

The relationship between pleasure and pain and emotions and feelings

Post by “Kalosyni” of September 16, 2025 at 8:16 AM

I did this search for consideration of the interplay between nature (natural processes of the body) , sensations of pleasure and pain, together with the inter-relationship between emotions and feelings.

I will put a list of reference articles provided by the search following the Google response.

Query: "what is the current understanding of the relationship between pleasure and pain and emotions and feelings"

Google AI Overview

Pain and pleasure are complex, interrelated phenomena with significant overlaps in their underlying brain systems and their impact on emotions and feelings. While distinct neural circuits process sensory aspects of pain, higher-level brain areas integrate these into generalized affective experiences, leading to a shared brain system for pain and pleasure that is rich in opioid receptors. These concepts are not isolated but part of a dynamic emotional system, where one can modulate the other. For example, positive emotions can diminish pain, and the relief of pain is often experienced as pleasurable.

1. Neural Overlap:

- **Shared Brain Regions:**

Both pain and pleasure activate overlapping brain regions, particularly those rich in opioid receptors, which are crucial for motivation and hedonic feelings.

- **Sensory vs. Affective Systems:**

While pain has distinct peripheral and spinal pathways, its ultimate experience is shaped by higher-level brain systems that also process pleasure.

2. Interaction and Modulation:

- **Modulating Effects:**

Pleasant stimuli can reduce pain, and the relief of pain is often perceived as pleasant. Conversely, negative emotions like fear and humiliation can amplify pain, whereas positive emotions like feeling safe can diminish it.

- **Anhedonia:**

A condition called anhedonia, or the inability to feel pleasure, is often associated with chronic pain, indicating a strong link between these states.

- **"Numbing" Effect:**

Attempts to avoid or suppress negative emotions can lead to a general "numbing" effect, reducing the intensity of both positive and negative emotions.

3. Emotional and Motivational Significance:

- **Reward-Punishment System:**

Pain and pleasure can be viewed as parts of a survival-oriented reward-punishment system. The pleasure of food, for example, helps restore the body's energy balance, while pain helps with avoidance and defense.

- **Motivation and Dopamine:**

Dopamine, a neurotransmitter, plays a role in both pain and pain relief by signaling the importance of stimuli and promoting learning and motivation to seek relief.

4. Paradoxical Experiences:

- **Simultaneous Expression:** Humans sometimes express both pain and intense pleasure with the same behavior, such as screaming during extreme pleasure or joy, highlighting the interconnectedness of these emotional states.

