Study: Love Can Stop the Pain

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Feelings of intense love can soothe your hurts, according toresearch from Stanford University and published in the journal *PloS ONE*.

For the study, researchers scanned the brains of 15 deeply-in-love(they said) college students to determine the link between love and pain. (Eightwere female and seven male.)

Researchers placed study participants through brain scannersthat tracked the body's responses to pain caused by a heated probe placed onthe palm of the hand. Then scientists studied the brain's pain response when participantsperformed three tasks: looked at the picture of an acquaintance, viewed apicture of their beloved, or engaged in a distracting verbal assignment (specifically,researchers asked students to name sports that don't use balls).

The results? Scientists found that participants who lookedat the picture of a romantic partner reduced moderate pain by about 40 percentand relieved severe pain by 10 to 15 percent compared with viewing a picture ofan acquaintance. In addition, researchers noted that the distracting assignmentalso provided similar pain-relieving effects, with one big difference. Scientistsfound that pain relief from love occurred along different brain pathwayscompared with relief from distraction.

So how does just looking at your beloved ease your pain? Viewingthe object of your affection causes the body's dopamine system to interact withother brain systems that release natural painkillers (called opioids) in thebody.

These study findings bolster the theory that patients couldget pain relief from engaging in pleasurable pastimes. "Find things to give youpleasure in life, whether it be through the one you love, listening to greatmusic or reading a good book," suggested Sean Mackey, MD, the study's leadstudy, revealing his advice to patients.

This research could also help doctors assess the conditionof patients who find pain relief without popping pills or undergoing a procedure,Mackey said.

It's not OK to suffer with chronic pain. Click here to readhow speaking up equals relief.

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