

Spiritual Dryness Scale (SDS)

Reference:	Büssing, A., Günther, A., Baumann, K., Frick, E., & Jacobs, C. (2013). Spiritual dryness as a measure of a specific spiritual crisis in catholic priests: associations with symptoms of burnout and distress. <i>Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine</i> , Volume 2013, Article ID 246797.
Language:	English, German, Italian, French, Spanish, Polish, Lithuanian, Rumanian
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Origin: Original instrument.

Purpose: The instrument addresses whether or not religious individuals do have experienced phases of 'spiritual dryness' as a form of spiritual crisis, specifically feelings that God is distant, that one's prayers go unanswered, to be 'spiritually empty' or not being able to give any more (both in terms of a spiritual exhaustion), and finally feelings of being abandoned by God. Apart from psychological and/or work associated stress, spiritual struggles, spiritual crisis or spiritual dryness are classical themes in religious literature. The specific items refer to statements in writings of mystics, but also to the Mother Teresa's experiences of spiritual "dryness", "darkness", and "loneliness". Such phases are supposed to be necessary, are (in most cases) transient, and they may recur. Nevertheless, spiritual feelings such as 'desolation', 'madness of the soul', and loss of meaning are very often near to an identity crisis with symptoms of psychological depression.

Population: Religious persons (i.e., priests, non-ordained pastoral workers), but also persons with depression, chronic pain and cancer

Administration:

Rater: Self, telephone or interview-administered

Time required: 1 min. for self administration

Training: none

Scoring: Response options were 'not at all' (1), 'rarely' (2), 'occasionally' (3), 'fairly often' (4), and 'regularly' (5). Items are finally summed up.

Description: The generic SDS scale has 6 (+ 3 optional) items, a uni-dimensional structure which explains 60% of variance, and a good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .87). Structural equation modelling proved a good fit of a unidimensional solution with model fit characteristics of χ^2 [df = 9, N = 425] = 96.918, $p < .001$, CFI = .92, AIC = 120.918 and SRMR = .049.

Coverage: Research and Clinical

Reliability: The internal consistency estimates of the scale is good (alpha = .87).

Validity: In a sample of 8,574 Catholic pastoral workers, the SDS-6 correlated strongly negative with perception of the transcendent (DSES, $r = -.56$), moderately positively with stress perception, depression, and anxiety, and moderately negatively with self-efficacy expectation and life satisfaction. In a sample of 3,824 Catholic priests, spiritual dryness was predicted best by the (lack of) perception of the transcendent, (low) sense of coherence, depressive symptoms and emotional exhaustion. These variables explain 46% of variance. Loneliness, anxiety and the personal accomplishment component of burnout would add only 1.3% additional variance explanation. Priests' living situation, social support, lack of social network, self-efficacy expectation, the depersonalization component of burnout, stress perception, and neuroticism were not among the significant predictors in this model.

Strengths: Because of its brevity, the 6-item instrument is suited to address a specific form of spiritual crisis.

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- (update required)

Version for religious persons

Some persons state specific phases of „spiritual dryness“, or even feelings to be abandoned by God. While several seem to be able to overcome these phases, others may have more problems to get on with it. Please respond to these questions as thorough as possible – there are no wrong answers with this topic.		not at all	rarely	occasionally	fairly often	regularly
SD S1	I have the feeling that God is distant from me, regardless of my efforts to draw close to him.	1	2	3	4	5
SD S2	I have the feeling that God has abandoned me completely.	1	2	3	4	5
SD S3	I experience times of `spiritual dryness`.	1	2	3	4	5
SD S4	I have the feeling that I am `spiritually empty`.	1	2	3	4	5
SD S5	I have the feeling that my prayers go unanswered.	1	2	3	4	5
SD S6	I know the feeling of not being able to give any more.	1	2	3	4	5
SD S0	I have a deep yearning for God in me.					
When you sometimes do experience these feelings and perceptions (or even often), please respond to the following three statements too – otherwise leave them unanswered.						
SD S9	I have found ways to deal with these feelings.	1	2	3	4	5
SD S8	After these phases of `spiritual dryness` or `abandonment by God`, I experience a greater spiritual serenity and depth.	1	2	3	4	5
SD S10	These feelings inspire me all the more to help others.	1	2	3	4	5