5. Implications for Health:

- **Chronic Pain Management:**

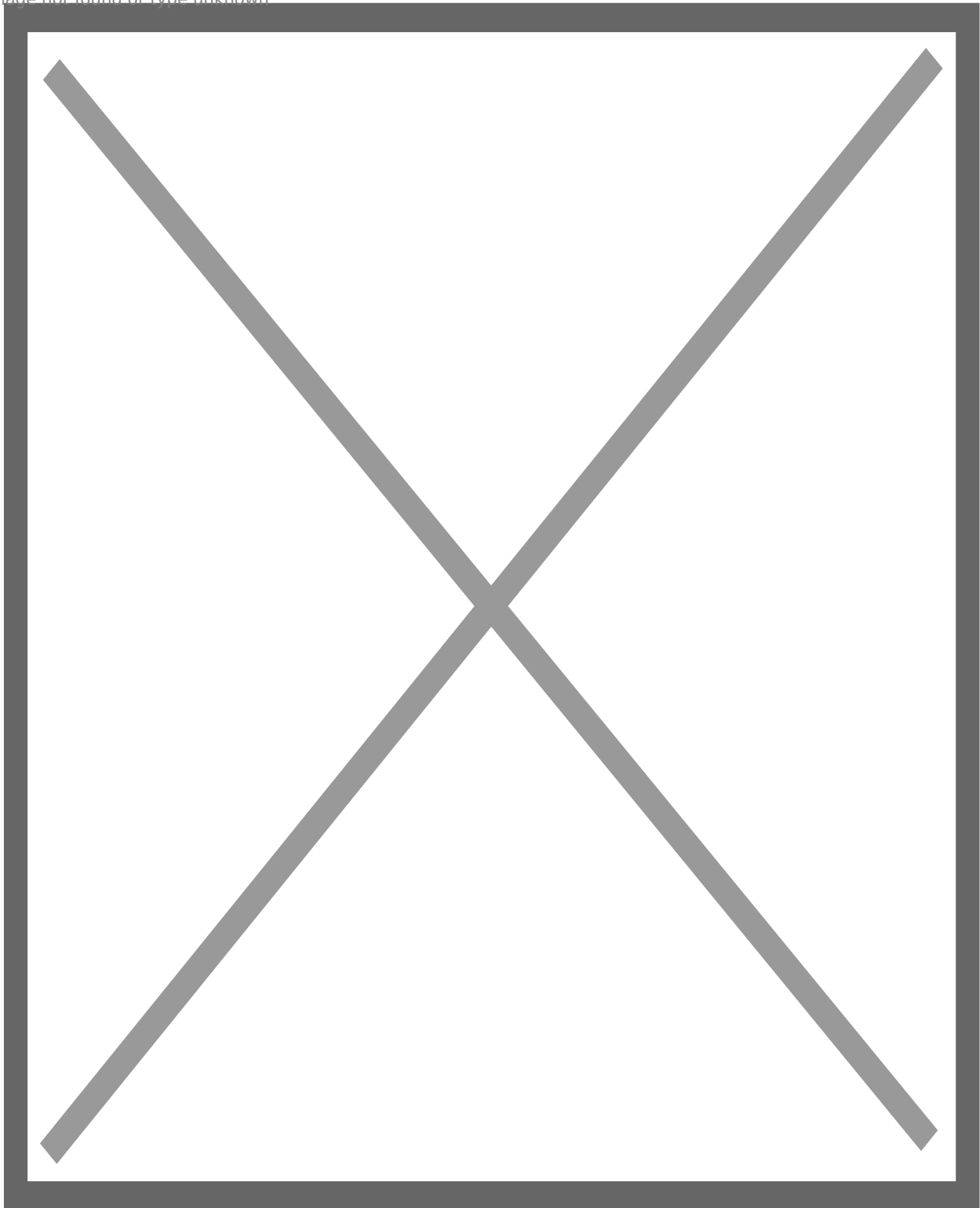
Understanding the connection between pain and emotions can lead to more holistic treatments for chronic pain, which often involves addressing the associated negative emotional states.

- **Bridging Disciplines:**

This relationship is the subject of ongoing research, bridging fields like neuroscience, psychology, and even psychoanalysis to understand the intricate interplay of sensation, motivation, and affect.

References:

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[The Pleasures of Pain and the Pains of Pleasure - By Paul Bloom - Behavioral Scientist](#)

In his new book, Paul Bloom pushes us to reflect on the complexity of our emotional reactions.

Why do we cry on our worst days and our best?

