

The Adolescent Dissociative Experiences Scale

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The Adolescent Dissociative Experiences Scale (A-DES) is a public domain, 30-item self-report instrument that is appropriate for those aged 10 to 21. It is a screening tool that fits an adolescent's phase-appropriate development. Modeled after the adult DES, the A-DES was developed by a group organized by Judith Armstrong, PhD, Frank Putnam, MD, and Eve Bernstein Carlson, PhD. Preliminary studies suggest that the A-DES is a reliable and valid measure of pathological dissociation in adolescents. Dissociative adolescents (diagnosed independently of the A-DES) scored significantly higher than other adolescent inpatients ([Putnam, 1997](#)). However, older adolescents with psychotic disorders scored almost as high as dissociative adolescents.

The A-DES is not a diagnostic tool. Its items survey dissociative amnesia, absorption and imaginative involvement (including confusion between reality and fantasy), depersonalization, derealization, passive influence/interference experiences, and identity alteration. The A-DES is scored by summing item scores and dividing by 30 (the number of the items). Overall scores can range from 0 to 10. Armstrong, Putnam, Carlson, Libero, and Smith ([1997](#)) gave both the A-DES and the DES to a sample of college subjects and found that their scores on each correlated well ([Putnam, 1997](#)). The A-DES score approximates the DES score divided by 10. Adolescents with DID typically score between 4 and 7.

As you consider using the A-DES, please consult the current literature and/or your more experienced colleagues to update yourself about any changes or evolving areas of knowledge. Although the A-DES might be used to screen for dissociative experience in large populations in a short period or as the basis for a differential diagnosis by a clinician learning about dissociation, its primary use is in the evaluation of dissociative symptoms for individual patients. Clinicians may learn nearly as much from exploring the reasons that patients choose to endorse certain items as they would from looking at test scores. Sidran Foundation offers the A-DES along with a short manual about it for a nominal fee. The Sidran Foundation can be reached at (410) 825-8888, via e-mail: sidran@access.digex.net, or on the Internet at www.sidran.org. You may also download the A-DES from this site.

Reference

1. Putnam F. W. (1997). *Dissociation in children and adolescents: A developmental perspective*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

[Google Scholar](#)

Adolescent Dissociative Experiences Scale-II (A-DES)

Judith Armstrong, PhD

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Directions

These questions ask about different kinds of experiences that happen to people. For each question, circle the number that indicates how much that experience happens to you. Circle a "0" if it never happens to you; circle a "10" if it is always happening to you. If it happens sometimes but not all of the time, circle a number between 1 and 9 that best describes how often it happens to you. When you answer, only say how much these things happen when you HAVE NOT had any alcohol or drugs.

Example:

- 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
(never) (always)

Date _____ Age _____ Sex: M F _____

1. I get so wrapped up in watching TV, reading, or playing a video game that I don't have any idea what's going on around me.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
(never) (always)

2. I get back tests or homework that I don't remember doing.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
(never) (always)

3. I have strong feelings that don't seem like they are mine.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
(never) (always)

4. I can do something really well one time and then I can't do it at all another time.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(never)

(always)

5. People tell me I do or say things that I don't remember doing or saying.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(never)

(always)

6. I feel like I am in a fog or spaced out and things around me seem unreal.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(never)

(always)

7. I get confused about whether I have done something or only thought about doing it.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(never)

(always)

8. I look at the clock and realize that time has gone by and I can't remember what has happened.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(never)

(always)

9. I hear voices in my head that are not mine.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(never)

(always)

10. When I am somewhere that I don't want to be, I can go away in my mind.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(never)

(always)

11. I am so good at lying and acting that I believe it myself.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(never)

(always)

12. I catch myself "waking up" in the middle of doing something.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(never)

(always)

13. I don't recognize myself in the mirror.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(never)

(always)

14. I find myself going somewhere or doing something and I don't know why.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(never)

(always)

15. I find myself someplace and I don't remember how I got there.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(never)

(always)

16. I have thoughts that don't really seem to belong to me.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(never)

(always)

17. I find that I can make physical pain go away.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(never)

(always)

18. I can't figure out if things really happened or if I only dreamed or thought about them.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(never)

(always)

19. I find myself doing something that I know is wrong, even when I really don't want to do it.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(never)

(always)

20. People tell me that I sometimes act so differently that I seem like a different person.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(never)

(always)

21. It feels like there are walls inside of my mind.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(never)

(always)

22. I find writings, drawings or letters that I must have done but I can't remember doing.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(never)

(always)

23. Something inside of me seems to make me do things that I don't want to do.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(never)

(always)

24. I find that I can't tell whether I am just remembering something or if it is actually happening to me.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(never)

(always)

25. I find myself standing outside of my body, watching myself as if I were another person.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(never)

(always)

26. My relationships with my family and friends change suddenly and I don't know why.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(never)

(always)

27. I feel like my past is a puzzle and some of the pieces are missing.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(never)

(always)

28. I get so wrapped up in my toys or stuffed animals that they seem alive.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(never)

(always)

29. I feel like there are different people inside of me.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(never)

(always)

30. My body feels as if it doesn't belong to me.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(never)

(always)