

## Sad movies help to reduce pain

24th September, 2016



Watching sad or traumatic movies can sometimes be just what the doctor ordered. A new study reveals that watching distressing movies may boost our tolerance to pain. Researchers at Oxford University say that movies that get your

emotions going can increase the amount of endorphins released by the brain. These are our body's natural painkillers - chemicals that make us feel better after physical or psychological pain. Dr Robin Dunbar, a co-author of the study, explained that: "Maybe the emotional [distress] you get from tragedy triggers the endorphin system." He added: "The same areas in the brain that deal with physical pain also handle psychological pain."

Dr Dunbar and his colleagues conducted a series of tests to determine the effect that tragic stories have on us. They invited 169 people to take part in the experiment. One group watched a traumatic drama about a disabled man battling homelessness, drug addiction and alcoholism. Another group watched a documentary on the geology and archaeology of Britain. The results showed that on average, the pain tolerance of those who watched the traumatic drama increased by 13.1 per cent. This compared to an average decrease in pain threshold of 4.6 per cent for those who watched the documentary. Dr Dunbar suggested one reason we like watching sad movies is the natural high from the endorphins.

Sources: [theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com) / [sciencemag.org](http://sciencemag.org) / [bbc.com](http://bbc.com)

## Writing

Movies and music should be part of what doctors prescribe for pain. Discuss.

## Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

sad / traumatic / doctor / tolerance / pain / emotions / painkillers / chemicals / brain / colleagues / stories / experiment / homelessness / alcoholism / geology / natural high

## True / False

- a) The article says a doctor ordered a patient to watch a sad movie. T / F
- b) Watching sad movies may increase our tolerance to pain. T / F
- c) Endorphins are chemicals released by the brain to relieve pain. T / F
- d) The same areas of the brain handle physical and psychological pain. T / F
- e) The research was the work of one researcher. T / F
- f) A group of people watched a film about Britain's geology in a test. T / F
- g) People who watched a sad movie decreased their resistance to pain. T / F
- h) People who watched a documentary became more resistant to pain. T / F

## Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- |                         |                 |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. <b>traumatic</b>     | a. lower limit  |
| 2. <b>boost</b>         | b. emotional    |
| 3. <b>tolerance to</b>  | c. carried out  |
| 4. <b>psychological</b> | d. endurance of |
| 5. <b>triggers</b>      | e. disturbing   |
| 6. <b>conducted</b>     | f. fighting     |
| 7. <b>battling</b>      | g. explanation  |
| 8. <b>increased</b>     | h. improve      |
| 9. <b>threshold</b>     | i. sets off     |
| 10. <b>reason</b>       | j. rose         |

## Discussion – Student A

- a) What kind of movies do you like?
- b) What do you think about what you read?
- c) What do you think of sad movies?
- d) How do different movies affect our feeling?
- e) How good or bad are movies for us?
- f) How much tolerance do you have for pain?
- g) What do you do when you have pain?
- h) Will you now watch a sad movie to relieve your pain?

# BreakingNewsEnglish - The Mini Lesson

## Phrase Match

- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| 1. be just what the                         | a. have on us                |
| 2. boost our tolerance                      | b. alcoholism                |
| 3. These are our body's natural             | c. with physical pain        |
| 4. tragedy triggers the endorphin           | d. series of tests           |
| 5. areas in the brain that deal             | e. threshold of 4.6 per cent |
| 6. conducted a                              | f. doctor ordered            |
| 7. determine the effect that tragic stories | g. high from the endorphins  |
| 8. drug addiction and                       | h. system                    |
| 9. an average decrease in pain              | i. to pain                   |
| 10. the natural                             | j. painkillers               |

## Discussion – Student B

- What's the saddest movie you have ever seen?
- What do you think about documentaries on the geology of Britain?
- What's the most amount of pain you've ever been in?
- Can music or gaming relieve pain?
- Do you think reading a sad novel would also relieve pain?
- What other kinds of painkillers are there?
- What do you do to get a natural high?
- What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

## Spelling

- sad or tcrailaumt movies
- boost our lroenceat to pain
- increase the umtaon of endorphins
- elhciams that make us feel better
- eaolntoim distress
- handle pylcalogihsc pain
- Dr Dunbar and his esgcelauol
- a series of tests to tneeridm the effect
- drug addiction and chmlaosiol
- the legoygo and archaeology of Britain
- This mrdocpae to an average decrease in pain
- those who watched the eodnyrmtuac

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. e	2. h	3. d	4. b	5. i
6. c	7. f	8. j	9. a	10. g

## Role Play

### Role A – Medicine

You think medicine is best at relieving psychological pain. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): a chat to friends, a long walk or chocolate.

### Role B – A chat to friends

You think a chat to friends is best at relieving psychological pain. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): medicine, a long walk or chocolate.

### Role C – A long walk

You think a long walk is best at relieving psychological pain. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): a chat to friends, medicine or chocolate.

### Role D – Chocolate

You think chocolate is best at relieving psychological pain. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): a chat to friends, a long walk or medicine.

## Speaking – Pain

Rank these with your partner. Put the things that are best at relieving psychological pain at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- |               |                     |
|---------------|---------------------|
| • a good book | • medicine          |
| • a hot bath  | • sleep             |
| • a movie     | • a walk            |
| • chocolate   | • a chat to friends |

### Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	T	d	T	e	F	f	T	g	F	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.