

# Eight Ways to Stop Taking Things So Personally

**I**T'S HARD NOT TO TAKE THINGS PERSONALLY. When someone shouts at you on the road, you feel the sting of their anger. When trolling social media, you see a picture of a friend out with your other friends—and wonder why you were not invited. When you write a friend or relative to get together, it's hard not to interpret their lack of response as a rebuff.

Taking things personally weighs on you and drains your energy. Due to rejection sensitivity, adults with ADHD may feel bad about something that is not actually about them. Our brains are hard wired to focus on the negative (to protect us from danger), so we therefore tend to focus on the negative stories we tell ourselves.

Here are eight ways to stop taking things personally.

## 1. What else could it be?

Before you jump to conclusions about an actual or perceived slight, look, or oversight, consider instead, “*What else could it be?*” Evaluate the evidence to support this perception; could it be something else? Learn to walk

in their shoes. Perhaps they forgot, did not see you, missed your message, or had a personal reason they were unable to share. Double check your reasoning by asking yourself questions such as: “*What story am I telling myself?*” “*What evidence is there that this story is true?*” “*What else could it be?*”

## 2. Shift your self-talk.

Negative self-talk can bombard you, encasing you in your own hurtful prison. It hurts performance and increases the tendency to enter fight, flight, or freeze mode. No matter what the root cause, you deserve to feel there is a path forward.

People with ADHD often are sensitive, empathic, and thoughtful. You may expect the same in others. These traits may cause you to take on unnecessary burdens. When they disappoint, you feel it personally. Reframe your negative talk and practice self-compassion. Is your negative self-talk creating this negative picture? Instead, tell yourself that it is NOT about you. Unless and until someone tells you that it is your fault, don't take it on. More than likely, the other person was busy and didn't even consider the impact of their actions.

## 3. Could it be from a past hurt?

Check in with yourself. Could a past experience be coloring your lens? Separate facts from fiction. Have things been hard on you lately? When your thalamus is on high alert, it recognizes elements from the past and sounds an alarm in your brain. Your thalamus wants to alert and protect you from a past situation. An emotional reaction does not prove that something is true. Could you be interpreting this situation based on anxiety and assuming the worst?

## 4. Consider the source.

Do you value this person's opinion? Is the relationship new or old? Valued and reciprocal? Does the person tend to be critical, often late, ignore texts, make zinger comments, or engage in other behavior that irritate you? Ask yourself, “*Does this person's judgement count or hold up?*”



## 5. Enact strategies to end rumination.

Honor and name your feelings. Identify the triggers, the impact, and acknowledge the wound it has created in your body and mind. Have you started to spiral and enter fight, flight, or freeze mode? Is this bringing up past feelings? To stop dwelling and ruminating, shift your physical circumstances with a “pattern interrupt.” Modify your thoughts with prearranged strategies intended to halt the negative ruminative cycle. This may include changing your environment, listening to music, engaging in physical activity, practicing mindfulness, or seeking out a pleasurable activity.

## 6. Set boundaries.

Ramp up your self-talk, create self-protection strategies, and limit your contact with critical people who are prone to treat you badly. Remind yourself that this is their negative, critical self-talk. As one of my clients says, “*This is a THEM problem not a ME problem.*” Seek and nurture a circle of supportive people who do not engage in emotionally toxic behavior.

## 7. Value your own opinion.

Sometimes people share constructive feedback. In that case, you can say, “*I am working on this.*” Before you allow yourself to fall into the rumination cycle, take an honest look at the situation or advice. If feedback is given in the right way, it can promote positive self-evaluation. If not given in the right way, remind yourself of your strengths and your values, and reframe with more positive self-talk. Most importantly, have pride in how far you have come!

## 8. Don't give your power away.

By allowing others to upset you, you are in effect allowing them to dictate how you feel. Don't give them power over you. Instead, quickly change your thought, take a few deep breathes and tell yourself this is a THEM problem.

**YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE.** Rely on yourself to know what is true about you. Don't put your trust in someone else to define who you as a person. If you take things personally, you tie yourself to someone else's judgement. You are not a victim nor a prisoner, so don't go down the rabbit hole of rumination and self-doubt. 🗣️



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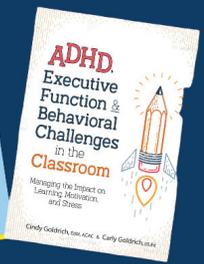
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