ALS

Affective Lability Scale (ALS)

The ALS is a self-report questionnaire designed to measure affective lability, that is, the tendency to experience rapid, marked mood shifts that are difficult to regulate. It explores the frequency and intensity of emotional swings, particularly between states such as anxiety, sadness, anger, and elevated mood. The ALS is used in clinical practice and research to document emotional instability, particularly in personality disorders, certain mood disorders, and emotion dysregulation problems. It is not a diagnostic tool on its own, but it provides a useful measure of the severity of affective lability and its clinical impact.

Number of questions	54 questions
Estimated duration	10 minutes
Language	English
Original name	Affective Lability Scale
Target audience	Adults
Authors	Philip D. Harvey, Barbara R. Greenberg, Mark R. Serper (1989)
Category	Mood disorders, Emotion regulation

Preview of the 54 questions

My sleeping patterns shift from times when I sleep perfectly well to times when I have insomnia and can't sleep well at all.

Very uncharacteristic of me, extremely undescriptive | Rather uncharacteristic of me, quite undescriptive | Rather characteristic of me, quite descriptive | Very characteristic of me, extremely descriptive

There are times when I feel very restless and then shortly afterwards I will not feel very restless at all.

Very uncharacteristic of me, extremely undescriptive | Rather uncharacteristic of me, quite undescriptive | Rather characteristic of me, quite descriptive | Very characteristic of me, extremely descriptive

There are times when I am so nervous that I feel light-headed and/or dizzy and then soon afterwards I feel so sad that I have difficulty getting motivated to do anything.

Very uncharacteristic of me, extremely undescriptive | Rather uncharacteristic of me, quite undescriptive

Rather characteristic of me, quite descriptive | Very characteristic of me, extremely descriptive

I frequently shift back and forth between worrying more than other people and not worrying much more than anyone else.

Very uncharacteristic of me, extremely undescriptive | Rather uncharacteristic of me, quite undescriptive

Rather characteristic of me, quite descriptive | Very characteristic of me, extremely descriptive

At times I feel just as relaxed as everyone else and then within minutes I become so nervous that I feel light-headed and dizzy.

Very uncharacteristic of me, extremely undescriptive | Rather uncharacteristic of me, quite undescriptive

Rather characteristic of me, quite descriptive | Very characteristic of me, extremely descriptive

Scoring & interpretation

Each item is rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale, from 0 to 3, according to how descriptive the statement is. The total score is the sum of the items; subscores can also be calculated for the dimensions defined by the version used. A high score indicates greater emotional instability and more frequent or more intense mood changes. There is no universal diagnostic cutoff; interpretation should be based on the available norms, the clinical context, and a comprehensive assessment.