

## Workbook 6

# Understanding Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria (RSD)



## What You'll Learn

This workbook will help you understand what Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria (RSD) is and how it affects your emotions, body, and relationships.


You will learn:

- What RSD is and how it shows up in ADHD women
- Why it can feel so intense
- How your nervous system responds to real or perceived rejection
- What triggers RSD and how it shows up in your body and thoughts
- What to do during an RSD episode
- How to care for yourself during and after a spiral
- Why perfectionism, people-pleasing, and withdrawal are common RSD survival responses
- How to talk about RSD with others and ask for what you need

# Part 1: Understanding RSD

## What Is Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria (RSD)?

**Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria (RSD)** is an intense emotional and physical reaction to perceived rejection, criticism, or failure

-  **Dysphoria** refers to a deep sense of emotional or psychological discomfort. It often shows up as restlessness, sadness, unease, or agitation, and can carry the feeling that something is “off” or unsettled within yourself or your life.

It can start with something real in the present, like a mistake, a comment, or a moment of distance.

But the reaction is also sometimes shaped by the past. You may have been judged, left out, or made to feel not good enough. That history adds another layer.

Your nervous system reacts fast. It responds to what feels familiar from your past, and also what is happening now.

It can come without warning and feel like a wave that takes over.



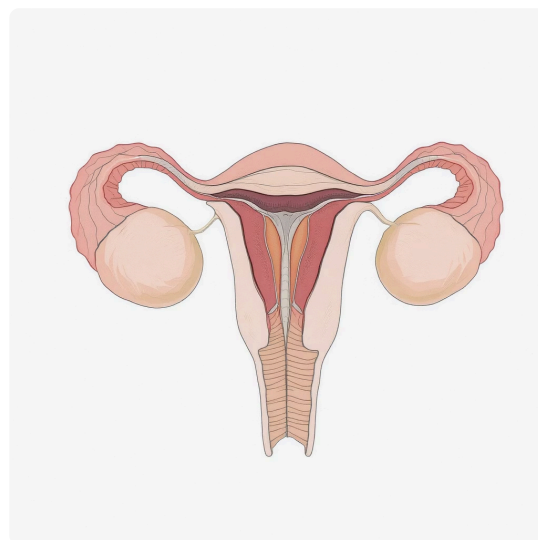
RSD, like many emotions, is a survival response. Your brain and body are trying to protect you from rejection before it happens.

Your system is always looking for safety in a world that has not always felt safe.

## Hormones Can Make RSD More Intense

RSD might feel stronger in the days before your period, the late luteal phase, or other times when estrogen is fluctuating.

Estrogen modulates dopamine, and when dopamine is lower emotions can be harder to manage.



## The Science Behind RSD

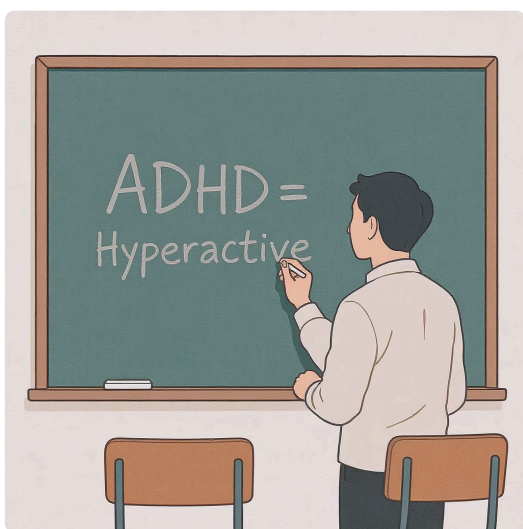
Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria isn't listed in the *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*.

The truth is, the way ADHD has been defined leaves out important parts of the lived experience of ADHD women.



- i** **What's the DSM?** The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)* is the tool clinicians use to diagnose mental health and neurodevelopmental conditions like ADHD and autism. It shapes how providers are trained and what symptoms "count" toward a diagnosis.

## Why RSD Often Gets Overlooked



The DSM describes ADHD as problems with attention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. This view is outdated.

ADHD was first seen as a childhood behavior disorder. People thought it mostly affected boys. The focus was on signs like fidgeting, blurting things out, or acting out.

These ideas have lasted for years. Many professionals and members of the public still base their views of ADHD on them.

## Emotional Regulation

Problems with emotional regulation are well documented, but they are not part of the official ADHD criteria. Experts believed they were too hard to measure or too common in other conditions.

This choice shaped how ADHD is taught, diagnosed, and treated. It has led to many missed or misunderstood cases, especially in girls, women, and people whose symptoms are more internal, emotional, or hidden.

RSD is closely linked to emotional dysregulation and a sensitive nervous system. But it does not fit the narrow definition of ADHD, so it has not been fully recognised or studied.

