

AD/HD and Deficient Emotional Self-Regulation (DESR)



“Managing Affective Interference”

- Problems managing emotions, motivation & arousal
- Those with AD/HD have problems inhibiting emotional reactions compared to peers,
- The emotions they experience are appropriate
- BUT, manifest their emotions significantly more than their age peers.
- They are less likely to internalize emotions and cannot moderate them as well as others do.
- They appear less emotionally mature, more reactive, hot-tempered, and easily frustrated.
- Hard for them to generate intrinsic motivation for tasks without immediate reward.

Barkley, R.A. (No Date). Fact Sheet: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Topics. From website: <http://www.russellbarkley.org/factsheets/adhd-facts.pdf>.

What is “Emotional Self-Regulation”?

- **A person's ability to understand and accept their emotional experience, manage their emotions, and respond with appropriate behavior for the moment.**
- **A.K.A.: “Managing Affective Interference”**

Goldrich, C. (2017). Executive Functions and ADHD in Children. Seminar Presented by PESI, Inc., Eau Claire, WI.

AD/HD, Cool Cognitive Network, Emotional Lability & Medication

- US study found between 38 to 75% of children/teens with AD/HD have comorbid emotional lability
- 10% of general population has this problem
- Emotional Lability in AD/HD = Hot Cognitive Network
 - Time blindness, reward response, reward frustration

NOT

- Cool Cognitive Network = Attention & Planning

- The more impaired by AD/HD and more comorbidities the more severe emotional lability.
- The medications used for AD/HD may abate this somewhat.

Childress, A.C. et al. (August 29, 2015). Emotional Lability in Patients with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder: Impact of Pharmacotherapy. CNS Drugs, 29(8), 683-693.

AD/HD + DESR Treatment

- A recent literature review found:
- Psychostimulants have been found to significantly improve core AD/HD symptoms and emotional dysregulation
- Hence, it should be a first line treatment
- Atomoxetine is also effective
- There is some evidence that group therapy with AD/HD adults can be helpful in teaching emotional regulation skills – **need more replication**

- Treatment is also guided by what if any comorbidities are present.

Shaw, P. et al. (March, 2016). Emotional dysregulation and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. American Journal of Psychiatry, 171(3), 276-293.

“Managing Affective Interference”

- Refocusing away from event or toward an event that might be better for them
- Encourage a more positive, acceptable mood
- Self - soothing or calming
- Utilizing self-talk as a form of self-guidance
- Acknowledge negative feelings and offer encouragement
- Help them visualize and imagine what will happen when the task is done
- Raise awareness of what impacts their own ability to stay calm, engaged, and focused
- Ask and note what seems to impact their behavior such as noise, visuals, pace, etc.
- Reduce frustrating distractors
- Exercise breaks

Goldrich, C. (2017). Executive Functions and ADHD in Children. Seminar Presented by PESI, Inc., Eau Claire, WI.

AD/HD & Socialization

- **80% of AD/HD children suffer social rejection by second grade. They can live a lifetime of rejection.**
- **AD/HD children often are not aware of their poor social skills and blame others for their problems.**

Barkley, R.A. (2008). Advances in ADHD: Theory, Diagnosis and Management. J & K Seminars, L.L.C., 1861 Withersham Lane, Lancaster, PA 17603; 800-801- 5415; www.jkseminars.com.

- **Loneliness can negatively effect executive function**

Diamond, A. (September 27, 2012). Executive Functions. Annual Review of Psychology. DOI: [10.1146/annurev-psych-113011-143750](https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-113011-143750).

William W. Dodson, M.D.
(October 2016)

Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria



Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria (RDS)

- May be only seen in ADHD
- “RSD is an extreme emotional sensitivity and emotional pain triggered by the perception or imagination by the person with ADHD that they have:
 - been rejected
 - been teased
 - been criticized
 - disappointed important people in their lives
 - withdrawn their own approval of themselves when they
 - failed to attain their own standards or goals” (p. 10)

Dodson, W.W. (October 2016). Emotional Regulation and Rejection Sensitivity. Attention. 8-11. From website: https://d393uh8gb46l22.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/ATTN_10_16_EmotionalRegulation.pdf

Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria (RDS)

- Mental Health professionals may see this as Depression, Bipolar Disorder, and/or a Personality Disorder.
- The person lashes out like they have been wounded.
- 50% of those mandated by courts for anger control training are ADHD
- “RSD is a triggered, wordless emotional pain that occurs after a real or perceived loss of approval, love, or respect.” (p. 10).
- Many of these people become people pleasers at the expense of their own needs.

Dodson, W.W. (October 2016). Emotional Regulation and Rejection Sensitivity. Attention. 8-11. From website:

https://d393uh8gb46l22.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/ATTN_10_16_EmotionalRegulation.pdf

Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria (RDS)

- **Dodson (2016) believed RSD is neurological and genetic, hence typical talk therapies will not treat it.**
- **He believe it may be treated by one guanfacine, or clonidine which are alpha 2 agonists approved by the FDA for treatment of ADHD, but not RSD.**

Dodson, W.W. (October 2016). Emotional Regulation and Rejection Sensitivity. Attention. 8-11. From website:

https://d393uh8gb46l22.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/ATTN_10_16_EmotionalRegulation.pdf

Symptoms of RSD

- “Be strong people-pleasers
- Feel more embarrassed or self-conscious
- Have low self-esteem and self-doubt
- Display sudden outbursts of physical emotions like anger, tears, and sadness
- Engage in negative self-talk
- Have difficulty managing their reactions
- Find it draining to manage relationships
- Suddenly become quiet, moody, or show signs of depression or anxious feelings”

Watson, S. (May 2, 2023). What Is Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria? WebMD. From website:
<https://www.webmd.com/add-adhd/rejection-sensitive-dysphoria>.

Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria (RDS)

- RSD is not a diagnosis and there is no research that indicates it exists.
- That is not to say they MAY not be research conducted that establishes it exists.
- “Classic” Cognitive Behavior Therapy does not tend to work for children and adolescents with ADHD, because they are delayed in the internalization of speech.

Watson, S. (May 2, 2023). What Is Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria? WebMD. From website: <https://www.webmd.com/add-adhd/rejection-sensitive-dysphoria>.

Barkley, R.A. (2006). Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, A Handbook for Diagnosis and Treatment, Third Edition. New York, NY: Guilford.

Ramsay, R. (2010). Nonmedication Treatments for Adult ADHD. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association Press.

Parental Friendship Coaching

Amori Yee Mikami, Ph.D. and her colleagues at the University of British Columbia (UBC) have recently developed a new social skills program where the professional teaches the parents to teach their child social skills at the point of performance in activities with their peers. Their child gets immediate feedback, pre-session coaching, and debriefing as well as their peers see they “trying to become better socially”, and give them a break. The technique is called, “Parental Friendship Coaching”.

Lerner, M.D. et al. (September 2011). The Alliance in a Friendship Coaching Intervention for Parents of Children With ADHD. Behavior Therapy. DOI: 10.1016/j.beth.2010.11.006.

<https://peerlab.psych.ubc.ca/>

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