

SOCRATES User Information

The Stages of Change Readiness and Treatment Eagerness Scale

SOCRATES is an experimental instrument designed to assess readiness for change in alcohol use. The instrument yields three factorially-derived scale scores: Recognition (Re), Ambivalence (Am), and Taking Steps (Ts). It is a public domain instrument and may be used without special permission.

Answers are to be recorded directly on the questionnaire form. Scoring is accomplished by transferring to the SOCRATES Scoring Form the numbers circled by the respondent for each item. The sum of each column yields the three scale scores.

Version 8 is a reduced 19-item scale based on factor analyses with prior versions. The shorter form was developed using the items that most strongly marked each factor. The 19-item scale scores are highly related to the longer (39 item) scale for Recognition ($r = .96$), Taking Steps (.94), and Ambivalence (.88). We therefore currently recommend using the 19-item Version 8 instrument.

Psychometric analyses revealed the following psychometric characteristics of the 19-item SOCRATES:

	Cronbach	Test-retest Reliability	
	Alpha	Intraclass	Pearson
Ambivalence	.60 -.88	.82	.83
Recognition	.85 -.95	.88	.94
Taking Steps	.83 -.96	.91	.93

We do not recommend making clinical decisions based on SOCRATES scores. It is a useful screening instrument for motivation, and scores have been found to predict outcome, but like other brief screening instruments it should be used clinically to suggest areas for further discussion.

SOCRATES is not meant to be used as a pre-post outcome measure. Consider, for example, how “Problem Recognition” could decrease after treatment. How would a person who is remaining abstinent respond to:

I really want to make changes in my drinking.

If I don't change my drinking soon, my problems are going to get worse.

My drinking is causing a lot of harm.

If your interest is in measuring pre-post differences in alcohol-related problems, the Drinker Inventory of Consequences (DrInC) is a far better instrument than the SOCRATES, which was designed only as a baseline predictor measure.

Original Source Citation:

Miller, W. R., & Tonigan, J. S. (1996). Assessing drinkers' motivation for change: The Stages of Change Readiness and Treatment Eagerness Scale (SOCRATES). *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors* 10, 81-89.

Guidelines for Interpretation of SOCRATES-8 Scores

Using the SOCRATES Profile Sheet, circle the client's raw score within each of the three scale columns. This provides information as to whether the client's scores are low, average, or high relative to people already seeking treatment for alcohol problems. For interpretation of scores, it is wise in an individual case also to examine individual item responses for additional information.

RECOGNITION

HIGH scorers directly acknowledge that they are having problems related to their drinking, tending to express a desire for change and to perceive that harm will continue if they do not change.

LOW scorers deny that alcohol is causing them serious problems, reject diagnostic labels such as "problem drinker" and "alcoholic," and do not express a desire for change.

AMBIVALENCE

HIGH scorers say that they sometimes drink too much, are hurting other people, and/or are alcoholic. Thus a high score reflects ambivalence or uncertainty. A high score here reflects some openness to reflection, as might be particularly expected in the contemplation stage of change.

LOW scorers say that they do not wonder if they are drinking too much or are hurting others, or are alcoholic. Note that a person may score low on ambivalence because they "know" their drinking is causing problems (high Recognition), or "know" that they do not have drinking problems (low Recognition). Thus a low Ambivalence score should be interpreted in relation to the Recognition score.

TAKING STEPS

HIGH scorers report that they are already doing things to make a positive change in their drinking, and may have experienced some success in this regard. Change is underway, and they may want help to persist or to prevent backsliding. A high score on this scale has been found to be predictive of successful change.

LOW scorers report that they are not currently doing things to change their drinking, and have not made such changes recently.

The SOCRATES is not a valid instrument for measuring the transtheoretical stages of change. For that purpose we recommend the University of Rhode Island Change Assessment (URICA).