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Feeling Excluded Hurts Like a Broken Arm

The pain of social rejection. In her recent article Kirsten Weir summarizes recent studies where researchers have found that when social rejection is monitored by brain scans, it is experienced by the brain like physical pain. Others have found that feeling excluded hurts even when the researchers have tried to soften the impact by having research participants snubbed by those they don't respect, or by receiving money for being rejected. Kirsten Weir reminds us that we're social beings and that this has been important for our survival throughout our evolutionary history.

So, we all have strong needs to feel connected and included, and will be hurt when confronted with social rejection even if it is slight. "Social rejection increases anger, anxiety, depression, jealousy and sadness" (p. 52). If the social rejection is minor and infrequent, most of us are able to shake it off by reconnecting with others close to us and reminding ourselves of our positive qualities. For others, however, the rejection may be more significant or occur more frequently. Ways of coping with the painful feelings associated with rejection can lead to further interpersonal difficulties, reinforcing the distance experienced in relationships.

Individual and/or group psychotherapy using an interpersonal-psychodynamic model can be helpful for people with interpersonal difficulties. This approach focuses on repetitive patterns that typically have been developed to protect the person from feeling hurt but that results in increased distance. The psychologist's job is to help the person recognize the pattern, where it comes from, and what alternate behaviours may provide protection as well as increased closeness.

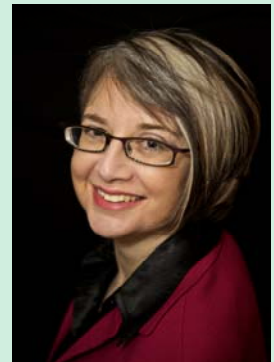
To read the full article:

Weir, K. (2012). The pain of social rejection. Monitor on Psychology (pp.50-53).

Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Online: www.apa.org/monitor/2012/04/rejection.aspx

Video samples of the game used in social rejection research: www.apa.org/monitor/digital/cyberball.aspx



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Are you ready to make a change that counts? I have over 20 years clinical experience helping people feel better, move forward in their lives, and create more satisfying relationships.

Take the first step to get started. Contact me for a short phone call to see if my services are a good fit for what you're looking for. Generally I can see new clients 1-2 weeks after this call.

