# Mental status exam affect descriptors

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## QUALITY (the emotion you see)

Euthymic: within the usual range, neither low nor elevated.

Dysphoric: low, unhappy or uneasy.

Depressed or sad: low, downcast, sometimes tearful.

Anxious: tense, worried or apprehensive.

Fearful: frightened, as if expecting harm.

Irritable: easily annoyed or provoked.

Angry or hostile: openly angry, sometimes directed at the interviewer.

Tearful: crying or close to crying.

Euphoric: intense elation, more than the situation explains.

Elevated: more cheerful than the situation explains.

Expansive: open, unrestrained expression of feeling, often with an inflated sense of importance.

Apathetic: shows little interest or concern.

Perplexed: puzzled or bewildered.

## RANGE (how much expression varies across the session)

Full (or broad): expression varies naturally with the topic.

Restricted (or constricted): narrower than expected, mostly one emotional tone.

## INTENSITY (how strong the expression is)

Normal: expression of the strength you would expect.

Heightened (or exaggerated): stronger than the topic calls for.

Blunted: clearly reduced expression.

Flat: little or no expression; a still face and unchanging voice.

## STABILITY

Stable: shifts in expression are gradual and fit the conversation.

Labile: rapid, marked shifts between emotions, sometimes without a clear trigger.

## REACTIVITY

Reactive: expression changes in response to the conversation, for example brightens with humor.

Non-reactive: expression stays the same whatever is discussed.

## CONGRUENCE (fit with the mood the person reports)

Congruent with mood: what you see matches what they say they feel.

Incongruent with mood: what you see does not match, for example says "great" while tearful.

## APPROPRIATENESS (fit with the topic)

Appropriate to content: expression fits what is being discussed.

Inappropriate to content: expression does not fit, for example laughing while describing a death.

## SAMPLE WRITE-UPS

Typical: "Affect euthymic, full range, reactive, congruent with mood, appropriate to content."

Low mood: "Affect dysphoric and tearful at times, restricted range, congruent with stated mood."

Reduced expression: "Affect flat. Little change in face or voice across topics, including when discussing family."

Shifting: "Affect labile, moving from tearful to laughing within a minute while describing the week."

## NOTE ON TERMS

Textbooks group these words slightly differently. Some list blunted and flat under range. Use the version your service uses and keep it the same in every note.


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