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A Review of the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS): Percentile-Based Severity Ranges, Clinical and Community Normative Data and Qualitative Descriptors

The Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS), created by Gratz & Roemer et al. (2004), measures difficulties in emotion regulation across multiple domains. This technical review presents normative data from both community and clinical populations, along with detailed percentile rankings and interpretive guidelines, to help clinicians better understand and utilise the assessment in practice.

[View the DERS on NovoPsych.com.au](https://www.novopsych.com.au)

January 2025

Developer

The Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) was developed by Gratz & Roemer (2004):

Gratz, K. L., & Roemer, L. (2004). Multidimensional assessment of emotion regulation and dysregulation: Development, factor structure, and initial validation of the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment*, 26(1), 41-54.
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This document was developed by NovoPsych to review contemporary literature, describe original scoring methodologies, provide interpretation material, enhance normative data and provide qualitative descriptors.

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Description

The Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) is a 36-item self-report measure designed to assess clinically relevant difficulties in emotion regulation (Gratz & Roemer, 2004). The scale was developed based on an integrative theoretical framework that conceptualises emotion regulation as involving: (a) awareness and understanding of emotions, (b) acceptance of emotions, (c) ability to engage in goal-directed behaviour and control impulsive behaviours when experiencing negative emotions, and (d) access to effective emotion regulation strategies. The scale has been used with groups as young as 13 years old, but was originally validated in an adult population (Gratz & Roemer, 2004; Monell et al., 2020).

The scale consists of six subscales:

- **Nonacceptance of Emotional Responses:** assesses negative secondary emotional responses to one's negative emotions, or nonaccepting reactions to one's distress
- **Difficulties Engaging in Goal-Directed Behavior:** measures difficulties concentrating and accomplishing tasks when experiencing negative emotions
- **Impulse Control Difficulties:** looks at difficulties remaining in control of one's behavior when experiencing negative emotions
- **Lack of Emotional Awareness:** evaluates difficulties and/or unwillingness to attend to and acknowledge emotions
- **Limited Access to Emotion Regulation Strategies:** refers to the belief that there is little that can be done to regulate emotions effectively once an individual is upset.
- **Lack of Emotional Clarity:** focuses on the extent to which individuals know and are clear about the emotions they are experiencing

Research has shown that difficulties in emotion regulation as measured by the DERS may serve as a transdiagnostic risk factor across multiple forms of psychopathology (Skutch et al., 2019). The scale has demonstrated relationships with borderline personality disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorders, substance use disorders, depression, and eating disorders (Sörman et al., 2022).

The DERS is a useful tool for formulation and treatment planning at the outset of therapy, as well as being suitable for repeated administrations for outcome monitoring. By identifying specific domains of emotion regulation challenges, the DERS can help clinicians target interventions, such as mindfulness techniques to improve emotional awareness, or building adaptive coping skills to regulate emotional states.

Psychometric Properties

The DERS has strong psychometric properties across multiple studies in both clinical and non-clinical populations. Internal consistency for the full scale is consistently excellent, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.93 to 0.95 (Fowler et al., 2014; Gratz & Roemer, 2004; Hallion et al., 2018). Subscale internal consistency ranges from generally good to excellent (alpha = 0.80-0.92).

Factor analytic studies have examined various structural models for the DERS. The original six-factor structure has shown acceptable fit across multiple populations (Fowler et al., 2014; Hallion et al., 2018; Neumann et al., 2010; Osborne et al., 2017). Other research has suggested that alternatives such as a five-factor structure and a bifactor model with one general emotion dysregulation factor and five specific factors (excluding Awareness) may also provide a good fit (Hallion et al., 2018; Osborne et al., 2017; Sörman et al., 2022). However, the original six-factor structure was shown to be acceptable in many studies (Fowler et al., 2014; Hallion et al., 2018; Neumann et al., 2010; Osborne et al., 2017) and remains widely used due to its comprehensive assessment.

