

# Aspects of Pleasure - Dopamine, Endorphine, Continuity

Post by “Julia” of November 9, 2024 at 3:33 AM

[Quote from TauPhi](#)

Pain is not the only path towards pleasure.

I agree with everything you said, except for this; it's just not possible, physiologically. Your nerves will eventually de-sensitise and get used to whatever pleasure they consistently get, unless that is interrupted sufficiently long and often to re-sensitise them, the only way to do that is by pain, and this is true equally of mental and bodily pleasures, because in the end, both are just nerves.

The average life easily contains enough pain to achieve that re-sensitisation. However, there is no pleasure in warmth which has been there, unchanging, for your entire life. Likewise, there is no pleasure in eating cake, if that's all you've ever been eating. And finally, the only sustainable way to solve this is to get out in the cold, have some bread and water – and that can be done reluctantly, miserably, or you can embrace it and make a day of it. Either way, it entails the pain of having no cake and no warmth for a while. Does that mean it is net painful? No, of course not; but being cold is not a pleasure in itself, either.

There is joy in variation because variation itself is a joy (for most people). However, by necessity, there is no variation in being constantly at the absolute limit of pleasure. There is a much lower, sustainable limit of pleasure, where a stronger pleasure is recurrently interrupted by a weaker pleasure; and because everything is relative, including pleasure and pain, that means variation, by necessity, interrupts pleasure with pain. That's just how nerves and neural networks work.

There's no such thing as a permanent high; there's also no such thing as a permanent low. With time, what is perceived as neutral shifts. The same is true for the extremes we can handle, both positive and negative, because what we perceive as endurable shifts, too.

I cannot make my warm, soft, calm corner any better by making it warmer, softer or calmer; it is already perfect. So when it gets boring to my Self (my body seems like it would love to stay there forever), the only thing I can do is to get up and leave it behind – but that's physically painful compared to staying where I was. It is a net positive, because my mind is happy – but my skin and bones are unhappy. If I wouldn't simply embrace that as a part of life and focus on what is to be gained, it would only serve to add mentally misery to the physical pain, and that certainly wouldn't help things.

Anyways, I rest my case. Agree to disagree, I suppose? 😊

PS: I think "to embrace specific calculated pains" was a bad choice of words for what I mean; "to both accept and dismiss specific calculated pain" might be clearer: It feels painful to go for a hike through the ice (feedback from my body), but that doesn't mean I am in pain while I do it (state of my Self). With other things, I am in pain while I do them (current state of my Self), but I do them anyway because I know it will pay off later (projected future state of my Self and/or my body). What I am aiming at is to not whine about the cold after I made the choice to go out (which will only make me miserable), but to focus on all the rest (which is probably the same as to say: tap into the background pleasure TauPhi mentioned?) or at least focus on the future.