# PAQ

**Name:** **Date:**

This questionnaire asks about how you perceive and experience your emotions. Please score the following statements according to **how much you agree or disagree that the statement is true of you**. Circle one answer for each statement.

Some questions mention *bad* or *unpleasant* emotions, this means emotions like sadness, anger, or fear. Some questions mention *good* or *pleasant* emotions, this means emotions like happiness, amusement, or excitement.

| | | **Strongly disagree** | **----** | **----** | **Neither agree nor disagree** | **----** | **----** | **Strongly agree** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | When I'm feeling *bad* (feeling an unpleasant emotion), I can't find the right words to describe those feelings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2 | When I'm feeling *bad*, I can't tell whether I'm sad, angry, or scared. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3 | I tend to ignore how I feel. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4 | When I'm feeling *good* (feeling a pleasant emotion), I can't find the right words to describe those feelings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 5 | When I'm feeling *good*, I can't tell whether I'm happy, excited, or amused. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 6 | I prefer to just let my feelings happen in the background, rather than focus on them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7 | When I'm feeling *bad*, I can't talk about those feelings in much depth or detail. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 | When I'm feeling *bad*, I can't make sense of those feelings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 9 | I don't pay attention to my emotions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 10 | When I'm feeling *good*, I can't talk about those feelings in much depth or detail. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 11 | When I'm feeling *good*, I can't make sense of those feelings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 12 | Usually, I try to avoid thinking about what I'm feeling. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

| | | Strongly disagree | ---- | ---- | Neither agree nor disagree | ---- | ---- | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13 | When something *bad* happens, it's hard for me to put into words how I'm feeling. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 14 | When I'm feeling *bad*, I get confused about what emotion it is. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 15 | I prefer to focus on things I can actually see or touch, rather than my emotions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 16 | When something *good* happens, it's hard for me to put into words how I'm feeling. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 17 | When I'm feeling *good*, I get confused about what emotion it is. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 18 | I don't try to be 'in touch' with my emotions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 19 | When I'm feeling *bad*, if I try to describe how I'm feeling I don't know what to say. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 20 | When I'm feeling *bad*, I'm puzzled by those feelings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 21 | It's not important for me to know what I'm feeling. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 22 | When I'm feeling *good*, if I try to describe how I'm feeling I don't know what to say. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 23 | When I'm feeling *good*, I'm puzzled by those feelings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 24 | It's strange for me to think about my emotions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

# Perth Alexithymia Questionnaire (PAQ) Scoring Instructions

Alexithymia is a multidimensional construct comprised of three components: difficulty identifying one's own feelings (DIF); difficulty describing feelings (DDF); and an externally orientated thinking style (EOT) whereby one tends to not focus their attention on their emotions. In other words, people with high levels of alexithymia have difficulty focusing *attention* on their emotional states (EOT), and difficulty accurately *appraising* what those states are (DIF, DDF) (Preece et al., 2017).

The PAQ (Preece et al., 2018) is a 24-item self-report measure of alexithymia. It is designed to assess all components of alexithymia, and do so across negative and positive emotions. Five subscale scores and six composite scores can be derived from the measure, with higher scores indicating higher levels of alexithymia. For more information about the development and psychometric properties of the PAQ, see Preece et al. (2018).

The table below describes each of the PAQ subscale and composite scores and how to calculate them. We have also created an Excel 'auto-scorer' spreadsheet that assists with the scoring of the PAQ. A copy of the Excel auto-scorer can be downloaded here: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329058432. This Excel spreadsheet also includes some normative data to assist with the interpretation of PAQ scores. Our plan is to continue to update this Excel auto-scorer as new normative data becomes available.

