

Assessment of Mental State

Appearance
How does the client look? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Age• Gender• Race/ethnic background• Posture – slumped, tense, bizarre.• Grooming – dishevelled, make-up inappropriately applied, poor personal hygiene. Unkempt hair• Clothing – bizarre, inappropriate, dirty• Nutritional status – weight loss, not eating properly• Evidence of AOD use – intoxicated, flushed, dilated/pinpoint pupils, track marks
Behaviour
How is the client behaving? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eye contact (some cultures may not display eye contact)• Motor activity – immobile, pacing, restless, hyperventilating• Abnormal movements – tremor, jerky or slow movements, abnormal walk• Bizarre/odd/unpredictable actions
How is the client reacting to the current situation and assessor? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Angry/hostile towards assessor/others• Unco- operative or withdrawn• Over familiar/inappropriate/seductive• Fearful, guarded, hypervigilant
Speech and language
How is the client talking? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rate – rapid, uninterruptible, slow, mute• Tone/volume – loud, angry, quiet, whispering• Quality – clear, slurred• Anything unusual about the client’s speech?
How does the client express himself/herself? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incoherent/illogical thinking (word salad: communication is disorganised and senseless and the main ideas cannot be understood)• Derailment (unrelated, unconnected or loosely connected ideas; shifting from one subject to another)• Tangentiality/loosening of associations (replies to questions are irrelevant or may refer to the appropriate topic but fail to give a complete answer)• Absence/retardation of, or excessive thought and rate of production• Thought blocking (abrupt interruption to flow of thinking so that thoughts are completely absent for a few seconds or irretrievable)
Mood and affect
How does the client describe his/her emotional state (i.e., mood)? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Down/depressed; angry/irritable; anxious/fearful; high/elevated

What do you observe about the client's emotional state (i.e., affect)?

- Depressed – flat, restricted, tearful, downcast
- Anxious – agitated, distressed, fearful
- Irritable, hostile
- Labile – rapidly changing
- Inappropriate – inconsistent with content (e.g., laughs when talking about mother's death)
- High/elevated – excessively happy or animated

Thought content**What is the client thinking about?**

- Delusional thoughts (e.g., bizarre, grandiose, persecutory, self – referential)
- Preoccupations: paranoid/depressive/anxious/obsessional thoughts; overvalued ideas
- Thoughts of harm to self or others
- Does the client believe that his/her thoughts are being broadcast to others or that someone/thing is disrupting or inserting his/her own thoughts?

Perception**Is the client experiencing any misinterpretations of sensory stimuli?**

- Does the client report auditory, visual, olfactory or somatic hallucinations? Illusions?
- Are they likely to act on these hallucinations?
- Do you observe the client responding to unheard sounds/voices or unseen people/objects?
- Any other perceptual disturbances, such as derealisation (feeling one is separated from the outside world), depersonalisation (feeling separated from one's own personal physicality), heightened/dulled perception?

Cognition**Level of consciousness**

- Is the client alert and orientated to time, place, person?
- Is the client attentive during the interview (drowsy, stuporous, distracted)?
- Does the client's attention fluctuate during the interview?
- Does the client present as confused?
- Is the client's concentration impaired? (can he/she count from 100 or say the months of the year backwards?)

Orientation

- Does the client know:
 - Who he/she is? Who you are?
 - Where he/she is?
 - Why he/she is with you now?
 - The day of the week, the date, the month and the year?

Memory:

- Can the client remember:
 - Why he/she is with you? (Immediate)
 - What he/she had for breakfast? (Recent)
 - What he/she was doing this time last year? (Remote)
- Are they able to recall recent events (memory and simple tasks e.g., calculation)?

Insight and judgement

- How aware is the client of what others consider to be his/her difficulty?
- Is the client aware of any symptoms that appear weird/bizarre or strange?
- Is the client able to make judgements about his/her situation?