behavioralscientist.org

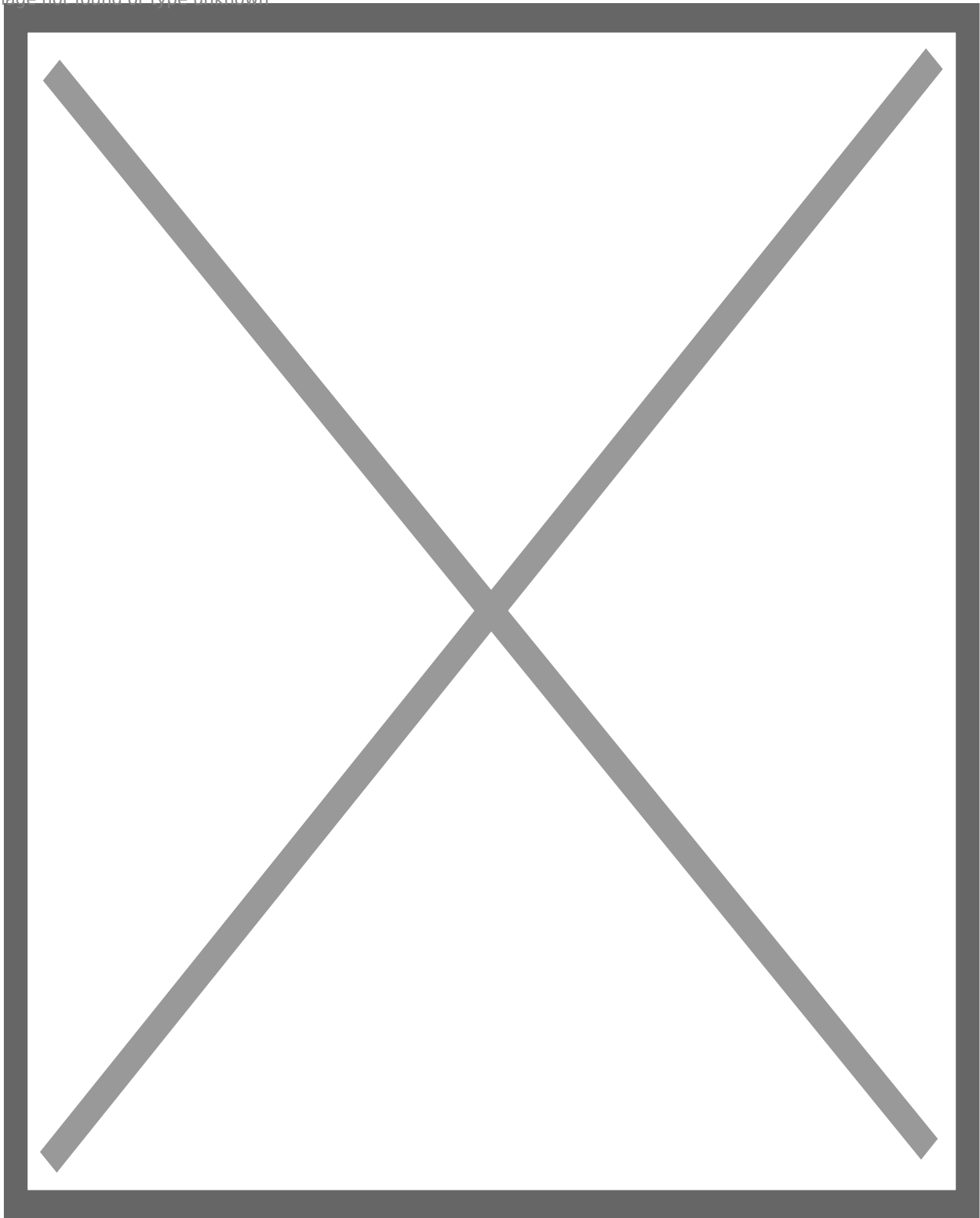
<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/4730-the-relationship-between-pleasure-and-pain-and-emotions-and-feelings/?postID=37254#post37254>

<https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2310433121>

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2015/02/18/387211563/pain-really-is-all-in-your-head-emotion-controls-intensity>

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/4730-the-relationship-between-pleasure-and-pain-and-emotions-and-feelings/?postID=37254#post37254>

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[Emotional aspects of chronic pain isolated in brain circuitry | WashU Medicine](#)

Animal study could help ID new treatment targets for negative emotions linked to pain
medicine.washu.edu

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/4730-the-relationship-between-pleasure-and-pain-and-emotions-and-feelings/?postID=37254#post37254>

[Emotional and Motivational Pain Processing: Current State of Knowledge and Perspectives in Translational Research - PMC](#)

