

THE ADHD RSD RESET TOOLKIT

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INTERRUPT THE SPIRAL BEFORE IT BECOMES YOUR WHOLE DAY

Because knowing it's RSD doesn't always stop it.

A delayed reply. A change in tone. A conversation you can't stop replaying. And suddenly your brain is trying to convince you that you've done something wrong.

This toolkit isn't something you read once & put away.

It's something you reach for when the spiral starts.

The reset itself takes around 5 minutes.

The rest will help you understand your patterns, recognise RSD sooner & build trust in yourself when uncertainty shows up.

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What's Actually Happening?

This isn't "overreacting"

Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria (RSD) is often dismissed as being "too sensitive" or "taking things personally."

But that's not what's happening.

Often, your body reacts before you've had a chance to work out whether there's actually a problem.

A delayed reply. A short message. A change in tone. Someone seeming a little distant. Something feels off.

Your brain starts searching for an explanation. And because uncertainty feels uncomfortable, it often fills in the blanks with the worst-case scenario.

This creates a loop:

Trigger → Body Alarm → Story → Shame → Reaction

For example:

Delayed reply
→ "They're annoyed with me."
→ Anxiety.
→ Overthinking.
→ Sending another message.
→ Feeling embarrassed afterwards.

You're not reacting to the delayed reply.

You're reacting to what your brain thinks the delayed reply means.

The good news?

Once you can spot the loop, you can start interrupting it.

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The 5-minute RECLAIM reset

When you feel the spiral begin, start here.

You don't need to do every step perfectly. You don't need to convince yourself everything is okay.

The goal isn't to stop having feelings. The goal is to create enough space between the trigger & your reaction that you can choose what happens next.

☐ **Recognise** - What's happening right now?

Can you name the trigger? "This feels like rejection" or "I think I'm spiralling". Naming the pattern helps your brain shift from reacting to observing.

☐ **Catch** - What is your brain telling you?
Examples:

"They're annoyed with me", "I've said too much", "I've messed this up", "They don't actually like me."

Write down the story if it helps.

☐ **Acknowledge** - It makes sense that this feels difficult.

Your nervous system is responding to a perceived threat. You don't have to judge yourself for having the reaction. Try: "I'm having a hard moment", "This feels real right now", "I can be kind to myself while I figure this out."

☐ **Move** - What does future you need right now?

Not what RSD wants. Not what shame wants. What do you need? One small next step is enough. You don't need to solve everything today.

☐ **Experience** - Notice what's happening in your body.

Can you feel:

Tight chest, racing heart, knot in stomach, heat, restlessness or other?

You don't need to get rid of the feeling. Just notice it.

☐ **Look** - What do I actually know? What am I guessing?

Facts:

Assumptions:

Can you separate what happened from what your brain thinks it means?

☐ **Interrupt** — Choose one small action that breaks the automatic loop.

Put the phone down, wait 10 minutes before replying, get a drink, move your body, take a short walk or use one of the reset tools in this toolkit?

The goal isn't to feel better instantly. The goal is to create space.

Your Personal RSD Pattern

The goal isn't to eliminate every trigger.

The goal is to recognise your patterns sooner, so the spiral doesn't catch you by surprise.

R — Recognise the trigger

What situations tend to set off your RSD?

- ☐ Delayed replies
- ☐ Short or neutral messages (e.g. "Okay")
- ☐ Changes in tone
- ☐ Feedback or criticism
- ☐ Being interrupted or talked over
- ☐ Plans changing unexpectedly
- ☐ Someone seeming "off"
- ☐ Feeling left out or excluded
- ☐ Authority figures or work situations
- ☐ Conflict or disagreement
- ☐ Other: _____

My most common triggers:

These are the situations that tend to make your brain ask:

"Have I done something wrong?"

The more familiar you become with your triggers, the easier it becomes to recognise the spiral before it takes over.

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E — Experience the body

When RSD shows up, what happens in your body?

Tick the signs that usually appear before the spiral takes over.

- ☐ Tight chest
- ☐ Stomach drop
- ☐ Heat or flushing
- ☐ Tension in shoulders or jaw
- ☐ Restlessness or agitation
- ☐ Freeze or shutdown
- ☐ Urge to fix it immediately
- ☐ Urge to withdraw or disappear
- ☐ Checking messages repeatedly
- ☐ Unable to focus on anything else
- ☐ Other: _____

My early warning signs:

Your body often notices the trigger before your mind works out what's happening.

