

# Hypersensitivity in Adults

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Most Adult Children are hypersensitive to anything that is perceived as a rejection or abandonment. For example, constructive criticism is always perceived as negative criticism which, in turn, feels like rejection. Any interaction with another person, whether it is with your boss, a customer, your father or your friend has the opportunity to lead to hurt or irritation. Some people get hurt more easily than others. They can be particularly sensitive and take things to heart.

Here are 10 tips to help you stop taking things personally so you can leave your interactions in a happier way.

1. Know why you are hurting and respond accordingly. Are you hurting because of something that has happened in your history? Are you adding your history to the present moment and therefore adding fuel to something small and making it appear bigger? For example, if your mother has looked at you in a certain way since childhood and she's looked at you in the same way today - do you react because of the way she looked today or the way she looked at you as a child? If it's the latter, try reacting as if this was the first time you'd ever seen the look!
2. Laughter can be a wonderful cure and reliever. If you can keep light about a potential put-down then the put-down has no power. This doesn't mean that you leave yourself open to abuse. What it does mean is that you can more easily brush off potentially hurtful comments.

3. Tell someone else what has happened and tell it in a way that makes it funny. Do a caricature—exaggerate what was said—think of a funny line back ... build it up until it's funny. This will help the hurt to dissipate.
4. Delay your response. Many people retaliate very quickly before they've even had time to think through what has been said. It's a bit like someone throwing something at you. Would you just stand there and let it hurt you or would you duck? Delaying is like ducking. Pause before you respond. Then you give yourself time to think of a good response and to check that you're not adding hurt to what was said.
5. Think of the other person as being "unskilled" rather than being "intimidating," "bossy" or "aggressive." I'll often say to myself, "Well that was an unskilled way of saying things, I wonder what she meant?" This helps me keep calm and non-reactive, yet still available to help the person.
6. Separate out what is specific to you. Sometimes people respond to a general complaint as if it is personally directed at them. Don't do this. Work out what is specifically about you and what is a general complaint that you happen to get because you were in the same place as the other person? When it's not specific to you, remind yourself of this, e.g. you might say to yourself, "This is about the company," or "He has obviously got a bad headache."
7. Monitor for sites of tension build up and let go before they develop. Each of us will have physiological changes which occur early on in the process of becoming hurt. If you can catch your stomach tightening early on, you have more chance of letting go and not hooking into the other person's comments. Someone in one of our workshops recently discovered she started clicking her nails as a sign that she was hooking in. What are your signs?

8. Keep breathing in and out. No, I'm not joking! Some people hear something unpleasant and catch their breath and then don't let go of it. You're more likely to take something personally if you aren't breathing!
9. Breathe deeply so your breathing remains calm, regular and deep. Even in a meeting it's possible to put your hand on your midriff to give yourself a physical reminder to keep your breathing deep and regular. If your breathing speeds up and becomes shallow it could be a sign that you are getting hooked in.
10. Don't read in something that wasn't there. It's easy to try and "read between the lines" and imagine what someone meant or what they were implying and then to react as though your interpretation is true. It may not be. Someone, for example, may have crossed his arms to stop his shoulders aching not because he didn't like what you said! Someone may be whispering to someone else as you walk in the room and you may assume they are talking about you. In fact they may be talking about their latest exploits with their new boyfriends. By not getting hurt and looking after yourself, you increase your chances of staying healthy and having even more caring to give to others.