



# Understanding Rejection Sensitivity Dysphoria (RSD) Fact Sheet

## Introduction:

Rejection Sensitivity Dysphoria (RSD) is a common but often misunderstood feature of ADHD and other forms of neurodivergence. It can cause intense emotional pain, physical discomfort, and a sense of worthlessness or failure when faced with perceived rejection or criticism. Educating loved ones and advocating for oneself can help manage RSD.

## 💡 Education:

### Share Your Experience of RSD:

- Explain to your partner, friends, and family that **"RSD can feel like physical pain in my body just like it causes you physical pain when you get injured."**
- By sharing what you are learning and taking care of yourself, you can teach those close to you about RSD and receive therapeutic and helpful support.

### Acknowledge Positive Actions:

- Ask those close to you to **"remind me of the things I have been doing well."** Positive reinforcement can help to increase self-esteem and decrease the impact of RSD.

### Be Aware of Facial Expressions:

- Explain that you can be really sensitive to facial expressions, which can have a big impact on you. Ask them to **"be conscientious of what your facial expression is,"** especially when giving feedback or criticism.

## Use Collaborative Language:

- When giving feedback or asking for help, ask them to use collaborative phrases so that you do not feel shamed or controlled. For example:
  - **"Would you be open to...?"**
  - **"Would you be willing to...?"**
  - **"I would love it if you would..."**

## Timing is Important:

- Ask them to be careful of the times they approach you with concerns. Request that they **"check first with me to make sure that I am feeling good, regulated, and calm"** before discussing any issues.

## Validate and Listen:

- Remind those close to you that your thoughts and feelings matter to you and that validating and listening to your feelings can decrease RSD. Ask them to **"validate and listen to my feelings."**

## Self-Advocacy:

### Educate Mental Health Professionals:

- It is important to educate mental health professionals about RSD and how it can be misdiagnosed as bipolar disorder or borderline personality disorder in women.

### Seek Support When Needed:

- Advocating for oneself can be challenging, and it is important to seek support when needed. Reach out to supportive friends, family members, or mental health professionals when struggling with RSD.

## Self-Care to Decrease RSD:

### Prune Your Life of Unsupportive People:

- Address uninformed people in your life regarding your RSD.
- Assess and address toxic or unhealthy work environments.

### **Practice Staying in Your Regulated Stress Zones:**

- Through self-awareness and necessary self-accommodations.

### **Establish and Maintain Regular Sleep and Eating Habits:**

- Be aware of how your hormonal cycle affects your emotions and plan accordingly.

### **Connect with Supportive People:**

- To avoid feeling isolated.

### **Find Systems to Manage Your Medications When Possible:**

- Medications can help with rejection sensitivity, according to Bill Dodson. Dodson recommends alpha agonists like clonidine and guanfacine. Women report feeling like they are wearing emotional armor while taking these medications, which helps them manage intense dysregulation and choose their responses to situations with a greater sense of self-trust.