The earlier you spot these signs, the earlier you can use RECLAIM.

C — Catch the story

When RSD shows up, what story does your brain usually tell?

- ☐ "They're annoyed with me"
- ☐ "I've done something wrong"
- ☐ "I'm too much"
- ☐ "They don't like me anymore"
- ☐ "I've ruined it"
- ☐ "I need to fix this now"
- ☐ "I should just stay quiet"
- ☐ "Everyone's judging me"
- ☐ "I shouldn't have said anything"
- ☐ Other: _____

My most common RSD story:

These thoughts can feel convincing in the moment.

But they're often your brain's attempt to explain the discomfort you're already feeling.

A thought isn't automatically a fact.

The story is one possibility, not the only possibility.

L — Look for facts vs. assumptions

RSD often fills in the blanks. This step helps you separate what you know from what your brain is predicting.

What are the facts?

What has actually happened? For example:

- They haven't replied yet.
- The message was short.
- My manager asked to speak to me.

Fact:

What assumptions am I making?

What meaning am I adding? For example:

- They're annoyed with me.
- I've done something wrong.
- They don't like me anymore.

Assumption:

Reflection: What's another possible explanation?

This isn't about convincing yourself everything is fine. It's about noticing when your brain has started treating assumptions as facts. That's often where the spiral begins to loosen.

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A — Acknowledge the need

RSD often makes us focus on the trigger. But underneath the spiral is usually an unmet need. What were you actually needing in that moment?

- ☐ Reassurance
- ☐ Clarity
- ☐ Time to process
- ☐ Emotional safety
- ☐ Space
- ☐ Connection
- ☐ Validation
- ☐ Rest
- ☐ Understanding
- ☐ Predictability
- ☐ Other: _____

What I actually needed in my last spiral was:

Sometimes the need isn't for the situation to change. Sometimes the need is simply to recognise what would help you feel safer, more supported, or more grounded. The spiral isn't the need. The spiral is often a signal that something needs attention.

I — Interrupt the spiral

Once you've noticed the trigger, the body response, the story, and the need, the next step is to interrupt the automatic pattern.

The goal isn't to make the feeling disappear.

The goal is to create enough space to choose your next step.

What helps you pause, regulate, or slow the spiral?

- ☐ Step away from the conversation
- ☐ Delay responding
- ☐ Use a grounding tool
- ☐ Take a short walk
- ☐ Put your phone down
- ☐ Talk to someone safe
- ☐ Use a script instead of reacting
- ☐ Take a body break (stretch, move, shake)
- ☐ Set a timer before responding
- ☐ Other: _____

My go-to interrupt:

The best interrupt isn't necessarily the one that makes you feel better immediately.

It's the one that stops the spiral from making the decision for you.

M — Move forward intentionally

Now that you've recognised the pattern, what would help you move forward with choice rather than urgency?

- ☐ Take more time before responding
- ☐ Ask for clarification
- ☐ Choose not to engage right now
- ☐ Focus on something else for a while
- ☐ Return to the situation later
- ☐ Send a neutral check-in message
- ☐ Remind myself that uncertainty isn't proof
- ☐ Other: _____

My intentional response:

RSD isn't just a reaction. It's often a signal. A signal that something feels uncertain, vulnerable, or important.

You don't need to change this pattern all at once.

You don't need to get it right every time.

You just need to recognise the spiral a little earlier than you did before.

That's how change happens.

One pause.

One choice.

One RECLAIM step at a time.

Real-life scenarios

RECLAIM in real life

What does a spiral actually look like?

In this section, you'll see how RECLAIM can be used in common RSD situations.

The goal isn't to use every step perfectly.

The goal is to slow the spiral down enough to create a little more space between the trigger and your reaction.

Remember:

$R \rightarrow E \rightarrow C \rightarrow L \rightarrow A \rightarrow I \rightarrow M$

Even one step can make a difference.

Scenario 1: "They replied 'Okay.'"

R — Recognise the trigger

They replied: "Okay."

Immediately, something feels off.

E — Experience the body

My chest tightens. My stomach drops. I feel an urge to fix something.

C — Catch the story

"They're annoyed with me."

"I've said something wrong."

"They're pulling away."

L — Look for facts vs. assumptions

Fact: They replied "Okay."

Assumption: They're upset with me.

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A — Acknowledge the need

I need reassurance or clarity.

I need emotional safety before I respond.

I — Interrupt the spiral

Pause before replying.

Put my phone down.

Take a few breaths.

Use a grounding tool.

