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insights from Sproutable

## Brain science research: Hurt feelings REALLY hurt

“Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me.” **Wrong!**

Brain scientists have found that the same part of our brain that lights up when we experience physical pain also lights up when we experience social rejection. Matthew Lieberman, a renowned psychologist, has been conducting groundbreaking research in social neuroscience.

He's learned 2 very important things...

1. Our need to connect with people is more fundamental than our need for food or shelter. Infants will not thrive if they do not have comfort and social support from other human beings.
2. When we experience social rejection, bullying, or name-calling our brain experiences this just like it does physical pain. Lieberman conducted research at UCLA using an fMRI machine to show that social pain (and pleasure!) is experienced the same as physical pain (and

pleasure).

"Our Faustian evolutionary bargain allows us as humans to develop slowly outside the womb, to adapt to specific cultures and environments, and to grow the most encephalized brains on the planet. But it requires us to pay for it with the possibility of pain, real pain, every time we connect with another human being who has the power to leave us or withhold love. Evolution made its bet that suffering was an acceptable price to pay for all the rewards of being human."

~Matthew Lieberman, Ph.D.

A child's perception of punishment can feel like social rejection. Does their brain light up the same way when they are punished as when they feel physical pain? Lieberman's research suggests it can.

Positive Discipline reminds us of the 4 results of punishment:

- Resentment
- Rebellion
- Revenge
- Retreat: Sneakiness (I won't get caught next time.) or Reduced self-esteem (I really am a bad person.)

Instead, focus on solutions.

Solutions are...

Related,

Respectful,  
Reasonable, and most of all,  
Helpful.

Ask yourself before doling out a consequence or punishment,  
"Is this hurtful or helpful?"