Test-retest reliability over a period of 4-8 weeks is good for both the total score ($r = 0.88$) and subscale scores ($r = 0.57-0.89$; Gratz & Roemer, 2004). The scale shows good convergent validity with other measures of emotion

regulation and related constructs. For example, scores correlate significantly with the Negative Mood Regulation Scale ($r = -0.69$) and measures of experiential avoidance ($r = 0.60$) (Gratz & Roemer, 2004).

Clinical norms have been reported from a sample of treatment-seeking adults by Hallion et al. (2018). The authors reported a mean total score of 89.33 (SD = 22.64). Table 1 provides further details, including subscale scores from this sample.

Community norms were established by Gratz and Roemer (2004) in their original validation using 375 undergraduate students in the United States (total score $M=78.71(20.22)$). More recent large-scale studies have also reported community norms, such as 1,049 undergraduate students (total score $M=75.26(17.15)$) from Australia in Burton et al. (2022) and 843 community adults (total score $M=70.22(20.24)$) from the United States in Sörman et al. (2022).

For the total score, NovoPsych calculated a weighted mean and pooled standard deviation to combine community sample data from Gratz & Roemer (2004), Sörman et al (2022) and Burton et al (2022). Total score severity categories were created based on the percentile ranges of this combined sample ($M=73.80(18.89)$).

- Percentiles 1st-5th = "Very Low"
- Percentiles 6th-25th = "Low"
- Percentiles 26th-75th = "Average"
- Percentiles 76th-95th = "High"
- Percentiles 96th+ = "Very High"

For subscales, data is reported for both clinical (Hallion et al 2018) and community (Gratz & Roemer, 2004) samples, and are detailed in table 1.

Scoring & Interpretation

Total raw scores range from 36-180, with higher scores indicating greater difficulties in emotion regulation. Subscale raw scores have several ranges listed below:

- Non-acceptance (6 items: 11, 12, 21, 23, 25, 29): The Nonacceptance of Emotional Responses subscale assesses negative secondary responses to negative emotions and non-accepting reactions to distress (range 6-30)
- Goals (5 items: 13, 18, 20, 26, 33): The Difficulties Engaging in Goal-Directed Behavior subscale measures difficulties concentrating and accomplishing tasks when experiencing negative emotions (range 5-25)
- Impulse (6 items: 3, 14, 19, 24, 27, 32): The Impulse Control Difficulties subscale reflects difficulties remaining in control of behavior when experiencing negative emotions (range 6-30)
- Awareness (6 items: 2, 6, 8, 10, 17, 34): The Lack of Emotional Awareness subscale focuses on inattention to and lack of awareness of emotional responses (range 6-30)
- Strategies (8 items: 15, 16, 22, 28, 30, 31, 35, 36): The Limited Access to Emotional Regulation Strategies subscale assesses the belief that little can be done to regulate emotions effectively when upset (range 8-40)
- Clarity (5 items: 1, 4, 5, 7, 9): The Lack of Emotional Clarity subscale reflects the degree to which individuals know and understand the emotions they experience (range 5-25)

On first administration, a stacked bar graph shows the total and each of the six subscale scores in community percentiles. Percentiles give context to a client's score, showing how they compare to their peers. For example, a percentile of 50 represents the typical level of difficulties with emotional regulation among adults in the community. A horizontal comparison graph is also presented showing where a respondent's score is in comparison to the normative and clinical samples.

When administered more than once, a line graph is presented for the raw total score with clinical percentile labels on the right. A second line graph is presented plotting each of the six subscales in clinical percentile terms. Significant improvements or deterioration in the total score is indicated by shifts of half a standard deviation or greater (approximately 9 total score points or more) following the guidelines of the Minimally Important Difference (Turner et al., 2010).

Severity categories were created based on community percentiles derived from the combined community sample:

- Percentiles 1st-5th = "Very Low"
- Percentiles 6th-25th = "Low"
- Percentiles 26th-75th = "Average"
- Percentiles 76th-95th = "High"
- Percentiles 96th+ = "Very High"

This section details the community and clinical norms for the DERS. By using the latest data, these norms enhance the interpretability of DERS scores. Table 2 shows the percentiles for the community and clinical samples.

