



BlackEconomics.org®

“The Right High”

Confusion, ignorance, greed, and corruption have placed us on a precipice overlooking World War III. Accordingly, there are so many intriguing, but tenebrific topics about which to write that reflect the precariousness of much of Black America’s life and condition. STEMAIR (science, technology, energy, mathematics, artificial intelligence, and robotization) is wolfing down “Black jobs,” increasing Black unemployment, and creating an anxiety-filled stupor evidenced by a paralysis that causes us to sit and wait. All aspects of Black American life may soon be held in the balance and judged by others to be unworthy of a future.

Recently, we asked Black America: “What is our perspective concerning transformation from humans to machines?”ⁱ We have received little feedback concerning that BlackEconomics.org release. However, there is no doubt that, while Black elite and upper middle-income households are likely to remain apace with the remainder the nation going forward, middle-income, low-income, and poor Black American households may confront realities that cause us to cringe in horror when they are considered today. This eerie and uneasy feeling informs us that if we do not act soon to manufacture our own transformation that can enable our survival, then many of us may be destroyed in an accelerated system designed to produce our demise.

As always, an integral ingredient used to ensure our demise will be some new form of chemical dependency. Whether alcohol, morphine, cannabis, heroine, crack or powder cocaine, or methamphetamines, these chemicals have a nose for our areas of influence (communities)—especially during hard times and when a thick air of despair hangs over our heads. We get high to get by and then find ourselves depressed with a need to get high again. This pernicious cycle has sufficient power to produce our demise. Such drug addiction generates many social ills: Sickness, disease, crime, poverty, and destruction of families/households—the fundamental building block of our communities.

Methods for reducing and irradicating addiction are many (“cold turkey,” chemical replacement therapy (e.g., methadone), religious and meditative practices, personal counseling, work and group therapy, etc.), and they have all been used with varying degrees of success. In our view, all these efforts are designed to bring an addict from an elevated high back down to ground level, which is a place where addicts purposely chose not to exist. Is this a logical approach to resolving the addiction problem and preventing relapses? Would a better approach require that addicts “learn” how to replace an artificial chemical substance generated high with a “healthy high” (HH)?

What is an HH? There are multiple HHs that can also be addictive: Sports/Athletics, travel and tourism, cooking and dining, shopping, gardening, arts and crafts, etc. Each of these addictive, but HHs include positive and negative spillovers. Importantly, certain HHs constitute expensive undertakings that place them out of reach for many addicts formerly enslaved by debilitating chemical substances.

However, we should not forget the proverb: “Every dark, gray cloud has a silver lining.” There is one addictive HH that has mainly positive spillovers and is available at a range of affordable prices. This superb HH is overlooked too often. In fact, we do not recall it being mentioned as a solution the way we characterize it here. **It is dedicated, deep, intensive, and extended study of topics, subjects, or fields of learning.** How can studying and learning produce HHs?

To fathom this counterintuitive reality, we explore brain chemistry. Scientists know well that **Dopamine, Endorphins, Norepinephrine, Anandamide, and Serotonin** are naturally produced chemicals that are released in the brain that stimulate highs akin to those induced by artificial chemical substances that are produced outside of the human body.ⁱⁱ Certain methods used for studying and learning are known to help generate the natural chemicals just mentioned. There are caveats concerning the optimal types of studying and learning that can produce a flow of these very important chemicals that can sustain an elevated human state, with little-to-no adverse effects on the human body.

Having projected an excellent method for achieving HHs to help solve Black America’s addiction problem, we should ask the following questions:

1. Do statistics reveal that Black Americans are overly susceptible to substance abuse addiction?
2. Why are naturally produced chemicals seldom mentioned as a substitute or replacement for highs from the use of artificial chemicals?
3. What are the best strategies for informing Black America about the efficacy of HHs?
4. What is the likelihood that a significant number of Black Americans can employ HH-inducing studying and learning to help narrow Black-White socioeconomic gaps in the medium- to long-term?
5. What are realistic prospects for exchanging traditional substance abuse addictions with HH addictions that increase and accelerate Black American socioeconomic achievement?

These five questions scream for answers that we invite you to develop. However, we take the liberty to comment on questions “1” and “5.” On question 1, numerous studies reveal that Black Americans reflect a lower overall substance abuse (addiction) rate than that of the nation.ⁱⁱⁱ However, two important caveats are in order: (i) For certain types of drugs (e.g., illicit drugs and cannabis) Black Americans reflect a higher use rate than other groups; and (ii) multiple factors cause Black Americans to incur and endure more illnesses produced by drug addiction than do other groups

Question 5 is aspirational. That is, it should motivate all Black Americans to imagine great learning successes that are realistic and possible when we transform ourselves by replacing nonproductive highs from deleterious and debilitating artificially produced drugs, with highs that are induced by

natural chemicals that are produced and released in our brains by engaging in intensive and persistent study.

Even today after two score years, we can recall the exhilaration enjoyed after completing college semesters during our undergraduate school program that included a full course load of interesting and diverse topics, efforts to fulfill “Work Study” employment requirements, while fully engaged as a parent in a young and burgeoning family. These were our HHs, and we continue to produce them today through our work at BlackEconomics.org and elsewhere.