| Subscale /composite scores | How to calculate | Content measured |
|---|---|---|
| **Subscale scores** | | |
| Negative-Difficulty identifying feelings (N-DIF) | Sum items 2, 8, 14, 20 | Difficulty identifying, understanding, and differentiating between one's own *negative* feelings. |
| Positive-Difficulty identifying feelings (P-DIF) | Sum items 5, 11, 17, 23 | Difficulty identifying, understanding, and differentiating between one's own *positive* feelings. |
| Negative-Difficulty describing feelings (N-DDF) | Sum items 1, 7, 13, 19 | Difficulty describing and communicating one's own *negative* feelings. |
| Positive-Difficulty describing feelings (P-DDF) | Sum items 4, 10, 16, 22 | Difficulty describing and communicating one's own *positive* feelings. |
| General-Externally orientated thinking (G-EOT) | Sum items 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24 | Tendency to not focus attention on one's own emotions (negative and positive). |
| **Composite scores** | | |
| General-Difficulty identifying feelings (G-DIF) | Sum N-DIF and P-DIF subscales | Difficulty identifying, understanding, and differentiating between one's own feelings (negative and positive). |
| General-Difficulty describing feelings (G-DDF) | Sum N-DDF and P-DDF subscales | Difficulty describing and communicating one's own feelings (negative and positive). |
| Negative-Difficulty appraising feelings (N-DAF) | Sum N-DIF and N-DDF subscales | Difficulty identifying and describing (i.e., appraising) one's own *negative* feelings |
| Positive-Difficulty appraising feelings (P-DAF) | Sum P-DIF and P-DDF subscales | Difficulty identifying and describing (i.e., appraising) one's own *positive* feelings |
| General-Difficulty appraising feelings (G-DAF) | Sum N-DIF, P-DIF, N-DDF and P-DDF subscales | Difficulty identifying and describing (i.e., appraising) one's own feelings (negative and positive) |
| Alexithymia (ALEXI; total scale score) | Sum all items | Overall alexithymia; difficulty focusing attention on and appraising one's own feelings (negative and positive). |

**PAQ Descriptive Statistics**

Some descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients from an Australian adult general community sample (*N* = 748; Preece et al., 2018) are provided in the table below.

| Subscale/ Composite | Total Sample (*N*=748) | | | Females (*N*=468) | | Males (*N*=280) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *M* | *SD* | Cronbach's alpha | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* |
| Subscales | | | | | | | |
| N-DIF | 13.38 | 6.41 | 0.89 | 14.03 | 6.57 | 12.28 | 5.98 |
| P-DIF | 11.30 | 5.76 | 0.89 | 11.38 | 6.08 | 11.18 | 5.20 |
| N-DDF | 15.35 | 6.89 | 0.91 | 15.80 | 7.00 | 14.60 | 6.63 |
| P-DDF | 12.97 | 6.12 | 0.90 | 12.72 | 6.24 | 13.38 | 5.90 |
| G-EOT | 28.97 | 11.19 | 0.90 | 27.92 | 11.35 | 30.74 | 10.72 |
| Composites | | | | | | | |
| G-DIF | 23.68 | 11.28 | 0.92 | 25.41 | 11.57 | 23.45 | 10.68 |
| G-DDF | 28.32 | 12.16 | 0.93 | 28.52 | 12.30 | 27.98 | 11.92 |
| N-DAF | 28.73 | 12.71 | 0.94 | 29.83 | 13.07 | 26.88 | 11.89 |
| P-DAF | 24.27 | 11.39 | 0.94 | 24.1 | 11.95 | 24.55 | 10.41 |
| G-DAF | 52.99 | 22.58 | 0.96 | 53.93 | 23.23 | 51.43 | 21.39 |
| ALEXI (total scale) | 81.97 | 30.91 | 0.96 | 81.84 | 31.92 | 82.17 | 29.15 |

**Score Interpretations**

To interpret PAQ scores we recommend that a respondent's score be compared to scores from an appropriate normative sample. Alexithymia is a dimensional (rather than categorical) construct that is normally distributed in the general population, so alexithymia scores are best thought of as existing on a continuum. Everyone has some level of alexithymia, whether that be a low, average, or high level. The number of standard deviations (SDs) a respondent's score is from the mean of an appropriate normative sample indicates the degree of alexithymia. We interpret PAQ scores in the following way, keeping in mind that higher scores indicate a higher level of alexithymia:

- Scores **1SD or more above** the mean = "high level of alexithymia"
- Scores **less than 1SD** from the mean = "average level of alexithymia"
- Scores **1SD or more below** the mean = "low level of alexithymia"

**Contacts**

If you have any questions or comments about the PAQ, or would like to collaborate with us on some research, please feel free to contact us: Dr David Preece (david.preece@curtin.edu.au), Associate Professor Rodrigo Becerra (rodrigo.becerra@uwa.edu.au), Dr Ken Robinson (k.robinson@ecu.edu.au), Associate Professor Justine Dandy (j.dandy@ecu.edu.au), Professor Alfred Allan (a.allan@ecu.edu.au).

**References**

Preece, D., Becerra, R., Allan, A., Robinson, K., & Dandy, J. (2017). Establishing the theoretical components of alexithymia via factor analysis: Introduction and validation of the attention-appraisal model of alexithymia. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *119*, 341-352.

Preece, D., Becerra, R., Robinson, K., Dandy, J., & Allan, A. (2018). The psychometric assessment of alexithymia: Development and validation of the Perth Alexithymia Questionnaire. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *132*, 32-44.