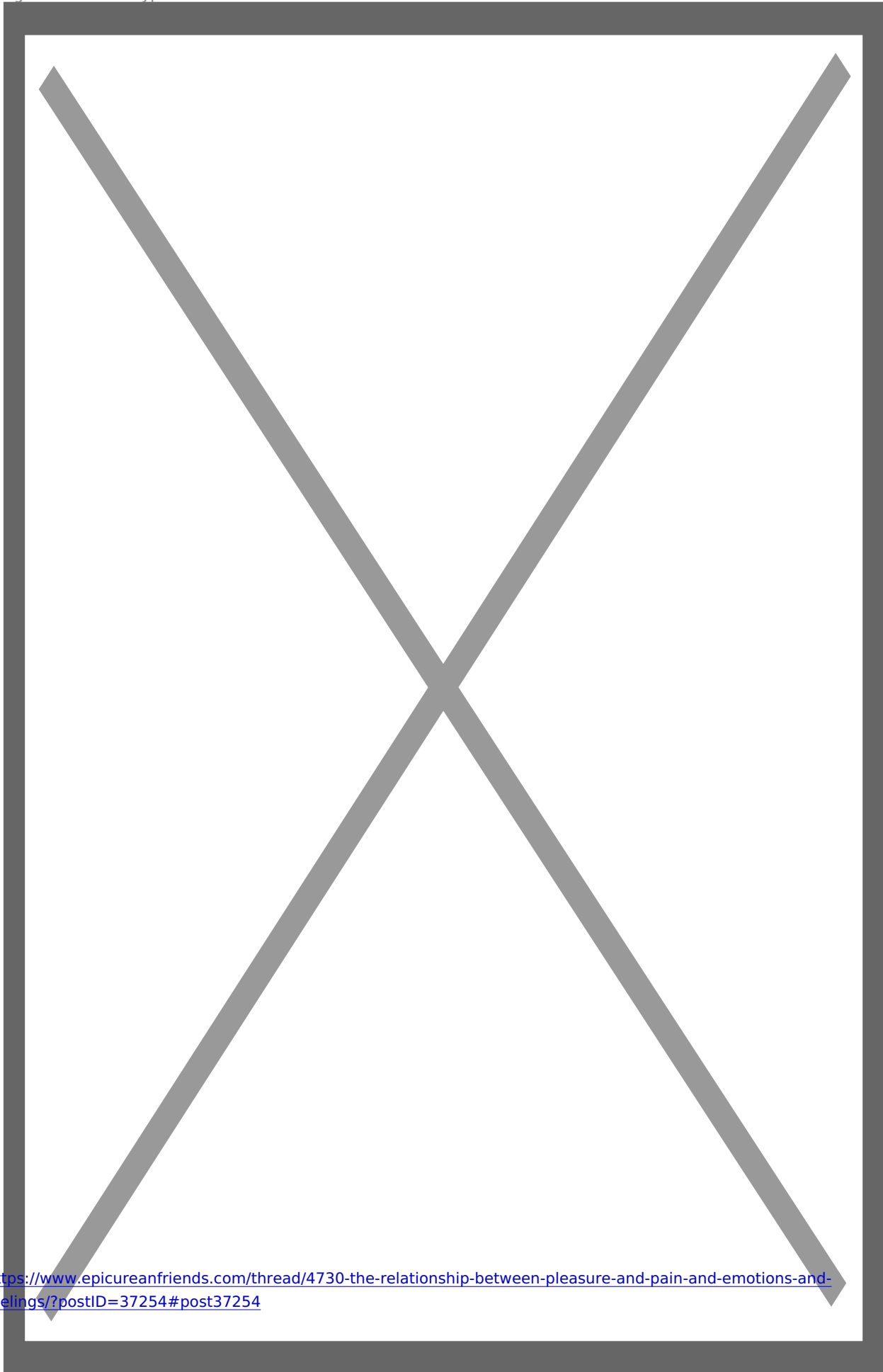
[The Experience of Pleasure: A Perspective Between Neuroscience and Psychoanalysis - PMC](#)

[Pain and pleasure - Wikipedia](#)

<https://academic.oup.com/book/6064/chapter-abstract/149506055?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/4730-the-relationship-between-pleasure-and-pain-and-emotions-and-feelings/?postID=37254#post37254>

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[The Power of Feeling our Feelings: a story of joy and pain — Integrative Psychotherapy Mental Health Blog](#)

Are you looking for more joy in your life, but you just feel numb? There is hope for you to feel fully again, darling.

integrativepsych.co

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1y_OjPRnM5c&t=11s