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**Emotional Rollercoaster of ADHD**

Some adolescents and adults with ADHD list their **EMOTIONAL SWINGS** as the **most impairing** aspect of their ADHD.

**Mood swings** associated with ADHD are almost always triggered by events and perceptions and resolve very quickly. These moods are normal in every way except for their **INTENSITY.**

Some of the **common expressions** of the emotional rollercoaster:

* Flash Temper
* Low frustration tolerance
* Being easily overwhelmed by emotions
* Feeling the pain of others, but also being unable to understand the emotions of others
* Extreme sensitivity to rejection and criticism- see Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria
* Feelings of hopelessness

The ADHD brain has a **hard time regulating emotion** because it struggles to distinguish between dangerous threats and minor problems.

This leads to:

* Panic over relatively small challenges
* Hyperarousal- being ready to fight or flee immediately
* Hypervigilance- constantly scanning the environment for any threat
* Lack of feeling at peace- “I’m always tense. I can never relax.”
* Mind feeling as if it is going 100mph until exhaustion.

**Rejection sensitive dysphoria** is an intense vulnerability to the perception- not necessarily the reality- of being rejected, teased or criticized by important people in your life. RSD causes extreme emotional pain that may also be triggered by a sense of failure, or falling short- failing to meet either your own high standards or others’ expectations. Some people avoid rejections by becoming people pleasers. Others just opt out altogether, and choose not to try.

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Sheila Woods MD Greenville ADHD Specialists

**As a parent or friend the best help you can give:** “I know you, you’re a good person. If anybody could have overcome these problems by hard work and just sheer ability, it would have been you. So what that tells me is that there’s something that’s getting in your way and I want you to know I will be here with you all the way until we figure out what it is and we master the problem.”

A person with ADHD hears **20,000 additional critical or corrective messages** before his/her

**TWELFTH** birthday and therefore:

* + Most grow up with the feeling that they are uncool, unwanted, defective, and incompetent
  + People with ADHD are **“the last picked and first picked on”**
  + The resulting shame and guilt often prevent the formation of a positive self-image
  + If this emotional response is internalized, it looks like major **depression**
  + If the response is externalized, it manifests as a **rage** at the person or situation that wounded them
  + 50% of people who are court-mandated for anger management treatment have previously unrecognized ADHD
  + On average, an adult will see 2.3 clinicians and go through 6.6 antidepressant trials before being diagnosed with ADHD.

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