

BUILD SELF-ESTEEM
PUMPING IRON MAKES YOU LESS REJECTION-SENSITIVE

Rejection. Rejected. Reject. Rebound.

LOUISE BOURGEOIS

Pumping iron makes you feel more confident and less prone to rejection sensitivity, or intimidation, than anything I know. The neurochemical culprit behind rejection sensitivity is low serotonin. The vicious cycle of low serotonin coupled with rejection sensitivity makes you less confident, creating a vicious downward cycle because you avoid the gym. The daily athletic process, especially lifting weights, can reverse this trend chemically and psychologically. The less serotonin, the more rejection-sensitive you become.

Pumping iron sends more serotonin to your prefrontal cortex via plumped-up microtubules. The mini-pipelines that deliver serotonin get more efficient at their job when you break a sweat regularly. More serotonin thickens the density of neurons that guide the optimistic discussion and facilitates optimistic cross talk inside your head around the clock, giving you tenacity to take the bull by the horns. Regular exercise will strengthen your frontal lobes and make you less rejection-sensitive and intimidated in all life situations.

*My passions were all gathered together like fingers that made a fist.
Drive is considered aggression today; I knew it then as purpose.*

BETTE DAVIS

Stepping into a gym—or onto a weight floor—can be overwhelming and nerve-racking if you've never done it before. Exercising in public is one of the most intimidating things we do as adults, because we are exposed and vulnerable. Don't be intimidated. If the fear of rejection or being judged is preventing you from joining a gym or the sporting life, it is time to get over it. While reading this section, consider areas in your life in which you feel insecure and personalize a strategy to cope with these situations. The worst thing you can do when feeling rejection sensitivity is to try to blend in and go under the radar. Don't do it.

I'm the fucking boss around here.

MADONNA (BLONDE AMBITION TOUR, 1990)

People who are rejection-sensitive try to make themselves invisible. Then even if they do something well, nobody notices. Not that you are necessarily doing things to impress other people, but you want people to be proud of you and you want to be a role model. Strive to be a maverick and a trailblazer, never a lemming. This is something I have consciously pounded into my head and reinforced through my daily behavior. The insecurity never goes away completely but you can handle it. The alternative would be living a life based in fear. Lead a life that makes you proud and that people would admire.

A life lived in fear is a life half lived.

BAZ LUHRMANN

I have struggled with paralyzing fear at many times throughout my life and I have bouts of insecurity every day. It has been helpful for me to have role models who substitute bravery and mental toughness for rejection sensitivity. My father, astronaut Chuck Yeager, and Madonna have been my mental-toughness, rejection-sensitivity role models for decades. When I feel emotionally hypersensitive, I think of the nerves of steel my dad had as a neurosurgeon, “the right stuff” of Chuck Yeager, or some of Madonna’s “blonde ambition.”

Nobody roots for Goliath.

WILT CHAMBERLAIN

For anyone who feels ostracized or intimidated for whatever reason, remember, it’s OK to feel rejection sensitivity and experience the pain of it. There is power in feeling like an underdog. It makes you fight harder. Feeling like an underdog teaches you how to be tough and stay strong. Identify the feelings of rejection sensitivity as being just that; give it a name so you can conquer it. Think like a Spartan youth; train hard to become brave. Have courage and respect yourself. Don’t let the judgment of other people or the fear of failure stop you.

TWELVE REASONS TO LIFT WEIGHTS

A LEAN, MEAN, FIGHTING MACHINE

*When you’re playing against a stacked deck, compete even harder.
Show the world how much you’ll fight for the winner’s circle. If you*