

Avoiding Instant Satisfaction in the Morning

Personal Research Paper
Simon Zambrano Sanchez
November 13, 2025

Abstract

(This is a new section that academic papers include. Write this later — 4–6 sentences summarizing your whole paper. For now leave it blank.)

I. Introduction

Every day I wake up the first thing I do is go on my phone and scroll straight to social media. The problem is this created a bad habit of constantly needing this satisfaction in the morning for dopamine. This creates procrastination of wanting to instead work or do something productive the moment you wake up. I created this research paper to find ways to avoid this for not myself, but for others. I've tried several ways throughout this paper and I'll focus on which works and the reason why. The reason for this is because I wanted to find the best optimal way to not go on your phone in the morning without having that urge. Instead, change that bad habit to instead do something productive like working or homework the moment you wake up. My goal for the end of this paper is to test out the several ways and documents which worked the best for me. By the end of this paper I'll answer that question to which is the best and avoid all the other solutions online they say.

II. Background: What I Know Already

From what I know the brain has these dopamine jumps depending on what you do during that time. Examples can be going on social media, watching videos, viewing short term content online this all create a dopamine rise. The problem with this is when you switch to a much

slower task such as working or doing homework you will not have that same dopamine feel. Instead it will drop down and will make that task feel slower and boring. The issue with instant satisfaction in the morning is that you increase your dopamine to rise the moment you wake up and switching to a slower task will take time causing procrastination. Once you begin that slower task you will want to switch back to your phone, videos and will cause a cycle of procrastination. The best solution I found so far is to force yourself to not go on your phone in the morning and go straight to work. While this may seem easy first glance it is in fact not. This is the core reason why I wanted to research ways to find the best optimal solution. Everyday in the morning I would be on my phone for hours until I finally worked. This caused procrastination and pushing that one task ahead instead of doing it in the morning. Every time I would do this I knew it wasn't a thing I should do, but I instead do it. However, no matter how many ways I've tried I still find that urge to go on my phone and scroll. I want to break this cycle and instead have a mindset to work in the morning instead of late in the afternoon.

III. Methods: My Approach

The main method I've tried that found success is putting my phone away from my bed before sleeping. The reason for this is I don't have my phone in arm's reach and will have to get up to stop the alarm. This worked for several reasons: 1. I got up right away to stop the alarm and 2. I wasn't on my phone the moment I woke up. While I did try this approach the issue is that I hated working first thing in the morning. This was due to that habit I had of going on my phone and resetting it to work was the core issue I didn't realize at the time.

My approach to ending an addiction like this is to start slow. That's what I ended up doing. I would wake up right away, write in my journal and then go on my phone. This approach worked however, the biggest issue is that I couldn't fit this in my routine every day. Next thing you know I was back to scrolling on my phone in the morning.

Another method I've tried is switching on my phone to reading. This approach did work for a few days. I would wake up, read a book for a few minutes and get up to start the day. However, there were moments where I happened to just go on my phone instead. That's the core issue I want to research, why do I have this urge to always go on my phone?

IV. Results

From the methods I've used I can say the best method so far was journaling in the morning and later going on my phone. The issue with this after doing it for several days is that the method just made me go back on my phone without making any real progress. Another major problem I had was when I did happen to work in the morning I would just result in browsing social media and watching videos.

To avoid this I would instead push my work onto my laptop with no distractions and my accounts not logged in. This approach is the best for me because I have zero distractions on my laptop. So far desktop-wise having your work and leisure separated in different devices is the best solution in avoiding going on your computer. Instead of getting useless apps that block websites or certain apps these can be easily bypassed. With a completely different device you don't have those saved websites on the browser, games aren't installed on that device and all you think about is work. For me, my device is a laptop where my bookmarks are work/school related and certain websites like YouTube which I am signed out of only show "study with me" videos that put me in a motivation to work. Having all my files and computer be work/school related has been the best solution so far.

