

Rejection Sensitivity Dysphoria Guide

What is rejection sensitivity dysphoria (RSD)?

Dysphoria is a Greek word which means that something is practically unbearable. Therefore, people who experience RSD perceive rejection as unbearable, and something which causes intense emotional distress. RSD is not an official diagnosis, and it has only recently been explored in research. People who experience RSD may be triggered by:

- Criticism by others
- Teasing/banter from other people
- Rejection from other people.

People who experience RSD are often regarded by others as highly sensitive by others, but the reality is that individuals who experience RSD feel intense pain at the thought of rejection. This pain often has physical symptoms such as stomach-ache or chest pain.

People with RSD are often hyper-vigilant to criticism and rejection, and thus may perceive rejection where others do not. This may cause difficulties in social relationships or at work, as people with RSD are more likely to interpret neutral social cues as a threat, activating the fight or flight response. This may result in people with RSD appearing to be more quick to anger and aggression, or avoidance, when experiencing problems.

It has been suggested that RSD is more common across neurodivergent individuals, especially ADHDers.

People experiencing RSD may:

- Base their identity and self-worth on how others view them

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- Have incredibly high standards of themselves
- Feel an intense need for approval and validation from others
- Withdraw from social situations
- Appear defensive
- Experience intense emotions, sometimes displayed as outbursts

How does RSD affect suicidality?

RSD can influence some of the risk factors of suicidality. For example, RSD can lead people to feel like they are not accepted or liked by others, increasing feelings of thwarted belonging. Moreover, if others around them do not experience RSD, they may have problems in relationships, thus increasing the likelihood of isolation.

How to support someone with RSD:

- Educate yourself on RSD, by reading the information provided, and discussing it openly and non-judgementally with the person you are trying to support
- Help them to understand what RSD is, and how it affects them. Provide a safe space to increase learning and understanding
- Help them to understand their strengths and capabilities to build self-esteem
- Think about how you phrase criticism, and give space for them to process and respond in whatever way they need to
- Avoid banter and teasing which may be misconstrued
- Be up-front and consistent in your communication. Say what you mean, as if the individual has to 'read into' your comments, they may not fully trust you
- Support them to develop mindfulness and grounding techniques, if they would like this

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Sources and further information

[What Is Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria? | Psychology Today](#)

[What Is Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria? ADHD and Emotional Dysregulation \(additudemag.com\)](#)

[Sensitive to Rejection? It Could Be RSD \(psychcentral.com\)](#)

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