



2022

DOPAMINE DRESSING

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW





WHAT IS DOPAMINE DRESSING?

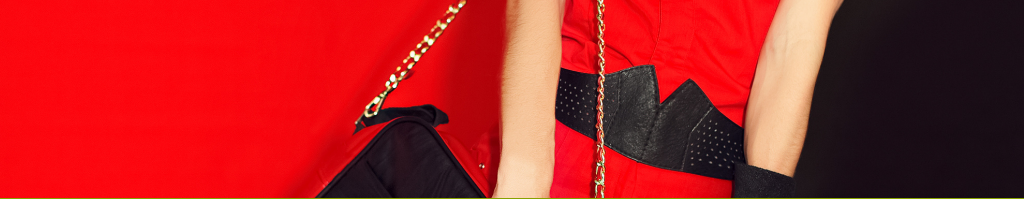
The fashion world is abuzz right now with the concept of dopamine dressing - the idea that we can dress ourselves happy. While designers are celebrating the new year with a rainbow of bright colours, I decided to dig a little deeper to find out whether the clothes we wear can impact our mood. Here's what I uncovered.

I first discovered the term dopamine dressing one night while scrolling TikTok. Not only did the alteration make me smile but the whole notion of wearing happy clothes really resonated with me. Given the pandemic has pushed many of us to our limits I really wanted to believe that our clothes could in fact make us happy. What I uncovered was really surprising. It turns out not only do our clothes have the power to make us happy but they can also make those around us happy too! Carolyn Mair, a psychologist who has developed an MA course in fashion psychology at the London College of Fashion recently told The Guardian newspaper that there is also an external element to dressing yourself happy. "If you wear a top with a kitten or smiley face you might not "actually see what's on your T-shirt except for when you look in the mirror," says Mair. "But you're projecting it to other people, and they project it back to you."

But before we start thinking that slipping on a brightly coloured dress in the sartorial equivalent of Prozac we need to back up the bus a little. Mair says it's not only the colour of the clothes you wear that has an impact on your mood but it's as much about what meaning you believe your clothes have. She says there's some "less than scientific evidence" to suggest certain colours lift your mood, whether or not La La Land yellow will chirp you up is actually down to how you see that colour. She says: "It's a simultaneous wearing and believing that has been found to have significant results." And it can be potent: "When people believe in the symbolic meaning of their clothes, it can affect their cognitive processes, and part of those are your emotions."

Mair cites a 2012 paper by Hajo Adam and Adam Galinsky that delved into this idea of "encloded cognition", clothes' ability to affect our thoughts. In one experiment, some participants wore a garment described as a doctor's coat and others an identical garment described as a painter's coat. Participants wearing what they thought was a doctor's coat performed better in a task than those who thought they were in a painter's coat - the influence of clothes, the paper suggested, depends on "wearing them and their symbolic meaning".

So, if you have an outfit that you love or a favourite colour, chances our wearing it may well help you feel better /more confident.



Mair quotes a study testing the theory that people wearing red are seen as more attractive. Participants were asked to rate the attractiveness of people wearing different coloured T-shirts. Those wearing red were seen as more attractive. The researchers then blanked out the colour of the T-shirts in pictures – participants still rated those wearing red as more attractive. “The researchers,” Mair explains, “concluded that the reason was that when people wore red they felt more attractive.”

How can clothes boost dopamine?

Along with serotonin, dopamine is one of the “happy hormones”, an important chemical made in the brain. It acts as a messenger between neurons, the working units that your brain is made of, and strongly affects your mood, attention, and motivation. When you have low levels of dopamine, you feel low. When you have high levels of dopamine going back and forth between the neurons, you feel pretty amazing.

But let’s make one thing clear: dopamine dressing is not necessarily about swathing yourself head-to-toe in bright colours. While within colour psychology, there are certainly strong known associations between hues and moods, what feels good for one person won’t feel good for another, because we all have different associations with colours based on our own experiences and unique sense of style. According to VeryWellMind dopamine dressing is all about self-perception, after all, and putting some thought into the clothes we wear at home during virtual calls can still provide that boost to your mood. Choosing an outfit that you’ll enjoy looking at and feel good wearing, rather than focusing on how your co-workers or friends might perceive it, can reinforce beneficial mental pathways.

Psychology professor Jennifer Pfeuffer told Verywellmind: “There could be a connection between us feeling good in our clothes and how we see ourselves on the Zoom screen,” Pfeuffer says. “If we’re able to see ourselves in a way that creates a positive emotion, perhaps we will engage less in negative thinking about ourselves and feel less need to compare ourselves to others.”

Leaving your comfort zone

It’s hardly surprising that the idea of dopamine dressing is on the rise after a period that has seen many of us cooped up in our homes thanks to Covid. The freedom that comes with dressing for you, the way you really want to as opposed to how you “should” be dressing, is a dopamine trigger in itself. You may realize that it’s time to leave your comfort zone.

Elizabeth Lombardo, phd told verywellmind: “Step outside your usual gear. The novelty can enhance mood, lower stress and help you see things in a different light.”

Research shows that trying new things can benefit mental health. But if taking fashion risks and wearing wilder outfits is your version of dopamine dressing, you may also require a new level of self-confidence and – assuredness. The silver lining to pandemic life is that you can test it all out from the comfort of your own home.

“The Zoom platform can offer an opportunity for us to explore and test those vibrant colors, unique styles and comforting textures that reinforce our happiness and self-love,” Pfeuffer says.

