

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, Romanian, Korean, Greek, Farsi (Iran)
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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:	<i>Rater:</i> Self, telephone or interview-administered <i>Time required:</i> 1 min. for self-administration <i>Training:</i> none <i>Scoring:</i> 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 that explains 60% of the 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. Additional modules that can be used to assess <i>Acedia Symptoms</i> and <i>Strategies to Cope</i> with phases of Spiritual Dryness
Coverage:	Research and Clinical
Reliability:	The internal consistency estimates of the SDS-6 scale are good (Cronbach's alpha = .87). With Cronbach's alpha = .84, the eight-item Acedia scale has good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .81 for the sub-factor Excessive Spiritual Demands and Cronbach's alpha = .75 for the sub-factor Difficulties in Prayer Life).
Validity:	In a sample of 8,574 Catholic pastoral workers, the SDS-6 correlated strongly negatively 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 the 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.

Meanwhile, there are further validation studies available that underline the instrument's quality (see reference list). The instrument was applied not only to Christians but also to Muslims. It was further applied to inpatients with depressive diseases and with cancer.

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

Scoring: Mean values of items 1-6

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Spiritual Dryness Scale

Some religious people report phases of “spiritual dryness” or feelings of “spiritual desolation” - despite longing for God. This feeling is mostly not talked about to avoid being regarded as “weak in faith” or “guilty”. However, there are often other reasons that do not have much to do with “weakness”, and some people handle it better than others. - Therefore, be as honest as possible when answering these questions!		not at all	rarely	occasionally	fairly often	regularly
SDS1	I have the feeling that God is distant from me, regardless of my efforts to draw close to him.	1	2	3	4	5
SDS2	I have the feeling that God has abandoned me completely.	1	2	3	4	5
SDS3	I experience times of ‘spiritual dryness’.	1	2	3	4	5
SDS4	I have the feeling that I am ‘spiritually empty’.	1	2	3	4	5
SDS5	I have the feeling that my prayers go unanswered.	1	2	3	4	5
SDS6	I know the feeling of not being able to give anymore.	1	2	3	4	5
SDS0*	I have a deep yearning for God in me.	1	2	3	4	5
When you sometimes do experience these feelings and perceptions (or even often), please respond to the following three statements too – otherwise, leave them unanswered.						
SDS9	I have found ways to deal with these feelings.	1	2	3	4	5
SD11	I find it difficult to talk to others about these feelings.	1	2	3	4	5
SD12	I have no one I can talk to about these feelings.	1	2	3	4	5
SDS8	After these phases of ‘spiritual dryness’ or ‘abandonment by God’, I experience a greater spiritual serenity and depth.	1	2	3	4	5
SDS10	These feelings inspire me all the more to help others.	1	2	3	4	5

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* optional item to analyze underlying processes

Acedia Symptoms as an additional module

For some, their prayer life is light and fulfilling, while for others it is harder and more 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
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
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 the 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 a spiritual counselor/pastor	0	1	2	3	4
R8	Consultation of a 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

Manche Menschen berichten von Phasen „geistlicher Trockenheit“ oder Gefühlen der „spirituellen Trostlosigkeit“, und manche können mit diesen Phasen besser umgehen als andere. Bitte beantworten Sie die folgenden Aussagen in dem Wissen, dass es kein „Richtig“ oder „Falsch“ gibt.		gar nicht	selten	manchmal	häufig	regelmäßig
SDS1	Ich habe das Gefühl, dass Gott mir fern ist, wie sehr ich mich auch um ihn bemühe.	1	2	3	4	5
SDS5	Ich habe das Gefühl, dass mein Beten ganz ohne Antwort bleibt.	1	2	3	4	5
SDS2	Ich habe das Gefühl, von Gott ganz und gar verlassen zu sein.	1	2	3	4	5
SDS3	Ich erlebe Zeiten „geistlicher Trockenheit“.	1	2	3	4	5
SDS6	Ich kenne das Gefühl, nicht mehr viel geben zu können.	1	2	3	4	5
SDS4	Ich habe das Gefühl, geistlich leer zu sein.	1	2	3	4	5
SDS0*	Ich spüre eine tiefe Sehnsucht nach Gott in mir.	1	2	3	4	5
Wenn diese Gefühle bei Ihnen manchmal (oder sogar häufiger) auftreten, beantworten Sie bitte die folgenden Fragen – ansonsten lassen Sie diese einfach unbeantwortet.						
SDS9	Ich habe Wege gefunden, mit diesen Gefühlen umgehen zu können.	1	2	3	4	5
SD11	Es fällt mir schwer, über dieses Empfinden mit anderen zu reden.	1	2	3	4	5
SD12	Ich habe niemanden, mit dem ich über dieses Empfinden sprechen kann.	1	2	3	4	5
SDS8	Nach diesen Phasen der „geistlichen Trockenheit“ oder „Gottverlassenheit“ erlebe ich eine größere geistige Klarheit und Tiefe.	1	2	3	4	5
SDS10	Diese Gefühle spornen mich umso mehr an, anderen zu helfen.	1	2	3	4	5

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* optionales Item, um zugrunde liegende Prozesse abschätzen zu können

Für einige ist ihr Gebetsleben leicht und erfüllend, während es für andere eher schwer und mühsam ist. Inwieweit stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen in dem Wissen zu, dass es kein „Richtig“ oder „Falsch“ gibt, sondern nur unterschiedliche Erfahrungen.		gar nicht	selten	manchmal	häufig	regelmäßig
Ac1*	Mein Gebetsleben ist reich und erfüllend.	1	2	3	4	5
Ac2	Im Gebet bin ich eher passiv und ohne innere Anteilnahme dabei.	1	2	3	4	5
Ac5	Im Gebet bin ich konzentriert und präsent vor Gott.	1	2	3	4	5
Ac6	Mein Gebetsleben begeistert mich nicht mehr so sehr.	1	2	3	4	5
Ac7*	Es ist mir eigentlich egal, ob ich im Gebet zu Gott finde oder nicht.	1	2	3	4	5
Ac8*	Es ist mir egal, was die anderen von meinem Gebetsleben halten.	1	2	3	4	5
Ac9	So richtig Freude macht mir nur wenig in meinem geistlichen Leben.	1	2	3	4	5
Ac12	Was Gott von mir verlangt, ist mehr als ich geben kann.	1	2	3	4	5
Ac13	Was Gott von mir verlangt, ist einfach zu viel für mich.	1	2	3	4	5
Ac14	Ich weiß nicht, was Gott von mir will.	1	2	3	4	5
Ac15	Es ist mir irgendwie alles zu viel geworden.	1	2	3	4	5

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Wenn Sie dieses Erleben geistlicher Trockenheit oder Dürre kennen, was hat Ihnen im Umgang damit geholfen?		trifft gar nicht zu	trifft eher nicht zu	kann ich nicht sagen	Trifft eher zu	Trifft genau zu
R1	Persönliches Gebet / Meditation / Lesen der heiligen Schriften (Quran)	0	1	2	3	4