## Supporting Every Student Learning Series

CONVERSATION GUIDE

# The Effects of Bullying on Children Part 3. Why Bullying Hurts So Much

*(with Dr. Tracy Vaillancourt, University of Ottawa)*

## Physical pain is often short lived, whereas social pain can last a lifetime.

**Key understandings**

* A *United Nations Report on Violence Against Children* identified that there is persistent social acceptance of some types of violence against children, particularly when there is no lasting visible physical injuries.
* Humans are wired to belong, and to feel uncomfortable when they experience rejection or exclusion.
* The brain perceives social pain as physical pain.
* Studies show that people can relive and re-experience social pain more easily than physical pain and the emotions they feel are more intense and painful.
* Recent neuro-imagining studies show that parts of the physical pain network are also activated when a person is socially excluded.
* Physical and social pain share similar neural structures and are linked to evolution and survival needs.

# Questions for reflection and discussion

* If we know individuals can re-experience the pain of bullying behaviour, even after it has stopped, what are the implications for supporting students?
* If we know humans are wired to belong, what are the implications for creating welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments?

# For more information

* Safe and Caring

<https://education.alberta.ca/safe-and-caring-schools/overview/>

* See the article *Broken Hearts and Broken Bones: A Neural Perspective on the Similarities Between Social and Physical Pain* at: <http://sanlab.psych.ucla.edu/papers_files/Eisenberger(2012)CDPS.pdf>