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Version for spiritual and religious persons

Some persons state specific phases of „spiritual dryness“, or that they have lost contact with the Sacred in their life (whether they call this Sacred God, Allah, etc.). While several seem to be able to overcome these phases, others may have more problems to get on with it. Please respond to these questions as thorough as possible – there are no wrong answers with this topic.		not at all	rarely	occasionally	fairly often	regularly
SD S1	I have the feeling that God / the Sacred is distant from me, regardless of my efforts to draw close to him.	1	2	3	4	5
SD S2	I have the feeling that the God / the Sacred has abandoned me completely.	1	2	3	4	5
SD S3	I experience times of `spiritual dryness`.	1	2	3	4	5
SD S4	I have the feeling that I am `spiritually empty`.	1	2	3	4	5
SD S5	I have the feeling that my spiritual practices / prayers go unanswered.	1	2	3	4	5
SD S6	I know the feeling of not being able to give any more.	1	2	3	4	5
SD S0	I have a deep yearning for the Sacred / God in me.					
When you sometimes do experience these feelings and perceptions (or even often), please respond to the following three statements too – otherwise leave them unanswered.						
SD S9	I have found ways to deal with these feelings.	1	2	3	4	5
SD S8	After these phases of `spiritual dryness`, I experience a greater spiritual serenity and depth.	1	2	3	4	5
SD S10	These feelings inspire me all the more to help others.	1	2	3	4	5

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Acedia Symptoms as an additional module

For some, their prayer life is light and fulfilling, while for others it is harder and difficult. To what extent do you agree with the following statements in the knowledge that these experiences are not a matter of 'right' or 'wrong', but only different experiences.		Not at all	Rarely	Occasionally	Fairly often	Regularly
Ac1	My prayer life is rich and fulfilling.	1	2	3	4	5
Ac2	In prayer, I am rather passive and without inner participation.	1	2	3	4	5
Ac4	In prayer I am focused and present before God.	1	2	3	4	5
Ac5	My prayer life does not inspire me so much anymore.	1	2	3	4	5
Ac6	I do not really care if I find God in prayer or not.	1	2	3	4	5
Ac7	I miss the prayer times because I have so much to do.	1	2	3	4	5
Ac8	Only a little in my spiritual life gives me real joy.	1	2	3	4	5
Ac9	I really enjoy only a little in my spiritual life.	1	2	3	4	5
Ac12	What God asks of me is more than I can give.	1	2	3	4	5
Ac13	What God wants from me is just too much for me.	1	2	3	4	5
Ac14	I do not know what God wants from me.	1	2	3	4	5
Ac15	Somehow everything has become too much for me.	1	2	3	4	5

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Strategies to Cope with phases of Spiritual Dryness

When you do know phases of spiritual dryness, which strategies / resources are helpful to you?		Does not apply at all	Does not really apply	Half and half (neither yes nor no)	Applies quite a bit	Applies very much
R1	Personal prayer / meditation / reading the scriptures	0	1	2	3	4
R2	Quiet times before God (meditation)	0	1	2	3	4
R3	Scripture / Bible Reading: Contemplative reflection on the Word of God	0	1	2	3	4
R4	Faithfulness / Trust in God	0	1	2	3	4
R5	Openness to whatever may come	0	1	2	3	4
R6	Communication with others (i.e., family, friends)	0	1	2	3	4
R7	Consultation of spiritual counselor / pastor	0	1	2	3	4
R8	Consultation of psychotherapist	0	1	2	3	4
R9	Self-Care (i.e., leisure time, sports, holidays)	0	1	2	3	4
R10	Religious Exercises / Retreat	0	1	2	3	4
R11	Regular attendance at the service	0	1	2	3	4
R12	Intensification of community life	0	1	2	3	4
R13	Charitable acting: helping others	0	1	2	3	4
R14	Avoidance strategies (i.e., repression, inner retirement)	0	1	2	3	4
Rx	Other strategies:	0	1	2	3	4

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