If you have been dismissed, misdiagnosed, or misunderstood, you are not not alone.

RSD has received little attention because emotional regulation has not been fully included in how the medical field understands ADHD. Additionally RSD may be a variation of rejection sensitivity which is seen in many people with varying mental health issues such as trauma, social anxiety, depression and boorderline personality disorder.





## How RSD Shapes Masking

Everyone, neurodivergent and neurotypical, builds strategies to feel safe and accepted.

For many girls with ADHD, that can be harder. RSD can make even small signs of disapproval feel overwhelming. To cope, many develop habits that are masking skills.

Over time, these habits can become so automatic that they start to feel like part of who you are.

### Other Ways RSD Shapes Behavior

- i You might also notice that you:
  - Need a lot of reassurance after conflict or distance
  - Replay conversations and search for signs you got it wrong
  - Avoid feedback because it feels overwhelming
  - Avoid conflict by staying quiet or agreeing too quickly
  - Monitor other people's moods closely
  - Change yourself to stay liked, accepted, or safe
  - Struggle to ask for help because needing support feels too risky



**REVIEW**

Remember: these are adaptations. They helped you cope.

You may notice that you:

- People-please** to avoid disapproval
- Strive for perfectionism to avoid criticism**
- Overexplain or apologize**, even when you did nothing wrong
- Stay quiet** so you do not sound "stupid" or upset someone
- Avoid risks** or new things to prevent embarrassment or failure
- Hide your needs** or feelings to keep the peace or stay connected

These strategies often formed slowly, over many years. They were likely reinforced along the way.

They made sense at the time. And you are not alone in using them.

But now you can learn new ways to support yourself.

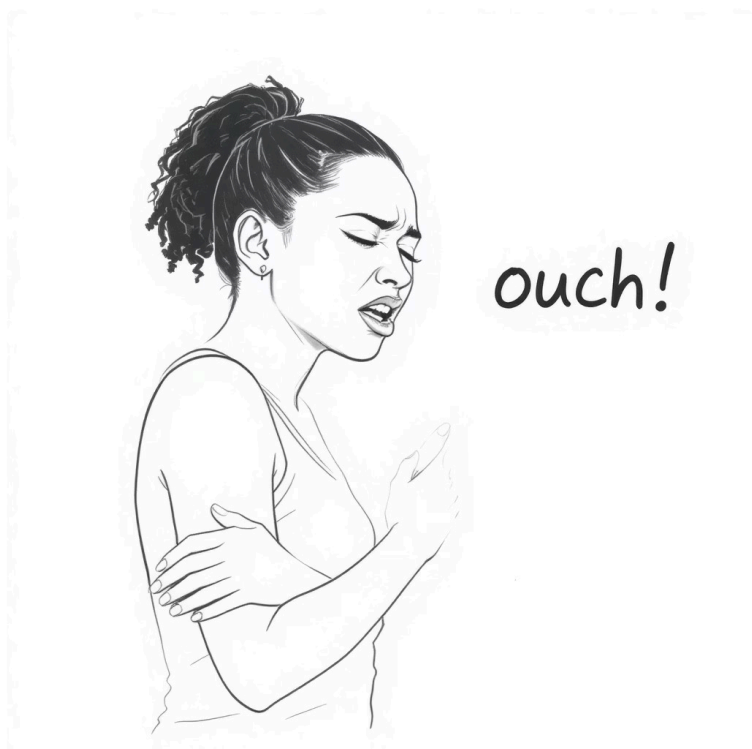


## What the Research Is Starting to Show

Even though RSD isn't in the DSM, research confirms some things:

- 1** Rejection sensitivity shows up in many people with ADHD.
- 2** It may be especially common in ADHD women—possibly due to chronic masking, social pressure, and years of being misunderstood.
- 3** ADHD brains often struggle with regulating dopamine, which affects motivation, mood, and sensitivity to feedback.
- 4** Brain scans show that social rejection activates the same parts of the brain as physical pain.
- 5** Emotional responses in ADHD brains are often more intense, more immediate, and harder to regulate.

If Rejection sensitivity feels like a real threat—**or even like physical pain**—it's because your brain is responding as if you're in danger.



That pain isn't exaggerated or made up. It's biological. It's valid. And it deserves care, both from you and others, not dismissal.



That's why your nervous system treats rejection as if it were a threat. Even today, when rejection isn't physically dangerous, your body still reacts as though it is. RSD episodes are your survival system firing up to protect you from the possibility of **losing connection and belonging**.

When you understand what's really happening in your brain and body, it makes sense. Your nervous system is sounding the alarm, even if the threat is only perceived.