It seems that increased happiness and confidence are closer than we think. In fact, we can access both from inside our own wardrobes.

But how does the fashion-induced release of the happiness hormone dopamine, the so-called “dopamine dressing,” actually work? The short answer: with clothing that makes you happy. The more colorful and flashy, the better. There are no guidelines: Whatever pleases is allowed! Because studies prove: People who wear bright colors and clothes that make them feel good all over feel better. This is due to the neurotransmitter dopamine, which, together with serotonin, is one of the so-called “happiness hormones”.

According to Sympatex we “absorb colors through the eyes into the part of our brain where our emotions are located. So other people also benefit from the trend: because when you wear a colorful outfit, you only see yourself in the mirror, but other people perceive the colors and project the good mood back in turn. A win-win situation for everyone!”

COLOUR THERAPY

Adding colour to your outfit is the easiest way to lift your mood and change up your look. Sometimes you just need to be a little brave and take a leap of faith when it comes to wearing a new colour. Here are a few of the key colour trends that will be featuring heavily in 2022.



KELLY GREEN

Kelly Green is being hailed as the new black and for very good reason. Not only is it super vibrant on its own but it really pops when teamed with neutrals. It also works beautifully with yellow and blue (also trending colours). For a fresh weekend look, team blue jeans with a fun Kelly green shirt or blouse. Opt for a crisp white top teamed with a Kelly green skirt, pants or blazer for a freshy, zingy outfit.

BRIGHT ORANGE

Now is the time to add a pop of tangerine to your lineup. In fact, bright orange (the colour of warmth and joy) is set to be the hottest colour this Spring. If you feel a little too high vis in a block colour then opt for a pattern which give you the same uplifting feeling when you wear it without seeming so in-your-face. Bright orange is easier to wear if you have darker skin but for me I just add a little extra bronzer to avoid the orange washing out my complexion. Orange teams beautifully with blue, white, grey, green and neutrals making it a really versatile colour to wear.



BLUE

Royal blue is the saturated hue that is set to knock Kelly green off its throne in the second half of this year. Whether it's royal blue or cerulean (a lighter, brighter hue) there truly is a hue of blue for everyone. These blues are as versatile as navy but add a little extra punch to an outfit. Treat like in the same way you would black to add a lot more zing to your looks.

COLOUR THERAPY



RED

Red represents confidence, power, and allure. Known as the shade of love and romance, this fiery color emits an abundance of energy when worn while also keeping you grounded. Red is assertive, daring, determined, energetic, powerful, enthusiastic, impulsive, exciting, and aggressive. Red represents physical energy, lust, passion, and desire. It symbolizes action, confidence, and courage. The color red is linked to the most primitive physical, emotional, and financial needs of survival and self-preservation.

PINK

We associate pink with femininity, romance but it also represents caring, nurturing and sharing and it asserts a strong sense of sensitivity. For the wearer it is said to increase a sense of peace and is friendly and playful. Some shades of pale pink are described as relaxing, while very bright, vibrant shades can be stimulating or even aggravating.



FUSCHIA

Fuchsia is cheerful, playful, and uplifting. Since the color gets its name from the purplish-red flower, fuchsia also represents a sense of liveliness, self-assurance, and confidence — just think about how this bright flower stands out boldly among more earthy colors in the garden.

COLOUR THERAPY

It's easy to write a colour off because you were once told it doesn't suit you but make this year the year to experiment with colour. You may be surprised what works and how injecting a little colour can extend your outfit options exponentially.



YELLOW

It's the most controversial colour of all and arguably the trickiest colour to wear. BUT once you find the right yellow for you there's no going back. 2021's buttery, pale yellow has been replaced this year by a classic, almost-neon sunshine hue. If you find yellow washes you out then wear it away from your face (think pants or skirt) or wear it as a pattern that features a darker colour (see pic left) to give it some more depth. If you're a dark-skinned girl then these bright yellows look incredible on you.

SOFT LILACS

If ever there was a time to uncover a new favourite colour, it's right now, when soft lilac's have really hit their stride. For anyone who's said they don't like purple, this shade, which has a lot more attitude than your average pastel, may just change your mind. While it's a pretty colour and very feminine it definitely packs more of a punch than pink. Wear it with white, grey, denim and your favourite earthy neutrals. It's also a fun accent colour to incorporate into accessories like handbags, footwear and scarves.



SALTED CARAMEL

Meet the 2022 neutral that's way more upbeat than khaki or classic tan. It's brighter than classic caramel and looks great worn with purple or played up by peach. It also looks great layered with multiple shades of brown. It has a little more depth to it than the neutrals we've been seeing which gives it a little more versatility. Fresh whites are always a great way to brighten and freshen this colour especially if you're wearing it close to your face.



COLOUR THERAPY



BLACK

The color black is often regarded as color of authority and power. However, in many cultures it is deemed to be associated with death and mourning. It is also popular in fashion for its slimming quality. The color black is the color of sophistication.

WHITE

- The color white is bright and can create a sense of space or add highlights. It is also considered to be a summer color because of its neutrality. Some of the positive meanings that white can convey include cleanliness, freshness, and simplicity. The color white often seems like a blank slate, symbolizing a new beginning or a fresh start.



PALE BLUE

The color blue is considered to be a calming color. It is also considered to be the color of peace and tranquility. Many people favor this color. The color blue can lower pulse rate and body temperature. People are more productive in blue rooms. It is also sometimes regarded as a cold or depressing color.





