

## Robinsons on Parallel Emotional Pain is Physical Pain

Recent research by Naomi Eisenberger, Ph. D. coincides with Adlerian/Dreikursian Psychology in that she found that ONE'S SOCIAL LIFE INFLUENCES THE BRAIN FUNCTION. **The pain of social rejection is so close to physical pain that it is hard to tell them apart** when viewed through neuroimaging in our brains. The feelings we are familiar with that move through our bodies when we are to give a speech in front of others, the feelings deep in our mid sections when another turns away from us. These are physical and intricately connected to what is happening with us and other persons with whom we have a strong attachment.

The neuroscience of social pain and social pleasure is a most interesting study of how closely related physical and social pain are. What are the consequences when one is excluded from a group? We describe the feelings as “hurt feelings, “painful separation” or a broken heart.” These are physical pain terms.

Recent research by two professors at UCLA (University of California at Los Angeles) tells us that we humans need food, water, shelter, but also social connections. From the beginning of our human evolution, we humans needed a caregiver to supply our physical needs and so our physical and social needs are all intertwined together. In fact, social needs may be more important to us because we are dependent on others when we are infants and children.

It is possible that “evolution has wired us to feel pain when we lack or anticipate a lack of social connection,” according to Drs. Eisenberger and her colleague, Matthew Leiberman. Even unfair treatment, which we humans often experience, stirs up the social pain system in our brain—the same social pain that goes with big time social rejection.

Fair treatment on the other hand represents an important social reward of its own. From our evolutionary past and even today, being accepted and valued by one's group provides resources for survival and thriving. If persons receive signs from a group (fair treatment) that they are likely to continue to be treated well and share in the group's successes, their brains react positively.

Our brains also react positively to social recognition—something Adlerian Psychology has said for years. Being cited for cooperation and contribution in front of our peers becomes a mental celebration.

Being included in a group is a goal worth working for. Children in school, for example, want to be a part of the class group/social group. In the workplace too, bringing out the

best in people on the job is as much social and emotional well being as in the brain processes they need to operate a computer, solve problems, and work for company goals.

This field of brain research called SOCIAL COGNITIVE NEUROSCIENCE includes the study of both the pleasurable and painful sides of social life. It demonstrates that social pain and pleasure show up in the brain studies looking almost alike.

For many of us, there is no difference in our physical pain and our emotional pain as we experience them. It hurts to be left out, it feels good to be included—we knew it all along, but now science has provided evidence.

Eisenberger, N. I. (2012) The pain of social disconnection: Examining shared neural underpinnings of physical and social pain. Nature Reviews Neuroscience, 13, 421-434. doi:10.1038/nrn3231.

Leiberman, M. D., Eisenberger, N. I. The pains and pleasures of social life: A social cognitive neuroscience approach. (IN PRESS), *Neuroleadership*.