That's why the first step in an RSD episode isn't to analyze, fix, or push through. **The first step is to create safety for your body—so you can begin to regulate before you reflect.**

## Common RSD Triggers

RSD can be triggered by real or perceived rejection, criticism, failure, or the fear that something means one of those things. Sometimes the trigger is obvious. Sometimes it is subtle, internal, or shaped by past experiences.

Common triggers can include:

- Receiving criticism, correction, or feedback
- Making a mistake, or thinking you made one
- Being ignored, excluded, or left out
- A shift in tone, facial expression, or the way someone is responding to you
- Slow replies, silence, or mixed signals
- Being misunderstood, dismissed, or talked over
- Arguments, tension, or minor disagreement
- Failure or perceived failure
- Comparing yourself to others
- Harsh self-judgment
- Fearing you disappointed someone
- Needing support in a situation where you already feel vulnerable

### Want to notice your own patterns more clearly?

Use the **Mapping My RSD Triggers** worksheet in the back.

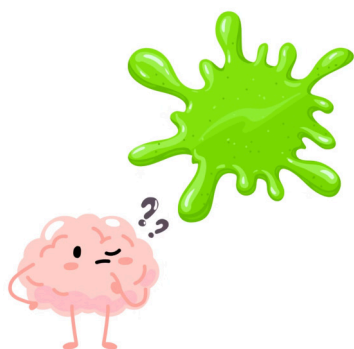
## Why RSD Develops: A Wider View

RSD is what happens when a sensitive brain learns the world isn't safe.

### Nature

#### Sensitive Brains

ADHD brains are more sensitive to:



- Feedback and social cues
- Emotional overwhelm
- Feeling misunderstood or judged

### Nurture

#### The World Teaches You to Mask

RSD often develops when you've been:

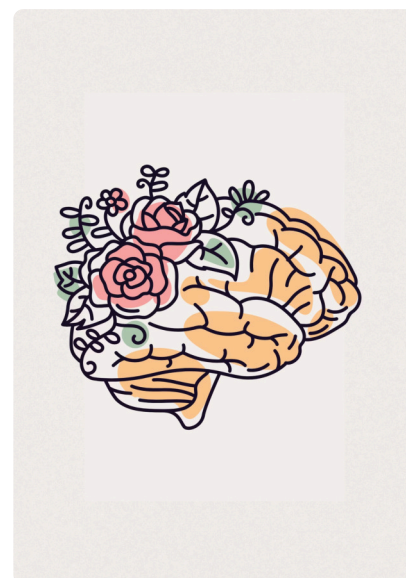


- Criticized without care
- Told you're "too emotional"
- Misread or pathologized
- Expected to hide who you are to belong

These experiences leave lasting marks on your nervous system.

### Adaptation

#### Your Brain Learns to Protect You



To stay safe, you may:

- Scan for signs of disapproval
- Try to be perfect
- Keep quiet or avoid asking for help
- Work hard to stay likable or invisible

# Part 2

# Experiencing RSD



## What RSD is Like

RSD doesn't just affect your thoughts. It can take over your body, your emotions, and your behavior all at once. Many ADHD women describe they feel like they are overcome by shame or fear. The need to get rid of this can be urgent.

Once an RSD episode hits, here are some of the ways it can play out.

1

### In Your Mind:

Replaying a conversation over and over, trying to find what you did wrong

Feeling like one small mistake ruined everything

Assuming people secretly dislike you or see you as too much

Believing even the smallest misstep will not be forgiven

Losing access to clear thinking, while your mind goes blank or starts racing

2

### In Your Body:

- Sudden waves of shame, dread, or fear that feel physical
- Fight, flight, freeze, or fawn kicks in
- Shutting down, snapping, or withdrawing to escape the intensity

3

### In Your Behavior:

- Panicking over a missed text, a shift in tone, or a single emoji
- Rushing to fix everything immediately just to feel safe again
- Pulling away from people, even the ones you care about
- Over-apologizing or people-pleasing to make the pain stop



### Want to better understand your RSD flare-ups over time?

Use **Mapping My RSD Triggers** worksheet in the back of your workbook to track the situations, patterns, or people that tend to spike your nervous system.

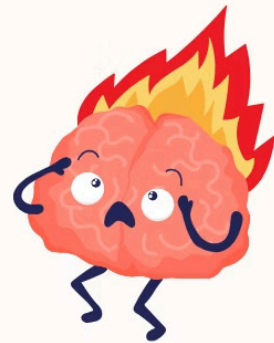
## **The Amygdala Hijack: When Your Brain Goes Offline**

During an RSD flare, your brain thinks you're in danger, even if there's no real threat.

That's because your brain's main job is to keep you safe.

A part of your brain called the **amygdala** acts like an alarm system. It sends out stress signals and tells your body, "Something's wrong!"

