



Assessment for Substance Abuse Treatment Readiness

Individuals who would likely benefit from substance use treatment that do not engage in treatment is often attributed to poor motivation.¹

Motivation for treatment is frequently characterized as ‘treatment readiness,’ which is when substance abusers’ decisions to enter treatment are considered. Motivation, or readiness, [thus] may be viewed as an individual’s personal considerations, commitments, reasons, and intentions that lead to the performance of certain behaviors.²

Consequently, when making the decision if an individual is a candidate for substance use disorder services it may be advantageous to understand an individual’s treatment readiness.

One (1) instrument that is commonly used to assess treatment readiness is the Stages of Change, Readiness, and Treatment Eagerness Scale (SOCRATES). An overview of the SOCRATES is presented as follows.

SOCRATES Version 8

The SOCRATES 8, which is in the public domain, is a 19-item instrument designed to give a general measure of motivation for problem drinkers and drug users who must make changes in their usage. Two (2) versions of the SOCRATES are available for assessing motivation of change: one (1) for assessing an individual’s motivation for changing their alcohol use (SOCRATES 8A), and one (1) for assessing an individual’s motivation for changing their drug use (SOCRATES 8D). It should be noted that both instruments have similar lines of inquiry with the SOCRATES 8A referencing alcohol and the SOCRATES 8D referencing drugs.

The SOCRATES 8 yields scores for three (3) domains that are listed as follows along with their survey items.

1. Recognition

SOCRATES 8A	SOCRATES 8D
I really want to make changes in my drinking.	I really want to make changes in my use of drugs.
If I don’t change my drinking soon, my problems are going to get worse.	If I don’t change my drug use soon, my problems are going to get worse.
I am a problem drinker.	I have a drug problem.
I have serious problems with drinking.	I have serious problems with drugs.
My drinking is causing a lot of harm.	My drug use is causing a lot of harm.
I know that I have a drinking problem.	I know that I have a drug problem.
I am an alcoholic.	I am a drug addict.

2. Ambivalence

SOCRATES 8A	SOCRATES 8D
<p>Sometimes I wonder if I am an alcoholic.</p> <p>Sometimes I wonder if my drinking is hurting other people.</p> <p>Sometimes I wonder if I am in control of my drinking.</p> <p>There are times when I wonder if I drink too much.</p>	<p>Sometimes I wonder if I am an addict.</p> <p>Sometimes I wonder if my drug use is hurting other people.</p> <p>Sometimes I wonder if I am in control of my drug use.</p> <p>There are times when I wonder if I use drugs too much.</p>

3. Taking Steps

SOCRATES 8A	SOCRATES 8D
<p>I have already started making some changes in my drinking.</p> <p>I was drinking too much at one time, but I have managed to change that.</p> <p>I am not just thinking about changing my drinking, I am already doing something about it.</p> <p>I have already changed my drinking, and I am looking for ways to keep from slipping back to my old patterns.</p> <p>I am actively doing things now to cut down or stop drinking.</p> <p>I want help to keep from going back to the drinking problems that I had before.</p> <p>I am working hard to change my alcohol use.</p> <p>I have made some changes in my drinking, and I want some help to keep from going back to the way I used to drink before.</p>	<p>I have already started making some changes in my use of drugs.</p> <p>I was using drugs too much at one time, but I have managed to change that.</p> <p>I am not just thinking about changing my drug use, I am already doing something about it.</p> <p>I have already changed my drug use, and I am looking for ways to keep from slipping back to my old patterns.</p> <p>I am actively doing things now to cut down or stop my use of drugs.</p> <p>I want help to keep from going back to the drug problems that I had before.</p> <p>I am working hard to change my drug use.</p> <p>I have made some changes in my drug use, and I want some help to keep from going back to the way I used drugs before.</p>

The SOCRATES 8 instrument comes with a scoring rubric that provides instructions for scoring and understanding each of the domain scores. Below are the guidelines for interpretation of scores, which are also part of the SOCRATES 8 instrument.

1. Recognition

- **HIGH** scorers directly acknowledge that they have problems related to their drinking/drug use, tend to express a desire for change, and perceive that harm will continue if they do not change.
- **LOW** scorers deny that alcohol/drugs are causing them serious problems, reject diagnostic labels such as “problem drinker” and “a person with an alcohol use disorder” or “a problem drug user and a person with a drug use disorder,” and do not express a desire for change.

2. Ambivalence

- **HIGH** scorers indicate that they sometimes wonder if they are in control of their drinking/drug use, are drinking/using too much, are hurting other people, and/or a person with an alcohol use disorder/a person with a drug use disorder. 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 indicate that they do not wonder whether they drink/use too much, are in control, are hurting others, or a person with an alcohol use disorder/a person with a drug use disorder. Note that a person may score low on ambivalence either because they “know” their drinking is causing problems (high Recognition), or because they “know” that they do not have drinking problems (low Recognition). Thus, a low Ambivalence score should be interpreted in relation to the Recognition score.

3. Taking Steps

- **HIGH** scorers report that they are already doing things to make a positive change in their drinking/drug use 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.

A link to the copy of the SOCRATES: <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/26826/1/socratesv8.pdf>

References:

- ¹ Rapp, R. C., Xu, J., Carr, C. A., Lane, D. T., Redko, C., Wang, J., & Carlson, R. G. (2007). Understanding treatment readiness in recently assessed, pre-treatment substance abusers. *Substance abuse*, 28(1), 11-23. https://doi.org/10.1300/J465v28n01_03
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