M — Move forward intentionally

Instead of reacting immediately, I could:

"Hey, just checking I read that right — all good?"

Or choose to wait until I feel calmer before responding.

Scenario 2: Delayed reply

R — Recognise the trigger

I've sent a message.

Hours have passed.

There's no reply.

E — Experience the body

Restlessness.

Heat in my chest.

An urge to check my phone again.

C — Catch the story

"They're ignoring me."

"They don't want to talk to me."

"I've upset them."

L — Look for facts vs. assumptions

Fact: They haven't replied yet.

Assumption: I'm being rejected.

A — Acknowledge the need

I need certainty.

I need reassurance.

I — Interrupt the spiral

Stop checking messages.

Put my phone down.

Redirect my attention elsewhere.

M — Move forward intentionally

"I'll come back to this later when I'm feeling steadier."

Or simply choose not to escalate the situation.

Scenario 3: Their tone feels different

R — Recognise the trigger

Their message feels shorter than usual.

E — Experience the body

Tension in my jaw.

Overthinking starts immediately.

C — Catch the story

"They're annoyed with me."

"I've done something wrong."

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L — Look for facts vs. assumptions

Fact: The message is shorter.

Assumption: The change means something negative.

A — Acknowledge the need

I need clarity, not guessing.

I — Interrupt the spiral

Pause.

Don't respond immediately.

Regulate first.

M — Move forward intentionally

I could ask a clarifying question:

"Hey, just checking, is everything okay?"

Or I could wait until I'm feeling more grounded before responding.

Remember

You don't have to use all seven steps perfectly.

You don't have to stop every spiral.

You don't even have to complete the whole RECLAIM process.

If you notice the trigger sooner, catch the story earlier, or create a little more space before reacting, that's progress.

RECLAIM isn't about controlling yourself.

It's about creating enough space to choose your response instead of letting the spiral choose it for you.

Your turn...

Build your own RECLAIM map

Think about a recent RSD spiral. Maybe it was:

- A delayed reply
- A short message
- Feedback or criticism
- Someone seeming "off"
- A work situation
- Something else

Use the RECLAIM process to map what happened.

R — Recognise the trigger

What happened?

E — Experience the body

What did you notice in your body?

- ☐ Tight chest
- ☐ Stomach drop
- ☐ Heat or flushing
- ☐ Tension
- ☐ Restlessness
- ☐ Shutdown
- ☐ Other:

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C — Catch the story

What story did your brain start telling?

L — Look for facts vs. assumptions

Fact:

Assumption:

A — Acknowledge the need

What did you actually need in that moment?

- ☐ Reassurance
- ☐ Clarity
- ☐ Space
- ☐ Connection
- ☐ Validation
- ☐ Emotional Safety
- ☐ Rest
- ☐ Other:

I — Interrupt the spiral

What helped (or could help) you pause?

M — Move forward intentionally

What's one response that supports Future You?

Reflection

What did I learn about my pattern?

What would I like to remember next time?

Emergency scripts

When your brain is spiralling:

RECLAIM Interrupts (I)

When you're in an RSD spiral, your brain is trying to complete a story as quickly as possible.

The goal isn't to figure everything out.

The goal is to create enough space to choose your next step.

Use these as interrupts, not truths you have to believe immediately.

When your brain is catastrophising

- "I don't have enough information to know that."

- "This is one possibility, not the only possibility."

- "My brain is filling in the gaps."

- "I'm noticing a story, not a fact."

- "I can be curious instead of certain."

When you feel the urge to react immediately

- "I can pause before I respond."

- "Nothing needs solving this second."

- "I don't have to make a decision while activated."

- "I can come back to this later."

- "Waiting is also an option."

When the shame spiral starts

- "This feeling is intense, but it won't last forever."

- "I've survived this feeling before."

- "A trigger isn't proof I've done something wrong."

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- "This is a hard moment, not a permanent truth."

- "I can be kind to myself while I figure this out."

When you want to over-explain, apologise, or fix

- "I don't need to explain everything right now."

- "I can respond when I'm calmer."

- "I don't need to earn my place in this conversation."

- "I don't need to solve someone else's feelings."

- "More words won't necessarily make me feel safer."

When everything feels overwhelming

- "My job right now is to regulate, not respond."

- "I can slow this down."

- "One thing at a time."

- "I don't need to solve the whole situation."

- "I can come back to this when my body feels safer."

Choose your go-to script

The best script is the one you'll actually use.