At the same time, another part of your brain called the **prefrontal cortex** goes quiet. This part helps you think clearly, plan, and calm down. During a flare, it temporarily shuts off.



That's why you might:

- 1** — **Feel panicky or overwhelmed**
- 2** — **Forget what you were trying to say**
- 3** — **Freeze, shut down, or lash out**
- 4** — **Feel disconnected from your body**

These reactions are not "overreactions," even though many ADHD women have been told that they are. They're your nervous system doing exactly what it was designed to do; protect you from danger.



During an RSD episode, the “danger” your body reacts to isn’t physical. It’s the pain of rejection, criticism, or disconnection. For the human brain, **belonging has always been tied to survival**. In our evolutionary past, being accepted by the group meant safety, protection, and access to resources. Being rejected meant real risk, sometimes even life or death.



## Common Protective Responses to RSD

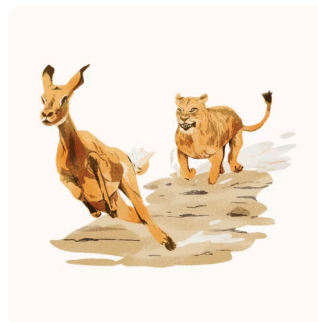
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### Fight

You get defensive, argue, or lash out.

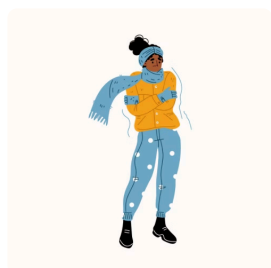
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### Flight

You try to escape or shut the situation down.

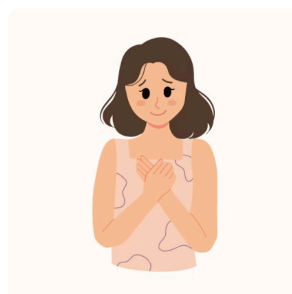
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### Freeze

You go blank, feel stuck, or can't respond.

4



### Fawn

You over-apologize, people-please, or try to fix everything.

You don't choose these reactions. They happen automatically, as your body tries to keep you safe.

## 🌸 Flourish Shift

**Old belief:** *I shouldn't be so sensitive.*

**New understanding:** *My nervous system is in survival mode. I need safety, not to try harder.*



## **Reflection: How Does RSD Show Up for Me?**

You don't have to relate to everything. Even one or two patterns might be how RSD shows up for you.

Take a moment to check in:

### **When I'm in an RSD spiral, I tend to...**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### **The thoughts that usually flood in are...**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



## What do you notice in Your Body?

**I notice these physical sensations or survival responses:**

- Tight chest
- Shaky hands or legs
- Brain fog or mental blanking
- Heat, nausea, or shutdown
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Afterward RSD, I often feel...**

- Exhausted
- Embarrassed
- Disconnected
- Numb
- Like I can't explain it
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**One thing I wish others understood about my RSD is:**

✨ My Truth

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_



## RSD and Shame



RSD often brings up shame very quickly.

Guilt says, "I did something wrong."

Shame says, "Something is wrong with me."

When RSD is active, it is easy to collapse a painful moment into a global story about who you are.

Part of healing is learning to notice that shift before shame takes over completely.

# Part 3

## Healing from RSD



## What Comes Next: Build Safety Before Solving

Now that you understand what's happening in your brain and body during an RSD episode, you may realize why some of the advice you've been given hasn't helped

**"Just don't take it personally"**

**"Calm down"**

**"Stop overreacting,"**

**"Be rational"**

**"Examine your thoughts"**

In fact, they often make things worse. Being told to "calm down" or "stop overreacting"—or even criticizing yourself—only adds more rejection and shame.

RSD is your body reacting to cues of threat. What helps is **not more pressure, but more safety.**

That starts with one core principle:

### Safety first



You've already practiced some of the tools from earlier Flourish workbooks.

In this section, we'll build on that foundation and introduce a clear, repeatable protocol to help you move through RSD—*not by fixing yourself, but by supporting yourself until your system feels safer.*



## The SOOTHE/Safety Protocol

When an RSD episode hits, your nervous system gets overwhelmed. Your thinking brain goes offline.

Trying to explain, fix, or reframe too soon can make things worse.

The **SOOTHE Protocol** gives you six simple steps to follow—each one designed to work *with* your nervous system, not against it.

You don't have to follow these steps in perfect order. The most important thing is to focus on creating a sense of **safety and regulation**, because RSD is rooted in perceived threat. Only after your body starts to feel safer should you try to reflect on what happened.

This framework and workbook offer tools and ideas to help you move through that process gently, at your own pace.

