

[Psychol Bull.](#) 2005 Mar;131(2):202-23.

Why does social exclusion hurt? The relationship between social and physical pain.

[Macdonald G](#), [Leary MR](#).

Source

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Abstract

The authors forward the hypothesis that social exclusion is experienced as painful because reactions to rejection are mediated by aspects of the physical pain system. The authors begin by presenting the theory that overlap between social and physical pain was an evolutionary development to aid social animals in responding to threats to inclusion. The authors then review evidence showing that humans demonstrate convergence between the 2 types of pain in thought, emotion, and behavior, and demonstrate, primarily through nonhuman animal research, that social and physical pain share common physiological mechanisms. Finally, the authors explore the implications of social pain theory for rejection-elicited aggression and physical pain disorders.

Comment in

- [Social exclusion and the hierarchical defense system: comment on MacDonald and Leary \(2005\).](#) [Psychol Bull. 2005]
- [Why does separation distress hurt? Comment on MacDonald and Leary \(2005\).](#) [Psychol Bull. 2005]

PMID:

15740417

[PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]