NovoPsych has computed clinical percentiles using the mean and standard deviations reported in Hallion et al (2018). For community percentiles, a weighted mean and pooled standard deviation was derived from the samples of Gratz & Roemer (2004), Burton et al (2022) and Sörman et al (2022). This weighted mean and pooled standard deviation was then used to convert the DERS total score to percentiles as shown in Table 2, according to the following equation.

$$\text{Percentile} = 100 \times \Phi(x - M) / SD$$

Where:

- x is the score
- M is the mean
- SD is the standard deviation
- Φ is the standard normal cumulative distribution function

This equation first standardises the score to a z-score by subtracting the mean and dividing by the standard deviation, then converts the z-score to a percentile by applying the standard normal cumulative distribution function and multiplying by 100. The percentiles contextualise each score relative to typical scores among those in clinical as well as general community settings, offering a clear perspective on how the respondent's level of difficulties with emotional regulation compares to those of their peers.

Table 1. DERS-36 means and standard deviations for community and clinical samples.

Source	N	Population	Total Score	Non-acceptance	Goals	Impulse	Awareness	Strategies	Clarity
Hallion	427	Clinical	89.33(22.64)	14.67(5.92)	15.42(4.21)	12.58(4.97)	15.55(4.92)	19.67(7.31)	12.01(4.04)
Burton	1049	Community	75.26(17.15)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sörman	843	Community	70.22(20.24)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gratz & Roemer	357	Community*	78.71(20.22)	11.62(4.58)	14.39(5.00)	11.01(4.46)	14.86(4.68)	16.18(6.21)	10.64(3.76)
Combined	2,249	Community	73.80(18.89)	-	-	-	-	-	-

*Male and female scores were combined using a weighted mean and pooled standard deviation

Table 2. Percentile distributions of community and clinical samples.

Total Score		
Score	Community	Clinical
36	2	0.9
37	2.6	1
38	2.9	1.2
39	3.3	1.3
40	4	1.5
41	4.1	1.6
42	5	1.8
43	5.1	2
44	6	2.3
45	6.4	2.5
46	7	2.8
47	8	3
48	9	3.4
49	9.5	3.7
50	10	4
51	11	4.5
52	12	5
53	14	5.4
54	15	6
55	16	6.5
56	17	7



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57	19	8
58	20	8.3
59	22	9
60	23	10
61	25	11
62	27	11.4
63	28	12
64	30	13
65	32	14
66	34	15
67	36	16
68	38	17
69	40	18
70	42	20
71	44	21
72	46	22
73	48	24
74	50	25
75	53	26
76	55	28
77	57	29
78	59	31
79	61	32
80	63	34



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81	65	36
82	67	37
83	69	39
84	71	41
85	72	42
86	74	44
87	76	46
88	77	48
89	79	49
90	80	51
91	82	53
92	83	55
93	85	56
94	86	58
95	87	60
96	88	62
97	89	63
98	90	65
99	91	67
100	92	68
101	93	70
102	93.2	71
103	94	73
104	94.5	74



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105	95.1	76
106	95.6	77
107	96.1	78
108	96.5	80
109	96.9	81
110	97.2	82
111	97.6	83
112	97.8	84
113	98.1	85
114	98.3	86
115	98.5	87
116	98.7	88
117	98.9	89
118	99	90
119	99.2	90.5
120	99.3	91
121	99.4	92
122	99.46	93
123	99.5	93
124	99.6	93.7
125	99.66	94
126	99.71	94.7
127	99.76	95
128	99.79	95.6



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129	99.83	96
130	99.85	96.4
131	99.88	96.7
132	99.90	97
133	99.91	97.3
134	99.93	97.6
135	99.94	97.8
136	99.95	98
137	99.96	98.2
138	99.97	98.4
139	99.97	98.6
140	99.98	98.7
141	99.98	98.9
142	99.98	99
143	99.99	99.1
144	99.99	99.2
145	99.99	99.3
146	99.99	99.4
147	99.99	99.5
148	99.99	99.5
149	99.99	99.6
150	99.99	99.6
151	99.99	99.7
152	99.99	99.7



