

# HOW TO LIVE COURAGEOUSLY WITH REJECTION SENSITIVE DYSPHORIA



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**Rejection sensitive dysphoria (RSD) is when you experience intense emotional pain because of perceived failure or feeling rejected. This experience is associated with ADHD and is connected with the emotional intensity that many ADHDers feel. While rejection is something most don't like, the negative feelings that come with RSD are stronger and can be harder to manage. On the flip side, constant harsh and negative self-talk can make it difficult to enjoy success and praise when things do go well. Sometimes, RSD can result in withdrawal from social situations, rumination and perseveration over events, low self-esteem, and thoughts of self-harm. Since many with RSD avoid social settings in which they might fail or be criticized, this experience is hard to distinguish from Social Anxiety Disorder. There is less known about RSD and its impact on ADHDers because many of us internalize and hide our emotional reactions to rejection out of embarrassment or shame. Here are some strategies for counteracting RSD when you want to try something that feels vulnerable.**

## EXPLORE HOW RSD IMPACTS YOUR CHOICES

- RSD may cause the person to think of possible threatening scenarios and act as if the threat genuinely exists. The imagined threat may cause them to cancel plans or avoid doing things they want to try in order to avoid feeling even more hurt later on.
- For someone with RSD, the mere idea of potential rejection is enough to evoke deeply unpleasant emotions that can deter them from taking risks.
- RSD can cause relationship problems when the person perceives their partner is criticizing or rejecting them and they may respond defensively or avoidant as a result. Because of this, many relationships end before rejection happens.
- RSDers may withhold their opinions or feedback because they don't want others to experience the pain that they feel when receiving feedback.
- Acknowledging how RSD is impacting you can create more space for awareness and intentional choice.

## HONOR YOUR ADHD NEEDS

- Finding the food, movement, and routine that fits your needs can help you navigate the world from a clear and regulated state.
- Connecting with other ADHDers can give you a community to explore and identify your needs. This also includes online connections!

## IDENTIFY YOUR STRENGTHS

- Write out a visual list of all the things that make you exceptional to reference when negative thoughts begin to spiral.
- Check out the VIA Character Strengths assessment if you are having difficulty identifying your strengths  
<https://www.viacharacter.org/>

## DON'T FORGET TO PLAY

- Shifting life from a mindset of work to a mindset of play can decrease the pressure we put on the outcome. While both take time and effort, the idea of work is haunted by a fear of imperfection, while play feels harder to get wrong.