If we all join in learning more about how such transformations can become perfected and the norm in Black American life, then within two or three score generations or less we may be able to observe millions of Black Americans who can build a tremendous amount of human capital in many fields. Not only can we produce the just mentioned results, but we can preclude development of addictions that are associated with the first half of the transformation story. In other words, we should work to produce the day when Black Americans, *writ large*, come to eschew illegal, physically harmful, and poisonous drugs for cheap highs intended to satisfy addiction in favor of an addiction for knowledge that produces its own rewarding, natural HHs through studying and learning. When the just-described condition arises, then we will have relearned and recaptured our historical mindset and proclivity to be an exceptionally productive people and who have returned to our rightful state and place on our Earth home.

This is a goal and the kind of “right high” to which we can all easily aspire!!!

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Endnotes

ⁱ See Brooks Robinson (2026). “History, SPPs, LPs, and H-to-M.” BlackEconomics.org. [https://www.blackeconomics.org/BELit/cols-his-spps-lps-htm\(020826\).pdf](https://www.blackeconomics.org/BELit/cols-his-spps-lps-htm(020826).pdf) (Ret. 032626).

ⁱⁱ Google’s Large Language Model (LLM) artificial intelligence (AI) Bot, GEMINI provided the following overview of the question that we posed about HHs and important detailed information about the nature and production of HHs.

AI Overview

Focused, intense, and persistent academic study can produce a mental state that is, in many ways, functionally and chemically equivalent to a “high.” This state, commonly referred to as “**flow**” or being “**in the zone**,” is an optimal mental state of consciousness where an individual is fully immersed, energized, and focused on a challenging task.

The Neurochemistry of the “Academic High”

When deep study hits the “flow” state, the brain releases a potent cocktail of chemicals that share qualities with substances, causing high engagement and pleasure:

- **Dopamine:** Released during challenging tasks and moments of learning success, dopamine increases focus, enhances motivation, and creates a sense of pleasure and euphoria.
- **Endorphins:** These natural pain modulators, often associated with a “runner’s high,” can be released during intense focus, providing feelings of bliss and reduced physical discomfort.

- **Norepinephrine:** This chemical provides a rush of energy, increases vigilance, and sharpens attention, helping the learner remain locked into the task.
- **Anandamide:** Known as the "bliss molecule," this endocannabinoid is a mood regulator that can also be produced during these periods.
- **Serotonin:** Contributes to the feeling of calmness and emotional well-being experienced during flow.

The Characteristics of "Flow" in Study

This state is characterized by several specific factors:

- **Intense Concentration:** Complete absorption in the task with little to no distraction.
- **Loss of Self-Consciousness:** Self-doubt, self-criticism, and personal worries disappear, often linked to decreased activity in the prefrontal cortex—a phenomenon known as *transient hypofrontality*.
- **Time Distortion:** Losing track of time, where hours feel like minutes.
- **Intrinsically Rewarding:** The study is enjoyable for its own sake, rather than for an external reward like a grade.

The Balance of Skill and Challenge

A "flow state" requires a strict balance. If the study is too easy, it leads to boredom; if it is too difficult, it leads to anxiety. The high occurs when the student's skills are stretched to their limit in a challenging, but achievable, academic task.

Risks: Over-studying and Burnout

While achieving this state increases learning efficiency, persistent, excessive studying without adequate rest can lead to negative results.

- **Toxic Build-up:** Intense, uninterrupted cognitive work for several hours can cause a build-up of the neurotransmitter **glutamate** in the brain, which can cause symptoms of fatigue and mental exhaustion.
- **Mental Distress:** Pushing this "high" too hard can result in a cycle of stress, anxiety, or even manic episodes if not managed properly.

In summary, intense academic focus leverages the brain's innate dopamine and norepinephrine rewards systems to create a state of high, which is rewarding, addictive, and mentally "high-functioning."

[ⁱⁱⁱ Two such studies are: \(1\) The American Addiction Centers 2024 report by Micheal Kaliszewski, "Alcohol and Drug Use Among African Americans." <https://americanaddictioncenters.org/rehab-guide/addiction-statistics-demographics/african-americans>; and \(2\) National Institutes of Health's National Center for Biotechnology Information, by Mir M. Ali, *et al*, "Substance Use and Substance Use Disorders by Race and Ethnicity, 2015-2019," <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK606603/>. \(Both Sources Ret. 032626\).](https://www.google.com/search?q=Can+focused%2C+intense%2C+and+persistent+academic+study+produce+the+equivalent+of+a+chemical+substance+high%3F&sca_esv=97954111f5c3aa31&rlz=1C1YVBP_enUS1203US1206&biw=1280&bih=665&sxsrf=ANbL-n7ckZLZoE3wOCuHcg3z- taf4E7bzQ%3A1774532751845&ei=jzjFacOZM9nB0PEP7KPQqQM&ved=0ahUKEwiDncPS2b2TAxXZIDQIHewRNDUQ4dUDCB&uact=5&oq=Can+focused%2C+intense%2C+and+persistent+academic+study+produce+the+equivalent+of+a+chemical+substance+high%3F&gs_lp=Egxnd3Mtd2l6LXNlcnAiaENhbiBmb2N1c2VklCBpbnRlb nNlCBhbmQgcGVyc2lzdGVudCBhY2FkZW1pYyBzdHVkeSBwcm9kdWNlIHRoZSBlcXVpdmFsZW50IG9mIG EgY2h1bWljYWwgc3Vic3RhbmNlIGhpZ2g_SABQAFgAcAB4AZABAJgBAKABAKoBALgBA8gBAPgBAZgC AKACAJgDAJIHAKAHALIHALgHAMIHAMgHAIAIAA&scient=gws-wiz-serp. (Ret. 032626).</p>
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