

Why might your child with ADHD be experiencing Rejection sensitive dysphoria (RSD)?

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RSD is characterised by overwhelming feelings in response to either actual or perceived criticism or rejection. It can also trigger feelings of falling short or failing to meet their own high standards or others' expectations.

It is a serious condition and is not your child being "overly sensitive" or a "drama queen." Young people with ADHD say that the feelings they experience are real and painful and, in some cases, can damage self-esteem and lead to withdrawal and loneliness.

These responses can be internalised and your child experience low mood. This can happen very quickly in response to a perceived criticism or rejection from feeling perfectly fine to feeling intensely sad or your child's response can be externalised. This could be in the form of instantaneous anger or rage.

Three ways in which ADHD impacts upon rejection sensitivity.

1. **Challenges with emotional regulation**

Emotional disruptions can be one of the most impairing aspects of ADHD at any age. Many people with ADHD report feeling tense and on edge a lot of the time and often have difficulties resting or relaxing, especially in personal interactions and social situations. Children also have a developmental delay with emotional development and can often have experienced social rejection because of this, especially during adolescence. In some young people,

this can lead to low frustration tolerance, impatience, hot temper and excitability which can impact upon relationships.

2. Difficulties with Working Memory

Working Memory can help a young person to rationalise a criticism, they can put it in perspective based upon past experiences and the criticism doesn't then become a serious issue for them. However, with difficulties with working memory, which is a common feature of ADHD, a person may be less able to do this and then the momentary emotions experienced through perceived criticism flood the brain with this one intense emotion. This drives out other important information that might help to regulate these feelings and reduce the resulting behaviours.

3. High levels of anxiety

Anxiety is a very common feature of ADHD in children and teenagers, particularly social anxiety. Young people can feel exaggerated fears of being seen by others as incompetent, unappealing, or stupid. This means that some young people will be hypervigilant to criticism and may see rejection when it is not actually happening.

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About ADHD Foundation

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