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153	99.99	99.8
154	99.99	99.79
155	99.99	99.81
156	99.99	99.84
157	99.99	99.86
158	99.99	99.88
159	99.99	99.90
160	99.99	99.91
161	99.99	99.92
162	99.99	99.93
163	99.99	99.94
164	99.99	99.95
165	99.99	99.96
166	99.99	99.96
167	99.99	99.97
168	99.99	99.97
169	99.99	99.98
170	99.99	99.98
171	99.99	99.98
172	99.99	99.99
173	99.99	99.99
174	99.99	99.99
175	99.99	99.99
176	99.99	99.99



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177	99.99	99.99
178	99.99	99.99
179	99.99	99.99
180	99.99	99.99

Table 2.1. Community and clinical percentiles for the **Non-Acceptance** subscale.

Non-Acceptance		
Score	Community	Clinical
6	11	7
7	16	10
8	21	13
9	28	17
10	36	22
11	45	27
12	53	33
13	62	39
14	70	45
15	77	52
16	83	59
17	88	65
18	92	71
19	95	77
20	97	82
21	98	86



22	98.8	89
23	99.4	92
24	99.7	94
25	99.8	96
26	99.9	97
27	99.96	98
28	99.98	98.8
29	99.99	99.2
30	99.99	99.5

Table 2.2. Community and clinical percentiles for the **Goals** subscale.

Goals		
Score	Community	Clinical
5	3	0.7
6	5	1
7	7	2
8	10	4
9	14	6
10	19	10
11	25	15
12	32	21
13	39	28
14	47	37
15	55	46



16	63	55
17	70	65
18	76	73
19	82	80
20	87	86
21	91	91
22	94	94
23	96	96
24	97	98
25	98	99

Table 2.2. Community and clinical percentiles for the **Impulse** subscale.

Impulse		
Score	Community	Clinical
6	13	9
7	18	13
8	25	18
9	33	24
10	41	30
11	50	38
12	59	45
13	67	53
14	75	61
15	81	69

16	87	75
17	91	81
18	94	86
19	96	90
20	98	93
21	98.74	95
22	99.31	97
23	99.64	98
24	99.82	99
25	99.91	99.4
26	99.96	99.7
27	99.98	99.8
28	99.99	99.9
29	99.99	99.95
30	99.99	99.98

Table 2.3. Community and clinical percentiles for the **Awareness** subscale.

Awareness		
Score	Community	Clinical
6	3	3
7	5	4
8	7	6
9	11	9



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10	15	13
11	20	18
12	27	24
13	35	30
14	43	38
15	51	46
16	60	54
17	68	62
18	75	69
19	81	76
20	86	82
21	91	87
22	94	91
23	96	94
24	97	96
25	98	97
26	99	98
27	99.5	99
28	99.8	99.4
29	99.87	99.7
30	99.94	99.8

Table 2.4. Community and clinical percentiles for the **Strategies** subscale.

Strategies		
Score	Community	Clinical
8	9	6
9	12	7
10	16	9
11	20	12
12	25	15
13	30	18
14	36	22
15	42	26
16	49	31
17	55	36
18	61	41
19	67	46
20	73	52
21	78	57
22	83	63
23	86	68
24	90	72
25	92	77
26	94	81
27	96	84
28	97	87

29	98	90
30	98.70	92
31	99.15	94
32	99.46	95
33	99.66	97
34	99.80	98
35	99.88	98.2
36	99.93	98.7
37	99.96	99.1
38	99.98	99.4
39	99.99	99.6
40	99.99	99.7

Table 2.5. Community and clinical percentiles for the **Strategies** subscale.

