

The Big Eight: Your Inner Chemistry Toolkit

Understanding how your internal chemistry works is one of the most powerful tools for leaders, teams, and individuals facing stress or seeking peak performance. In executive coaching, leadership coaching, and team development work, this knowledge allows clients to take greater ownership over their state of mind, energy levels, emotional responses, and overall impact.

This fact sheet breaks down eight core hormones and neurotransmitters — what they do, how they feel, and how to shift them intentionally. Whether you're preparing for a high-stakes meeting, building trust in your team, or recovering from chronic stress, these insights can help you regulate your inner state and perform at your best.

Use this toolkit to help you:

- ✓ Build emotional resilience under pressure
- ✓ Increase confidence and executive presence
- ✓ Improve focus and creativity during strategic work
- ✓ Strengthen team cohesion and trust
- ✓ Manage stress through body-based self-regulation

Chemical	Nickname	What It Does	When to Adjust It at Work	How to Increase / Decrease It
Oxytocin	The Bonding Blanket	Creates warmth, trust, emotional safety, and social bonding by calming the fear centre of the brain.	Boost before team meetings or one-to-ones to build trust and create psychological safety. Lower slightly when needing to reassert personal boundaries or shift out of emotional enmeshment.	↑ Hug, eye contact, active listening, shared laughter ↓ Take space, set boundaries, re-ground yourself
Serotonin	The Calm Confidence Booster	Promotes calm confidence, emotional steadiness, and social status assurance.	Increase before public speaking, conflict resolution, or leading from presence. Decrease only if	↑ Sunlight, upright posture, acts of gratitude ↓ Reduce screen time, increase

			feeling emotionally flat or under-engaged.	novelty and stimulation
Dopamine	The Drive Dynamo	Stimulates motivation, goal pursuit, curiosity, and reward anticipation.	Raise before innovation sprints, visioning sessions, or launching new projects. Decrease when overstimulated, scattered, or hooked on distractions.	↑ Set small goals, novelty, music, movement ↓ Digital detox, mindfulness, fasting from rewards
Adrenaline	The Action Activator	Mobilises energy, sharpens attention, and prepares you for action or performance.	Increase for time-sensitive decisions, high-pressure delivery, or intense focus. Reduce when feeling wired, reactive, or overwhelmed.	↑ Cold water, HIIT, energising breathwork ↓ Slow exhale breathing, grounding, shaking
Cortisol	The Mobiliser	Provides alertness and energy in short bursts, but can impair clear thinking when chronically high.	Use in short bursts to stay alert in emergencies or deadline surges. Actively lower it during recovery, reflection, or emotionally intense meetings.	↑ Natural stressors, short-term urgency ↓ Nature exposure, laughter, adaptogens, long exhales
Acetylcholine	The Focus Filter	Supports clear thinking, mental clarity, learning, and coordinated action.	Boost before deep strategy work or learning sessions. Decrease if over-fixated or stuck in rigid focus.	↑ Learn something new, choline-rich food, nasal breathing ↓ Physical breaks, task switching
DHEA	The Resilience Builder	Buffers stress hormones, supports vitality, immune	Raise for long-term stress recovery, building resilience, or	↑ Resistance training, sexual connection, gratitude

		strength, and recovery from burnout.	leadership stamina. Decrease rarely — only needed if too dominant in specific hormonal therapies.	↓ Prioritise sleep, reduce overwork
Testosterone	The Power Pack	Builds assertiveness, muscle strength, sexual drive, and confidence in high-performance settings.	Elevate when you need to assert, set boundaries, or lead from grounded strength. Lower when reducing dominance or softening into collaboration.	↑ Strength-based movement, healthy fats, competitive play ↓ Reduce alcohol, increase rest

By learning how to regulate these chemical messengers, leaders and teams can build greater emotional intelligence, resilience, and interpersonal effectiveness. These tools are core to stress coaching, leadership coaching, and executive coaching that focuses on developing whole-person performance.

Explore how to use your inner chemistry to lead with more clarity, energy, and connection — and to support your team's wellbeing from the inside out.