



People on the spectrum often have challenges around instant gratification, escapism, and addiction; all of which have been compounded by our interaction with cell phones. In this episode we explore the book, *Dopamine Nation*, by Anna Lembke in the context of adult independence and on maintaining mental health in the era of smart phones.

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UNDERSTANDING AUTISM PODCAST

SHOW NOTES

SEASON 2 EPISODE 37

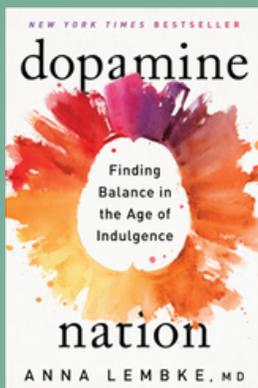
AUTISM AND MENTAL

HEALTH: DOPAMINE NATION



Escape From Reality
artwork by Nicole Kubilus

Book Review



[Dopamine Nation](#) by
[Anna Lembke](#)

INTRO (0:00–9:53)

- Topics on mental health and adult independence
- The lure of the smart phone vs. adulting tasks
- The impact of smart phones on different generations
- The new norm: screen time
- The impact of smart phones on the autistic brain

TOPIC 1: DOPAMINE BASICS (9:53–11:29)

- How dopamine works
- Creating and maintaining balance vs. imbalance in our brains

TOPIC 2: INSTANT GRATIFICATION AND SMART PHONE ADDICTION (11:29–1:34:12)

- Reasons technology can be so addictive
- The problems that technology can cause to our own natural reward system
- How using technology can become habit forming behaviors
- Being on our smart phones can override and replace our own important social behaviors as we become more inward and isolated
- Impacts that technology can have on our own internal reward system
- Boredom and the smart phone
- Parent's role in smart phone use
- Interventions: physical self-binding, chronological self-binding, and categorical self-binding
- What does digital wellness look like?
- How do smart phones help/hinder adult independence?
- Best advice for creating self-affirming screen-free zones for neurodiverse people
- How to practice these self-binding interventions?
- Parent's role in demonstrating smart phone habits
- Addressing the boredom issue.



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Resources

[Asperger Experts \(website\)](#)

TOPIC 3: PAIN VS. PLEASURE RESPONSE (1:34:12-2:28:45)

- The need to seek out pleasure
- Withdrawal and “dysphoria driven relapse”
- Cue-dependent conditioning
- Acceptance Commitment Therapy and self-care
- Unmet expectations and the pleasure/pain balance
- Parenting the “psychologically fragile” child
- Understanding your body and your mind’s energy level in dealing with difficult tasks or mental strain
- Using restorative practices to understand your body
- Parents role in protecting our children from uncomfortable experiences and responsibilities
- How to manage uncomfortable experiences or tasks
- How to facilitate uncomfortable task exposure

TOPIC 4: RADICAL HONESTY (2:28:45-3:18:42)

- What is radical honesty?
- Using the DOPAMINE acronym to assess our habits and dependence on our dopamine triggers
- Destructive shame vs. prosocial shame in promoting accountability
- Understanding prosocial shame from a neurodiverse perspective
- Understanding that each autistic person’s journey and timeline towards adult independence is different
- Why neurotypical developmental milestones are harmful when looking at an autistic child’s development
- Looking at our relationship with technology from our own mental and physical health

WRAP UP AND CONCLUSION (3:18:42-3:20:33)