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### Social Exclusion – Fear and Anxiety & Defensive Aggression ...

Clearly, both physical pain and social exclusion are important correlates of anxiety. In fact, Baumeister and Tice (1990) proposed that all instances of anxiety arise from either the threat of physical pain or the threat of social exclusion. In both cases, anxiety signals a potentially dangerous stimulus or situation, necessitating cautious approach or avoidance of the stimulus (Gray & McNaughton, 2000; Frijda, 1986). However, there is a problematic aspect to a long-term avoidant response common to both social and physical pain. One common strategy for avoiding social pain in romantic relationships is described by Murray and Holmes's Dependency Regulation Model (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 2000; Murray, Holmes, Griffin, Bellavia, & Rose, 2001; Murray et al., 1998).

According to the model, individuals who fear rejection from intimate others tend to avoid creating situations where the expected rejection might materialize. Thus, such individuals will keep emotionally distant from their partners, limiting the risks they take to increase intimacy such as self-disclosure. As discussed earlier, such a self-protective stance can be functional in the short-term by limiting rejection. The problem with this approach is that by not exposing oneself to the potential for rejection, one's fears of rejection are never disconfirmed. The emotional distance motivated by these rejection fears undermines relationship closeness (Murray et al., 1998, 2000, 2001), often instigating the feared hurtful behavior from others (Ayduk, Downey, Testa, Yen, & Shoda, 1999; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996) and leading to eventual dissolution of the relationship (Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Kelly & Conley, 1987; Kurdek, 1997).

### Defensive Aggression

In a series of studies, participants who were randomly assigned to receive feedback that they had been excluded by other participants or that they would have a lonely future exhibited higher levels of aggression such as administering unpleasant noise blasts to others than did those who did not receive exclusion feedback (Twenge et al., 2001). This was true even when the victim of aggression was not involved in the rejection episode in any way. This research suggests that, like physical pain, hurt feelings sometimes lead to aggression that is not limited to the source of threat. Although this pattern may seem interpersonally maladaptive (would not rejected individuals wish to foster relationships with other people rather than alienate them through aggression?), it parallels the findings regarding pain-elicited aggression. Overall, both physical and social pain appear to induce a general defensive stance that can lead to defensive aggression.