Circle, highlight, or write down the phrases that help you create a little more space between the trigger and your reaction.

My go-to interrupts:

What to say instead of reacting

RECLAIM responses (M)

Once you've slowed the spiral & regulated your body, you can choose how to respond instead of reacting from fear, urgency, or shame.

These responses aren't about saying the "perfect" thing. They're about creating space, building self-trust & responding intentionally.

Buy yourself time. When you need space before responding:

- ☐ "Can we come back to this?"
- ☐ "I've seen this, I'll come back to you properly later."
- ☐ "I need a bit of time to think before I respond."
- ☐ "I'll reply when I've got more headspace."
- ☐ "I want to give this a proper response rather than a rushed one."

Check the story. When you're not sure whether you're interpreting something accurately:

- ☐ "I might be misreading this, can you clarify?"
- ☐ "Can I double-check what you meant here?"
- ☐ "I might be misreading this, can you expand a bit?"
- ☐ "Before I make assumptions, can I check I've understood correctly?"

Set a boundary. When you need space, capacity, or time:

- ☐ "I want to respond well, so I'm taking a bit of space"
- ☐ "I can't take this on right now, but I'll come back to it later."
- ☐ "I'm not in the right headspace to respond fully at the moment."

☐ Your own examples?

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- ☐ "I need a bit of space before I engage with this properly."
- ☐ "I'm going to pause here and come back when I can give this my attention."

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When repair is needed.

When you've reacted from a spiral and want to reconnect:

- ☐ "Thanks for your patience, I was a bit overwhelmed earlier."
- ☐ "I think I reacted quickly, I'm coming back to this now more calmly."
- ☐ "I may have misunderstood before, thank you for clarifying."
- ☐ "I've had some time to think and I'd like to revisit this."

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When all is actually okay.

Sometimes the spiral settles and no further explanation is needed:

- ☐ "All good 👍"
- ☐ "Thanks, got it."
- ☐ "Appreciate it."
- ☐ "Sounds good."
- ☐ "No worries."

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Use these text templates instead of reacting impulsively:

"Hey, I might be misreading this, can you clarify?"

"I'll reply properly later when I've got more headspace."

"Can we come back to this? I want to respond well."

RECLAIM Responses are not about saying the "perfect" thing. They're about responding from **regulation instead of activation**.

You're not trying to prevent rejection. You're learning to stop abandoning yourself in the process.

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Body Reset Tools

You can't think your way out of an RSD spiral.

When your nervous system is activated, your brain will often try to solve the feeling by thinking harder.

Analysing.

Replaying.

Checking for clues.

Looking for certainty.

Unfortunately, that usually pulls you deeper into the spiral.

Before you challenge the story, try supporting the body.

These tools help send signals of safety to your nervous system, so your brain doesn't have to work quite so hard.

You don't need to do all of them.

Pick one.

Ground the body. Bring intensity down:

- ☐ Hold something cold (ice, a cold drink, cold water on your wrists)
- ☐ Press your feet firmly into the floor
- ☐ Sit with your back supported and notice the points of contact
- ☐ Wrap yourself in something heavy, soft, or comforting
- ☐ Lean against a wall or solid surface

Shift sensory input.

Change the channel:

- ☐ Put on calming, repetitive, or familiar music
- ☐ Adjust the lighting (softer,

Discharge the activation.

Move the energy:

- ☐ Shake out your hands, arms, or shoulders
- ☐ Walk, pace, or move around the room
- ☐ Stretch in whatever way feels natural
- ☐ Push against a wall and slowly release
- ☐ Dance, bounce, sway, or rock

Slow the nervous system.

Gentle downshift:

- ☐ Focus on a longer exhale than inhale
- ☐ Hum, sigh, or make sound

- darker, or brighter depending on what helps)
- ☐ Use scent (hand cream, perfume, essential oil, a favourite smell)
 - ☐ Hold or touch something textured
 - ☐ Change your environment, even briefly

- ☐ Rest a hand on your chest or stomach
- ☐ Intentionally soften your jaw
- ☐ Drop your shoulders away from your ears
- ☐ Notice one thing you can see, hear, feel, smell, and taste

My go-to reset tools

The best regulation tool is the one you'll actually use.

What helps your body feel safer?

Remember

You don't need to convince yourself everything is okay.

You don't need to solve the situation right now.

Support the body first.

Then come back to the story.

When the body settles, the story often softens too.

RECLAIM Quick Reset Card

Your in-the-moment reset tool.

Use this when you feel the spiral starting.

