



RSD (Rejection Sensitivity) Reflection Tool

*A gentle way to separate threat, perception, and emotional
memory*

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Important note

This resource is intended to support understanding and good practice in neuro-inclusive workplace design. It provides general guidance and does not constitute legal, medical, or clinical advice. Organisations should apply the principles in line with their own policies, regulatory obligations, and professional judgement.

Rejection Sensitivity often isn't about being "too sensitive."
It's about a nervous system that has **learnt to protect you quickly...** sometimes faster than the present moment requires.

This tool helps you **pause the spiral** and sort what's happening into three different layers:

- **Threat** (what's happening now)
- **Perception** (how it's being interpreted)
- **Emotional Memory** (what past experiences might be amplifying it)

You don't need to get this "right."
You're just creating **space**.

Before you begin

If emotions are very high right now:

- You don't need to complete this
- Skim or save it for later
- Regulation comes first

Reflection works best **after the initial wave**, not during peak intensity.

Step 1. Name the Trigger (Briefly)

Without analysing, write one sentence:

"Something happened that made me feel rejected / criticised / unsafe."

Example:

"They didn't reply to my message."

"My manager corrected me."

"Someone's tone changed."

Keep it factual.

No conclusions yet.

Step 2. Threat Check

(Is there an immediate, real danger?)

Ask gently:

- Am I physically unsafe right now?
- Is something actually being taken away from me in this moment?
- Am I about to be harmed, punished, or excluded *for certain*?

If the answer is **no**, your nervous system may still be reacting... but it's likely **not to immediate threat**.

That matters.

Step 3. Perception Layer

(What meaning did my brain add?)

Complete this sentence:

“My mind is telling me that this means _____.”

Common examples:

- “They’re angry with me.”
- “I’ve messed everything up.”
- “I’m about to be rejected.”
- “They don’t like me.”
- “I’ve failed.”

This isn’t wrong or irrational.
It’s your brain trying to **predict and protect**.

Step 4. Emotional Memory Layer

(What might this be reminding my body of?)

Without digging deep, notice:

- This feels familiar
- This reaction feels bigger than the situation
- My body feels younger than I am
- This matches past experiences of rejection, shame, or exclusion

You don’t need to identify *which* memory.

Just recognising “**this might be old**” can reduce intensity.

Step 5. Separate the Three Layers

Gently lay them out:

- **What's happening now (threat):**

- **What my mind is predicting (perception):**

- **What my nervous system remembers (emotional memory):**

Seeing them side-by-side often softens the reaction on its own.

Step 6. Offer Your System Reassurance

(Not logic... safety)

Try one sentence that feels believable:

- "I'm not in trouble right now."
- "I don't have all the information yet."
- "This feeling makes sense given my past."
- "I can pause before reacting."
- "I'm allowed to take time."

You're not trying to *convince* yourself... just to **reduce threat**.

Step 7. Choose a Low-Risk Response

(Or no response at all)

Ask:

"What's the smallest, safest next step?"

Options:

- Do nothing for now
- Wait before replying
- Ask for clarification later
- Write a draft but don't send it
- Ground first, decide later

Urgency often comes from **RSD energy**, not actual necessity.

Important reminders about RSD

- RSD responses are **fast**, not faulty
- Emotional intensity \neq accuracy
- You don't need certainty to be okay
- You don't need to resolve everything immediately
- Pausing is a skill, not avoidance

You are not “overreacting.”
Your system is reacting **based on history**.

When this tool helps most

- After receiving feedback
 - During text / email silence
 - In conflict or miscommunication
 - When shame spikes suddenly
 - When you feel the urge to withdraw or over-explain
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Closing note

RSD doesn't mean you're fragile.

It means your nervous system learned early that **connection mattered deeply...**
and that loss felt costly.

This tool isn't about turning that off.

It's about helping your system realise:

“This moment might not be the same as before.”

That awareness alone can be regulating.