Clarity		
Score	Community	Clinical
5	7	4
6	11	7
7	17	11
8	24	16
9	33	23
10	43	31
11	54	40
12	64	50

13	73	60
14	81	69
15	88	77
16	92	84
17	95	89
18	97	93
19	98.69	96
20	99.36	98
21	99.71	99
22	99.87	99.3
23	99.95	99.7
24	99.98	99.8
25	99.99	99.9

Interpretive Text

The interpretive text for the DERS follows a structured format that adapts based on the client's scores, comparative position, and change over time.

Very Low (1st-5th percentile):

The client's total score indicates very few difficulties with emotion regulation compared to community peers. They generally demonstrate strong ability to understand and manage emotions effectively, maintain goal-directed behavior when distressed, and readily utilise adaptive coping strategies. Their score is higher than XX% of the general population and XX% of individuals in clinical settings.

Low (6-25th percentile):

The client's total score suggests minimal difficulties with emotion regulation. While some specific challenges may be present, these individuals generally report good emotional awareness and regulatory abilities. Their score is higher than XX% of the general population and XX% of individuals in clinical settings.

Average (26th-75th percentile):

The client's total score falls in the average range indicating a typical level of emotion regulation difficulties compared to community peers. Most individuals report some challenges with emotion regulation while maintaining generally adaptive functioning. Their score is higher than XX% of the general population and XX% of individuals in clinical settings.

High (76th-95th percentile):

The client's total score suggests difficulties with emotion regulation compared to community peers. They may experience frequent challenges understanding or managing emotions effectively, particularly during times of distress. Their score is higher than XX% of the general population and XX% of individuals in clinical settings.

Responses to the following items contributed to the client's high score:

<Three highest scored items >. i.e.,

- 1. I am clear about my feeling (Almost never)*
- 2. I pay attention to how I feel (Almost never)*
- 3. I experience my emotions as overwhelming and out of control (Sometimes)*

Very High (96+ percentile):

The client's score indicates substantial difficulties with emotion regulation compared to peers. These individuals likely experience pervasive challenges across multiple domains of emotion regulation that may significantly impact their functioning. Their score is higher than XX% of the general population and XX% of individuals in clinical settings.

Responses to the following items contributed to the client's very high score:

<Top five highest scored items >

- 8 I care about what I am feeling (Almost never)*
- 9 I am confused about how I feel (Almost never)*
- 10 When I'm upset, I acknowledge my emotions (Almost never)*
- 11 When I'm upset, I become angry with myself for feeling that way (Sometimes)*
- 12 When I'm upset, I become embarrassed for feeling that way (Sometimes)*

Tracking score change over time.

Since the respondent was first assessed on [Date], their total difficulties in emotional regulation score has [not changed | not shown meaningful change (if change <9) | increased | decreased] [, from the (initial range) to the (current range) range] OR if in the same range, [and has remained in the (current range) range] [if change > 0: (score change = X)]. A change of half a standard deviation (9) or more points is considered meaningful based on a minimally important difference calculation.

Example: Since the respondent was first assessed on 02 Jan 2025, their total difficulties in emotional regulation score has not shown meaningful change and has remained in the Average range (score change = 3).

A note is also provided to inform users of the updated percentiles.

Note, the normative samples were updated on '<Date>' so percentile calculations before this date may vary from current percentiles on graphs.

To recalculate percentiles you can follow

<<https://novopsych.com.au/support/user-guide/percentiles-based-on-age-and-gender-how-to-re-norm-and-assessment/>>.

The text then describes any two highest subscales that score at or above the High range. The subscales are presented in order based on percentile value, with higher percentiles listed first. For each elevated subscale, the text includes:

- The specific subscale percentile comparison to community norms
- An explanation of what aspect of emotion dysregulation the subscale measures
- The specific items that received the highest ratings, highlighting the most problematic areas

This allows for quick identification of an individual's most significant emotion regulation challenges and informs clinical understanding.

Non-acceptance:

“The responses on the Non-acceptance subscale indicate strong negative secondary reactions to their own emotions, often feeling guilty, ashamed, embarrassed, or angry at themselves for experiencing negative emotions. Their score is on the XXst/nd/rd/th percentile when compared to a community adult sample. In therapy, this individual may benefit from psychoeducation about secondary emotions followed by self-compassion exercises.. ACT-based acceptance strategies and trauma-informed approaches could help build emotional tolerance when appropriate.