Don't analyse it.

Don't perfect it.

Just move through the steps.

R — Recognise

What just happened?

What was the trigger?

E — Experience

What is my body doing right now?

☐ Tight chest

☐ Stomach drop

☐ Heat

☐ Tension

☐ Shutdown

☐ Urgency

☐ Other: _____

C — Catch

What story is my brain telling?

What am I assuming?

L — Look

What are the facts?

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What am I guessing?

A — Acknowledge

What do I actually need right now?

Reassurance?

Clarity?

Space?

Connection?

Rest?

I — Interrupt

What can I do to slow this down?

Pause.

Step away.

Ground.

Move.

Breathe.

Wait.

M — Move

What is one intentional response I can choose?

Not the urgent response.

The intentional one.

Remember: You don't need to complete RECLAIM perfectly. You don't need to stop the feeling. You only need to create enough space between the trigger and the reaction to choose your next step. Even one RECLAIM step can change the direction of the spiral.

When everything else disappears:

Recognise → Experience → Catch → Look → Acknowledge → Interrupt → Move forward

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RECLAIM Aftercare

Completing the cycle after a spiral

Just because the trigger has passed doesn't mean your nervous system has caught up. After an RSD spiral, many people find themselves:

- Replaying what they said
- Analysing every detail
- Wondering if they've ruined something
- Feeling embarrassed about how they reacted
- Wanting to fix everything immediately

This is often where shame takes over. RECLAIM Aftercare isn't about getting it right. It's about helping your nervous system return to safety and rebuilding trust in yourself.

Reinforce safety

Remind yourself:

- The moment has passed
- I am safe right now
- I don't need to stay in high alert

Things that may help:

- ☐ Sit or lie somewhere comfortable
- ☐ Reduce sensory input
- ☐ Use a Body Reset Tool
- ☐ Rest without trying to solve the situation
- ☐ Focus on comfort before analysis

Reduce shame

Shame will often try to turn a difficult moment into a story about who you are. Try interrupting that story:

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- "My nervous system activated. That makes sense."
- "This was a response, not a failure."
- "I can feel this without turning it into self-criticism."
- "Having a trigger doesn't mean I've done something wrong."
- "I don't need to punish myself for struggling."

Complete the cycle

You don't need to rush into repair. Before responding, ask yourself:

- Does this actually need fixing?
- Do I need to respond now or later?
- What would a more regulated version of me choose?

If repair is needed, keep it simple:

- ✓ No over-explaining
- ✓ No over-apologising
- ✓ No urgency
- ✓ No trying to erase the discomfort

Gentle reminders

- You didn't ruin everything.
- You don't need to solve this immediately.
- Rest is part of regulation.
- Progress isn't never spiralling.
- Progress is returning to yourself more quickly.
- You deserve compassion after a hard moment.

Remember: RECLAIM doesn't end when the spiral stops. It ends when you return to yourself without shame. And sometimes, that's the most important part.

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Want support with this?

If this toolkit resonated, remember:

You don't have to figure this out on your own.

The RECLAIM approach isn't about stopping every trigger or never spiralling again.

It's about learning to recognise the pattern sooner, create more space, and respond with greater self-trust.

This toolkit is the beginning.

The next step is learning how to use RECLAIM in real life, with real triggers, real relationships, and real situations.

Inside The ADHD Coaching Circle, you'll be able to go deeper with:

- ✓ Step-by-step guidance on applying RECLAIM in everyday life
- ✓ Tools to interrupt spirals earlier & more consistently
- ✓ Support to rebuild trust in your responses
- ✓ Resources designed for ADHD brains, not against them
- ✓ A compassionate, non-shaming approach to RSD

Choose your next step

Join the Waitlist for the RSD Reset Course:

Learn how to apply RECLAIM in real situations with guided support and practical exercises.

[\[JOIN THE WAITLIST\]](#)

Join the Waitlist for the RSD Reset Group Coaching Programme:

Be the first to hear when group coaching opens and work through RSD patterns alongside people who understand what it's like.

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Stay connected

Join our email list to receive:

- New RECLAIM tools
- ADHD and RSD resources
- Upcoming workshops and offers
- Practical strategies you can use straight away

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One last reminder

You don't need to wait until the spiral becomes your whole day.

You don't need to wait until you're completely overwhelmed.

And you don't need to do this perfectly.

Every time you recognise the pattern a little sooner, pause a little earlier, or respond with a little more self-trust, you're already practising RECLAIM.

See you inside,

Beth

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