# SOOTHE RSD Protocol Quick Handout

## 1 — **SEE**-Name What's Happening

"This is an RSD episode."

"I feel overwhelmed."

## 2 — **OWN**-Validate It Makes Sense

"Of course I feel this way."

"My nervous system thinks I'm in danger."

## 3 — **OFFER**- Self Compassion

"This is hard, and I'm doing my best."

"I don't need to fix it right now."

## 4 — **TEND**-To your body

- Deep breaths, hand on heart, self-hug, fresh air, weighted object. Get calm.

## 5 — **HOLD**-Feeling of Calm for a while

Stay with regulation.

- Blanket, warm shower, walk slowly, pet an animal, creative task.

## 6 — **EXPLORE** (only when calmer)

- What happened?
- What story did I tell myself?
- What does my nervous system need now?

## Step 1: SEE — Name What's Happening

If you can, name what you're feeling or noticing.

Naming your emotional state helps shift your brain out of overwhelm and into awareness.

Try phrases like:

**"I'm overwhelmed."**

**"This feels unbearable right now."**

**"This is an RSD episode."**

## Step 2: OWN — Validate the Experience

Give yourself a reason why your reaction makes sense. This interrupts shame.

Try:

**“Of course I feel  
this way.”**

**“My nervous  
system thinks I’m  
in danger.”**

**“This pain is real,  
even if I don’t fully  
understand it yet.”**

## Step 3: OFFER — Self-Compassion

Talk to yourself the way you'd talk to a friend. This creates internal safety and helps with emotional regulation.

Try:

**"This is hard, and I'm doing my best."**

**"I don't have to fix this—I just need care right now."**







**"I'm allowed to feel pain without judgment."**

## Step 4: TEND — Body Support




When your brain feels like it's on fire, you can't think clearly. Before you try to process or reflect, focus on tending to your body.

Pick one or two things that feel comforting right now. The idea is to create a little more safety and calm inside.







### 1. Soothing Options

-  Take deep breaths with long, slow exhales
-  Run cold water over your hands or splash your face
-  Offer gentle touch: hand on your heart, a self-hug, or wrap in a soft blanket
-  Step outside for fresh air
-  Hold something weighted or textured
-  Curl up somewhere cozy


### 2. Body Based Self-Compassion

-  Place a hand on your heart and say: *"This is hard, and I'm doing my best."*
-  Give yourself a gentle self-hug while breathing slowly
-  Rest a hand on your cheek or face and remind yourself: *"I'm allowed to feel this way."*

### 3. Nervous System Anchors

-  Gentle movement: rock, sway, or walk
-  Butterfly taps (cross arms and tap shoulders)
-  Press your feet into the floor and notice the ground holding you
-  Look around and name three objects in your space
-  Sip cold water or chew gum
-  Listen to calming music or sounds

 Need ideas? Flip to your **Regulation Tools Menu** for more grounding, sensory, or calming strategies.

 Not ready to ground or soothe yet? That's okay. **Distraction** can also help.

 Flip to the **Distraction Tools**

## Step 5: HOLD — Ongoing Regulation

RSD recovery takes time. You may need hours, days, or even longer to feel steady again and that's okay. HOLD means giving yourself permission to stay with regulation. Just because the panic has passed doesn't mean your nervous system is fully settled. Keep holding space for calm until you feel grounded



### Keep checking in

Keep checking in with your body:

<p>“  <b>How am I feeling right now?</b>  ”</p>	<p>“  <b>What do I need in this moment?</b>  ”</p>	<p>“  <b>Am I pushing myself to “get over it” too quickly?</b>  ”</p>
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### Provide Gentle Care

Gentle care might include:

- A warm bath or shower
- Wrapping up in a blanket
- Watching something comforting
- Spending time with a pet
- Listening to soothing music
- A gentle walk
- Something creative or hands-on



**Flip to your Regulation Tools Menu for more ideas to stay anchored.**

## Step 6: EXPLORE — Reflect When You Feel Safe

When your body feels calmer, you can gently explore what happened—*only when you're ready*.

Reflection questions:

“  
What actually happened? (Just the facts)  
”

“  
What story did I tell myself about what it meant?  
”

“  
Is there another way to understand this?  
”

“  
What does my nervous system need to feel safe now?  
”

This isn't a tool to invalidate your experience. It's meant to help you to process the difficult trigger and helps you to make the best choices on how to handle triggers and process RSD events.

 Ready to reflect?

Turn to the worksheet: **Reviewing the Story (Flourish RSD Processing Template)** to gently explore what happened.



## Teaching Loved Ones About RSD

### Self-Advocacy

Sometimes, the people closest to you don't understand how deeply rejection, or the fear of it, can hurt.

This section offers practical tools and language you can use to help others support you with more compassion and clarity.



