

# Gidget Foundation Australia

## DASS 21

Lovibond, S.H., Lovibond, P.F. (1995)

### DASS Severity Ratings

The DASS is a quantitative measure of distress along the 3 axes of depression, anxiety<sup>1</sup> and stress<sup>2</sup>. It is not a categorical measure of clinical diagnoses.

Emotional syndromes like depression and anxiety are intrinsically dimensional - they vary along a continuum of severity (independent of the special diagnosis). Hence the selection of a single cut-off score to represent clinical severity is necessarily arbitrary. A scale such as the DASS can lead to a useful assessment of disturbance, for example individuals who may fall short of a clinical cut-off for a special diagnosis can be correctly recognised as experiencing considerable symptoms and as being at high risk of further problems.

However for clinical purposes it can be helpful to have 'labels' to characterise degree of severity relative to the population. Thus the following cut-off scores have been developed for defining mild / moderate / severe / extremely severe scores for each DASS scale.

**Note:** the severity labels are used to describe the full range of scores in the population so 'mild' for example means that the person is above the population mean but probably still way below the typical severity of someone seeking help (ie it does not mean a mild level of disorder).

The individual DASS scores do not define appropriate interventions. They should be used in conjunction with all clinical information available to you in determining appropriate treatment for any individual.

#### Notes:

1. Symptoms of psychological arousal
2. The more cognitive, subjective symptoms of anxiety

### DASS 21 SCORE

| DEPRESSION<br>SCORE | ANXIETY<br>SCORE | STRESS<br>SCORE |
|---------------------|------------------|-----------------|
|                     |                  |                 |

|                  | Depression | Anxiety | Stress |
|------------------|------------|---------|--------|
| Normal           | 0-4        | 0-3     | 0-7    |
| Mild             | 5-6        | 4-5     | 8-9    |
| Moderate         | 7-10       | 6-7     | 10-12  |
| Severe           | 11-13      | 8-9     | 13-16  |
| Extremely Severe | 14 +       | 10 +    | 17 +   |

*Gidget Foundation Australia exists to promote the importance of emotional wellbeing among expectant and new parents, their health providers and the wider community to ensure that those in need receive timely, appropriate and supportive care.*

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