

# The Leader's Brain

## Your Breakfast Choice Could Affect Your Leadership Decisions

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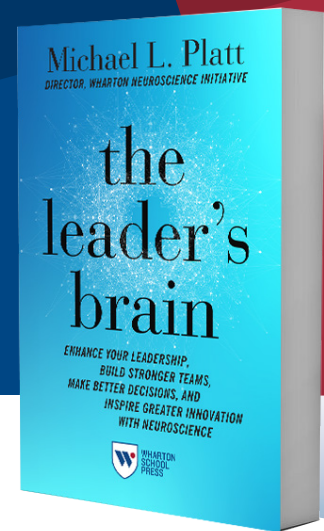
*A protein-rich, low-carb breakfast may increase dopamine, helping you make better decisions, making you more equitable toward others, improving cognitive performance, and much more.*

We all know that what we eat affects our physical fitness. It also affects many of the biochemical processes that influence our behavior. New studies link a lack of protein during breakfast with depleted blood levels of the amino acid precursor for dopamine, a chemical that signals reward and is important for learning and decision-making. In one study, people were more likely to reject an unfair financial offer (therefore receiving nothing) if they had a carb-rich breakfast. Those who ate a lower-carb, higher-protein breakfast were more likely to take the money.

In another study, people were given a high-protein breakfast, a low-protein breakfast, or no breakfast and were then tested for dopamine markers. Those who ate the high-protein breakfast had a 15-fold increase in blood levels of the amino acid precursor for dopamine. In another study, administering a drug that temporarily increased dopamine in the brain caused participants to make more equitable decisions toward others. This finding directly shows that increasing dopamine levels in the brain affects social decisions in much the same way that eating a protein-rich breakfast does. More generally, a large study of thousands of people found that how much tyrosine people included in their diet predicted cognitive performance—independent of age.

Of course, given the often back-and-forth scientific advice on the effects of different foods on the health of our bodies (remember when eggs were bad?), we should take this work with a grain of salt. But it does vividly illustrate the fact that our brains don't only demand lots of energy (about 20% of the calories we eat) but also need specific nutrients to work properly.

Ultimately, you can't go wrong by eating a well-balanced diet.



ADAPTED FROM  
MICHAEL L. PLATT'S NEW BOOK

### The Leader's Brain

Enhance Your Leadership, Build Stronger Teams,  
Make Better Decisions, and Inspire Greater  
Innovation with Neuroscience



#### MICHAEL'S MORNING SMOOTHIE—GOOD FOR MIND, BODY, AND SOUL

Put the following into a robust blender.

- 2 frozen bananas
- 2 scoops chocolate whey protein
- 8 oz. whole milk, almond milk, or oat milk (your choice)
- 2 teaspoons cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon peanut butter (better yet, chocolate peanut butter)

Blend until smooth. Top with a few blueberries, a superfood packed with antioxidants.