### RSD Scripts You Can Use



#### "It Feels Like Pain"



"RSD sometimes feels like actual pain in my body. I've learned this is common for people with ADHD and other forms of neurodivergence. Do you remember when you [insert example of physical pain they've experienced]?"

That's part of how rejection can feel for me. When you're not careful with your tone or words. I'm not being dramatic. My body truly reacts this way."



Once you've explained how RSD feels, you can gently guide your loved one on how to support you better with specific strategies.

## Encourage Positive Feedback



"Please tell me what I'm doing well not just what needs fixing. When I only hear corrections, my nervous system doesn't feel safe. My brain goes into overdrive, scanning for rejection or danger, even when the intention is neutral or caring. I need more praise than you think I do"

## Be Aware of Facial Expressions



"Even small expressions, like a sigh or a frown, can feel like rejection.

My brain might misread the signal, but the impact is still real. ADHD people are sensitive to facial expressions. A neutral face or softer tone helps me feel safer, and how feedback is phrased makes a huge difference."

## Use Collaborative Phrasing

**"When you give me feedback, would you be willing to use gentle language?  
It helps me stay regulated when things are framed as teamwork instead of criticism."**

Try phrases like:

"Would you be open to...?"

"I'd love it if you could..."

"Would you be willing to...?"

These soften the tone of the conversation and help reduce the shame spiral.

Before giving feedback, it's also helpful to check in emotionally.



## Check In First

"It really helps when you check in with me before giving feedback."

Try asking:

- "Is now a good time to talk about something important?"
- "How are you feeling before we dive in?"

This simple check-in creates emotional safety and helps prevent my body from going into fight-or-flight mode before the conversation even begins.

Sometimes, the best support isn't advice—it's simply being heard.

## Reflect Back, Don't Fix

"Instead of fixing, just reflect back what you hear me saying."

Simple reflections help me feel seen and understood:

• "That makes sense why you'd feel that way."

• "It sounds like that really hurt."

This tells my nervous system that my emotions are valid—not too much, not wrong. Just real.

 **Self-Advocacy Note**

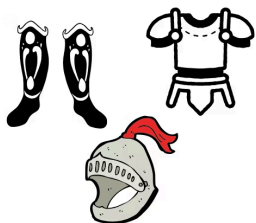
Sometimes, even mental health professionals misread or misdiagnose RSD. Women especially may be labeled as "too emotional" or misdiagnosed with conditions like borderline personality disorder or bipolar disorder.

Being informed about RSD helps you advocate for yourself more clearly and helps others take your experience seriously.

Don't stay with a professional that doesn't seem to understand this issue.

## Medication and RSD

### A Note on Medications



Medications can be helpful in easing rejection sensitivity, as shared by Dr. Bill Dodson. He often recommends **alpha agonists**, such as **clonidine** or **guanfacine**, to support emotional regulation.

Many women describe the experience of taking these medications as **putting on emotional armor**. With this support, they feel more grounded and better equipped to handle intense emotional waves without becoming overwhelmed.

The medication doesn't take away who they are—it simply creates space to respond instead of react. That emotional armor becomes a tool of protection and empowerment, helping them move through life with greater clarity, confidence, and self-trust.

## Caring for Yourself After being Rejected or Making a Mistake

Sometimes RSD is triggered by very painful and real situations. A friendship ends. A partner leaves. A boss criticizes your work. Or maybe you make a mistake that impacts others.

For ADHD women, these moments can feel earth-shattering. Not only do you feel the normal pain of rejection, but your nervous system reacts as if your safety, belonging, and worth are all on the line. Shame and self-criticism pile on quickly.

### Flourish Shift

**Old belief:** "If I'm rejected or make a mistake, it proves I'm not good enough."

**New understanding:** "Rejection and mistakes happen to everyone. They don't erase my worth they are moments where I need my own and others kindness the most."

But mistakes and rejections are part of being human.

They are not evidence that you are unworthy ,they are moments to practice compassion, not punishment.



## What to Do Next

Use the worksheet **Caring for Myself After Rejection** to gently walk yourself through:

1. Naming what actually happened
2. Noticing the part of you that feels hurt
3. Offering yourself comfort, support, or space
4. Reaching for safe connection when you need it

# Part 4 Worksheets





## My Regulation Tools Menu

### Purpose:

These are tools that help shift your nervous system from survival mode (panic, freeze, overwhelm) back toward calm, safety, and presence.

Try one from each group—or stick to what works for you.