However, the biggest problem isn't that. It's the fact that I have this urge to go on my phone or main desktop computer in the morning. I feel the need to always want to check certain apps to see if I am missing anything. This is what I will be continuing on for the rest of this paper. How to stop this urge and focus on ways that make this urge easier, so you can avoid instant satisfaction in the morning

V. Why Urge Exists

Social media and phone use in the morning is like a slot-machine in our brains. The randomness we might see from doomscrolling or satisfaction causes this dopamine rise to occur. Not through just doomscrolling, but if we happen to get a new message, notification, Youtube recommended video our dopamine levels rise. The main factor is knowing this dopamine loop is occurring and putting it to a stop. The issue I will be talking about is the science behind dopamine and why these activities increase so much compared to working on a slower task.

Dopamine release in the early morning creates what's called a *habit*, the issue with this is because it's a bad habit to have. Once we repeat a task like using our phones in the morning our brain makes a habit that creates this connection that every time you wake up you automatically check your phone. Wickens researching "Dopaminergic Mechanisms" states,

“In the early stages of learning dopamine plays an essential role, but with extended training dopamine appears to play a decreasing role in response expression.” (Wickens et al., 2007)

Our dopamine levels tend to reset while we are sleeping. Once we wake up our brains seek this quick dopamine and going on our phones is that urge to release dopamine. Our phones become the fastest dopamine source and the reason why we always go on them in the morning. This routine happens everyday to the point where our brains are automatically doing this process instead of ourselves thinking about it.

“With extended training, operant responses also shift from mediation by outcome value representations to stimulus–response (S–R) mode performance.”
(Wickens et al., 2007)

When we tend to learn a new behavior, dopamine is often required. Through this dopamine helps the brain strengthen the connection to that behavior. Our brains would then want to seek that behavior as it releases dopamine similar to a "reward". The more we do this habit the stronger the habit then becomes to the point where we don't realize it. This beginning effect is the dopamine-dependent synaptic plasticity. As we keep doing this behavior every single time it just runs automatically in our brains. The importance is learning about how these automatic habits occur. In the early stage of a habit, (checking our phones) we typically do this because you want the dopamine hit/release. During the later stages, you check your phone because it's automatically in your routine. This is the major point done in the research by *Wickens*, in the later stages of this habit it isn't about the dopamine reward, but because our brains are automatically trained to go on our phones. This habit became so strong to the point where dopamine isn't required and instead an automatic behavior. Through this dopamine teaches the brain to want this behavior and the pleasure of liking it. However, the core idea is that the more stronger the habit gets, this pleasure of liking goes away where it's just an automatic behavior. Robinson & Berridge researching on dopamine "incentive salience" states, <i>“Dopamine systems attribute ‘wanting’ to rewards, even when the pleasure (‘liking’) has decreased.” (Berridge & Robinson, 1998). </i> In connection to our phones, dopamine teaches our brains to *want* to check our phones, even if the behavior no longer feels good. You can doomscroll for hours then go onto a social media platform and back forth. This creates a habit of our brains wanting to check our phones despite already seeing the posts of the day already.

Our brains already work as that specific task has a dopamine rise and we don't think about it and just do it. This issue relates to the morning as the prefrontal cortex is typically the weakest when we wake up. To keep this short it's when our dopamine levels are at its lowest and our brains automatically go on our phones to increase those dopamine levels. The simple path works like this: cue (waking up), routine (checking phone), and finally reward the dopamine increase.

Going on our phones typically causes the most dopamine increase. This is why doing our homework or working right after going on our phones feels so boring and painful. The reason for this is because our dopamine levels have skyrocketed to the top and completing a task that doesn't cause those same dopamine levels only makes it feel slower. Example, if I doomscroll short-term content for hours and then read a book my brain will want to go back to doomscrolling instead of the book. This is known as *Dopamine Contrast* and why tasks like these feel slower than before after a dopamine spike. According to Anna Lembke, about Dopamine Nation she says, "After a surge in dopamine, the brain enters a state of dopamine deficit, making everyday activities feel effortful and dull." (Lembke, 2021) Content like checking our phones, notification, adult content raises our dopamine levels almost instantly. Compared to reading a book, homework, journaling creates very little dopamine. Understanding how automatic habits, dopamine contrast work gave me a better understanding of why my previous methods failed. For the next section, I will focus on the idea on how to apply this knowledge and focus on scientific strategies that can break this strong cycle.