthcare practitioner.

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**Part 1**

**Dopamine: The  
Hormone of Direction**

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## Chapter 1

### What is Dopamine?

Dopamine is the hormone of *direction* and *reward*. Dopamine motivates us to reach new heights and outdo ourselves, time after time. You can think of dopamine as the risk-taker that loves standing on the edge and exploring new possibilities. If dopamine was an investment banker, it would invest in high-risk, high reward stocks, keeping its focus on the future rewards.

Dopamine is basically behind every step we take. Healthy levels are crucial for motivation, reward, pleasure, alertness, mood, focus and a sense of positive drive and well-being. Whether that's the decision to grab a cup of coffee, pick up your phone or declutter your home, dopamine is fuelling you to take action. But dopamine has a deeper role, too: at its core, everything is energy and dopamine's deeper meaning is to give this energy direction towards your purpose in life.

When we are connected to our true purpose, we have inner peace that protects us from seeking out dopamine from unsustainable, even toxic sources. Living a life aligned with your true direction and purpose is the key to building a thriving dopamine system based on sustainable dopamine sources, and will reflect on your health even at a cellular level.

Dopamine helps drive motivation and goal-directed behaviour – it enables us to pursue rewards and take action to achieve our goals. In addition, dopamine is critical for motor control. It helps coordinate smooth, voluntary movements. Disorders like Parkinson’s disease are associated with low levels of dopamine, leading to symptoms such as tremors and difficulty with movement. On the other hand, movement can be a powerful source of dopamine, making things like dance and exercise a good way to boost dopamine in our daily lives.

Dopamine also influences cognitive processes, including attention, learning and memory. When an enjoyable activity or rewarding experience occurs, dopamine is released into the brain. It binds to specific receptors on neurons, transmitting signals that produce feelings of pleasure and satisfaction. After dopamine has transmitted its signal, it is either reabsorbed by the neuron that released it (a process called reuptake) or broken down by enzymes. This helps regulate the levels of dopamine in the brain.

Dopamine is released in greatest amounts when the brain is *anticipating* a reward: imagine the waggy tail of a dog excited to go for a walk – this is the essential nature of dopamine. The flood of dopamine to the brain when experiencing pleasure (such as enjoying delicious food, playing video games or having sex) ultimately reinforces our *intrinsic reward system*. We then respond by developing unconscious patterns and habits based on this reward, ensuring that we seek more of this pleasurable activity. Our brains ultimately want to ensure our survival and are constantly seeking the best ways of making sure we behave in a way that will keep us alive. The bottom line is that human survival is evolutionarily linked to our brain seeking rewards and pleasure, therefore helping us to grow strong and find the best sources of