#### Grounding My Body

- Feel my feet pressing into the floor
- Place a hand on my chest and breathe slowly
- Name 3 textures I can feel (clothes, chair, air)
- Do a mini body scan (jaw, shoulders, belly)

#### Soothing My Senses

- Hold something warm or soft
- Smell a comforting scent (lotion, tea, oil)
- Sip cold water or chew gum
- Listen to calming music or nature sounds

#### Shifting My Energy

- Butterfly taps (crossed arms, tapping shoulders)
- Shake out my hands or bounce gently
- Walk slowly or stretch with intention
- Tap feet or march in place

#### Comfort + Connection

- Cuddle a pet or stuffed animal
- Text someone safe (no explanation needed)
- Wrap up in a hoodie or blanket
- Repeat a gentle phrase: "This will pass." / "I'm safe right now."

#### Top 3 Go-To Tools (circle or write below):

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_



## My Distraction Tools Menu for RSD

### What It Is

Distraction is a nervous system support strategy. It helps you press pause when your thoughts are loud, emotions overwhelming, or body frozen in panic/shame. It's not ignoring pain — it's creating a break long enough to reset.

### Why It Works

Distraction gives your brain and body a task — something sensory, rhythmic, or concrete. This powers down the survival system so emotions can catch up.

### Visual + Object-Based

- Look for all green or square objects in the room
- Name 3 things you can see in a specific color
- Notice textures around you (fabric, surfaces, temperature)

### Thinking Tools

- Count up and down (1, 2, 3... then 3, 2, 1...)
- Say the alphabet backward
- Spell words out loud
- Repeat a quote, lyric, or affirmation

### Rhythm + Sound

- Sing or hum a familiar song
- Repeat lyrics in your head
- Tap rhythmically with your fingers
- Listen to music or soothing sounds

### Play + Puzzles


- Name categories (e.g., 5 fruits, 5 animals, 5 green things)
- Play a memory, matching, or puzzle game on your phone
- Say rhyming words or alliterations

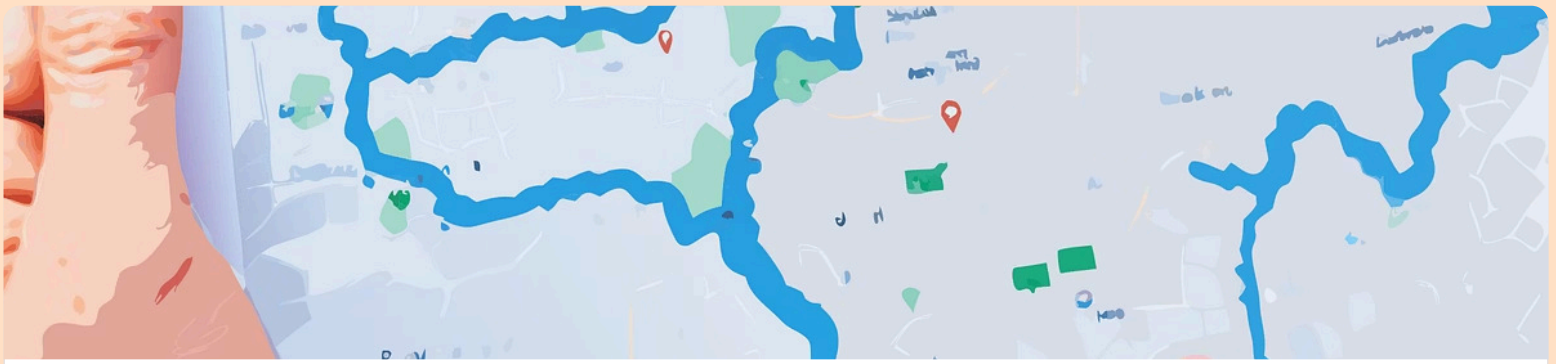
### Future Anchors

Think of something you're excited about

Picture yourself in a safe future moment

Imagine how it will feel once this spiral has passed

 Circle or star 3 tools you'll try first. Keep this page somewhere easy to grab in a spiral.



## My RSD Map

### Why It Matters:

Understanding your triggers isn't about avoiding everything—it's about preparing with kindness.

### Common Triggers

- Criticism / correction
- Being ignored or excluded
- Tone / facial expression shifts
- Silence (no response)
- Being misunderstood
- Mistakes / asking for help
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

