The Schalling-Sifneos Personality Scale Revised

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Although it is a well-known fact that the measurement of alexithymic characteristics is inadequate, because no perfect instrument has been devised as yet for that task, nevertheless the 2 most commonly used questionnaires are the Beth Israel Questionnaire (BIQ) and the Schalling-Sifneos Personality Scale (SSPS).

The BIQ is based on an interview with a patient and is scored by the evaluator. It is a forced-choice questionnaire and ideally it should be standardized so that all evaluators who use it ask similar questions. This is difficult indeed, because interviewing styles vary greatly. The key questions in the BIQ are No. 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 16. Questions 2 and 6 should be answered No and the others Yes. A score of 5-8 denotes alexithymic characteristics while a score of 0-5 falls within the normal range.

The BIQ appears in appendix 1. The SSPS was devised in an effort to simplify the measurement of alexithymia. It is a questionnaire which gives the patient 4 different choices to answer 20 questions. One of the difficulties of the SSPS has to do precisely with the 4 choices available: (A) does not apply at all; (B) does not apply very much; (C) applies very much, and (D) applies completely. Patients usually tend to avoid the extremes A and D.

The SSPS appears in appendix 2. Although both of these instruments are far from being ideal to measure alexithymia, nevertheless they seem to have some value in distinguishing individuals with alexithymic characteristics from normal people.

In an effort to improve the measurement of alexithymia, an attempt will be made to correlate the SSPS with the BIQ. This revised SSPS (SSPS-R) has also forced-choice questions similar to the BIQ. In addition there are 2 questions for each one of the key 8 BIQ questions (1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 16).

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The Revised SSPS (SSPS-R)

Name:

Address:

Phone No.:Date:

Please check only one: Yes No

1 It is easy to describe symptoms or Jj icomplaints rather than feelings

2 It is important to find out how one [J ---F feels about people

(questions 1 + 2 are associated with question 1 of the BIQ)

3 It is hard to use words to describe ☐ ☐ feelings

4 Feelings are what make life worthwhile ☐-☐ [☐ ☐ (questions 3 + 4 are associated with question 2 of the BIQ)

I lack imagination ☐-☐ ☐-☐

I spend much time daydreaming ☐ ☐ [☐ ☐ (questions 5 + 6 are associated with question 6 of the BIQ)

When I am mad I don't think, I take ☐ ☐ action

I like movies with action rather than ☐-☐ ☐ psychological dramas

(questions 7 + 8 are associated with question 7 of the BIQ)

9 When in conflict I prefer to act quickly ☐ ☐ rather than to think about it

10 When in trouble I don't like to act ☐ ☐ [☐ ☐ (questions 9+10 are associated with question 8 of the BIQ)

Yes No

11 I like to be precise and to describe ☐ ☐ everything in detail

12 I don't care to describe details but ☐ ☐ rather I prefer to examine how I feel
(questions 11 + 12 are associated with question 12 of the BIQ)

I have difficulty to communicate with ☐ ☐ people

I prefer to be alone rather than interact ☐ ☐ with people

(question 13+14 are associated with question 13 of the BIQ)

15 I always pay attention to my ☐ ☐ surroundings rather than concentrate on how I feel

When I hear suspicious noises at night ☐ --- I don't ever concentrate on how I feel (questions 15+16 are associated with question 16 of the BIQ)

I find life boring most of the time ☐ ☐

I cannot visualize circumstances which ☐ ☐ upset me

I dream rarely -☐ ☐

20 I like people better than things ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

For alexithymia individuals: Questions 2, 4, 6, 10, 12, 20 are false ones and should be answered No. All other questions should be answered Yes. Thus a score of 10-20 should point to alexithymic characteristics while a score of 0-10 should fall within the normal range.

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Medical Diagnosis if any

Please check – Have you ever had:

Yes No

Yes No

Peptic ulcer (stomach ulcer) ☐ ☐

Hypertension (high blood pressure) ☐ ☐-☐

Asthma ☐ ☐

Thyrotoxicosis (hyperactive thyroid) ☐ ☐

Neurodermatitis (nervous skin ☐ ☐ ☐ condition)

Rheumatoid arthritis (rheumatic ☐-☐ ☐-☐ arthritis)

Ulcerative colitis (bleeding colon ulcers) ☐ ☐

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Appendix 1 (cont.)

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Appendix 2. Questionnaire No. 3

Name: Date:

Address: Country:

The Schalling-Sifneos Personality Scale

Please indicate only one: A, B, C, D.

A = Does not apply at all; B = does not apply very much; C = applies very much; D = applies completely.

1 I find it hard to describe how I feel

I hardly ever cry except when I'm frustrated

It is important to find out how one feels about people

I daydream rarely

I find it hard to find the right words for my feelings

I spend much time daydreaming whenever I have nothing else to do

I prefer taking action rather than thinking

I don't seem to get really excited about anything

It is easy for me to describe in detail events

I prefer to use my left hand

I like people better than things

describe details

Please check if you have had any of these diseases

Yes No

Yes No

Peptic or duodenal ulcer

Hypertension

Asthma

Thyrotoxicosis

Neurodermatitis

Rheumatoid arthritis

☐ ☐

☐ ☐

☐ ☐

☐ ☐

☐ ☐

☐ ☐