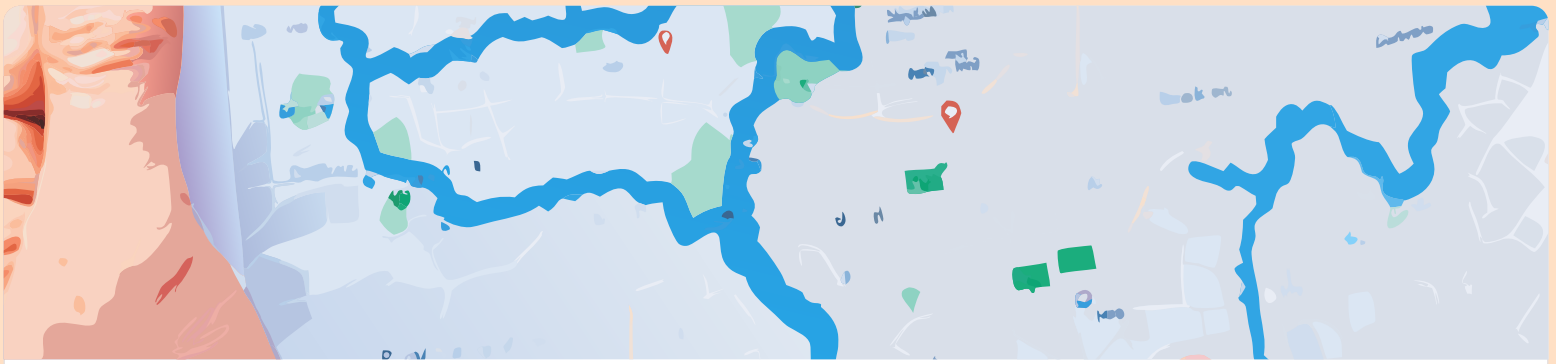
### Body Signals (first signs)

- Chest tightness
- Stomach drop / nausea
- Shaky hands / legs
- Throat lump / closing
- Brain fog / head pressure
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### My Coping Patterns

- Over-apologize
- Over-explain
- Shut down / withdraw
- People-please
- Try to look "perfect"
- Get angry / irritable
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_





## Your Personal Map

### People That Spike My RSD:

1

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2

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3

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### Situations that Spike my RSD

1

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2

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3

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## Am I Ready to Reflect?

### Why it matters:

Trying to "think clearly" while your nervous system is still in panic rarely helps. Reflection works best when your body has returned to some level of safety. You may do this step hours or days after RSD is triggered.

### Quick Self-Check Before Reflection

You don't have to answer "yes" to everything. One or two might be enough to gently begin:

- My breathing feels slower and more steady
- I can name one feeling I'm experiencing
- My body feels more grounded
- I don't feel urgency to defend, withdraw, or fix
- I feel curious—not just overwhelmed
- \_\_\_\_\_

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## Step 4: What Helps Me Respond Now?

You get to choose how you want to respond if at all.

Some prompts for you:

- Do I want to check in, clarify, or repair something?
- Do I want to let this go or give it more time?
- What would feel supportive to **me right now?**




### Optional Integration

You might pair this reflection with a grounding tool, such as:

- Gentle movement
- Sensory anchor (a warm drink, soft blanket)
- Self-compassionate statement: "No wonder that felt so painful. I'm allowed to take my time."

# Caring for Myself After Real Rejection

## Why it matters:

Not all rejection is imagined. When harm or loss happens, you deserve kindness from yourself.

### What Actually Happened?

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### What Part of Me Feels Hurt?

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### What Will Help Me Now?

- What would care look like (comfort, distance, expression)?
- Who can I reach out to who helps me feel safe?

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### Optional: Boundary/Kind Phrases

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- It makes sense I would feel this way
- I can take time before deciding how to respond.
- I am allowed to step back from people or situations that feel harmful.
- I can take my hurt seriously.
- I am allowed to need space.
- I can pay attention to patterns.



# Caring for Myself After Making a Mistake

## Why it matters:

Making mistakes can be a trigger for rejection sensitivity. For ADHD women, mistakes can feel bigger, like proof of not being good enough. But mistakes are not the end of your story. They are part of being human.

### What Actually Happened?

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### Some possible prompts for you if you're stuck

- What did I do (or not do)?
- Was it intentional or accidental?
- Did it cause harm, disappointment, or inconvenience?

### What Part of Me Feels Hurt?

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- What story about myself did this activate?
- What emotion is strongest right now?
- What need went unmet? (safety respect competence belonging)

### What Will Help Me Now?

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- How can I tend to this part of me?
- What would self-compassion look like?
- Who can I reach out to who helps me feel safe?  
Can I take some responsibility or mend this?

### Optional: Permission reminders

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- ✓ Mistakes are how people learn.
- ✓ This moment does not erase my worth.
- ✓ I can repair if I need to and still deserve compassion.
- ✓ I am still worthy even when I mess up.



## Closing

In this workbook, you explored how Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria shapes your body, thoughts, and relationships — and how to move through it with care instead of criticism.

## You Did it! 🎉

You practiced:

- Naming what happens inside you during RSD
- Using body-based tools to find safety and calm
- Validating yourself, even when others don't
- Preparing for future episodes with compassion, not fear
- Setting boundaries and teaching others how to support you