Items with the highest ratings were:

*<Top **Two** highest scored items >”*

Goals:

“The responses on the Goals subscale indicate significant difficulty concentrating and completing necessary tasks when experiencing negative emotions, with emotions frequently derailing goal-directed behavior. Their score is on the XXst/nd/rd/th percentile when compared to a community adult sample. In therapy, this individual may benefit from learning implementation intention strategies (‘if-then’ planning) alongside basic executive functioning skills. A gradual approach of building distress tolerance during progressively challenging tasks might be helpful..

Items with the highest ratings were:

*<Top **Two** highest scored items >”*

Impulse:

“The responses on the Impulse subscale indicate substantial difficulty controlling behaviours when emotionally aroused, often engaging in impulsive or regrettable actions when upset. Their score is on the XXst/nd/rd/th percentile when compared to a community adult sample. In therapy, this individual may benefit from establishing basic self-care routines focussing on physical health (sleep, exercise, nutrition, and avoiding mood-altering substances) as a foundation for emotion regulation. Developing personalised ‘pause button’ strategies for use during emotional arousal could be valuable.

Items with the highest ratings were:
<Top **Two** highest scored items >”

Awareness:

“The responses on the Awareness subscale indicate significant difficulty attending to or acknowledging emotional experiences, often remaining disconnected from or unaware of emotions. Their score is on the XXst/nd/rd/th percentile when compared to a community adult sample. In therapy, this individual may benefit from practising emotion awareness exercises, mindfulness skills and psychoeducation about the adaptive function and components of emotions.

Items with the highest ratings were:
<Top **Two** highest scored items >”

Strategies:

“The responses on the Strategies subscale indicate limited access to strategies to manage emotions when upset and a strong belief that little can be done to feel better once distressed. Their score is on the XXst/nd/rd/th percentile when compared to a community adult sample. In therapy, this individual may benefit from a skills-focus to develop emotion regulation and coping strategies, such as relaxation techniques, grounding strategies or skills to adaptively discharge or dampen emotional states.

Items with the highest ratings were:
<Top **Two** highest scored items >”

Clarity:

“The responses on the Clarity subscale indicate significant confusion about emotions being experienced, with marked difficulty understanding or identifying specific feelings. Their score is on the XXst/nd/rd/th percentile when compared to a community adult sample. In therapy, this individual may benefit from psychoeducation about emotions, as well as structured emotional differentiation exercises that progress from basic to complex emotions. Narrative techniques might help develop a richer emotional vocabulary, supported by gentle emotional monitoring.

Items with the highest ratings were:
<Top **Two** highest scored items >”

Developer

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Assessment Questions



Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS)

Instructions:

Please press the response that is most true for you.

		Almost Never	Sometimes	About half the time	Most of the time	Almost always
1	I am clear about my feeling	5	4	3	2	1
2	I pay attention to how I feel	5	4	3	2	1
3	I experience my emotions as overwhelming and out of control	1	2	3	4	5
4	I have no idea how I am feeling	1	2	3	4	5
5	I have difficulty making sense out of my feelings	1	2	3	4	5
6	I am attentive to my feelings	5	4	3	2	1
7	I know exactly how I am feeling	5	4	3	2	1
8	I care about what I am feeling	5	4	3	2	1
9	I am confused about how I feel	1	2	3	4	5
10	When I'm upset, I acknowledge my emotions	5	4	3	2	1
11	When I'm upset, I become angry with myself for feeling that way	1	2	3	4	5
12	When I'm upset, I become embarrassed for feeling that way	1	2	3	4	5
13	When I'm upset, I have difficulty getting work done	1	2	3	4	5
14	When I'm upset, I become out of control	1	2	3	4	5
15	When I'm upset, I believe that I will remain that way for a long time	1	2	3	4	5
16	When I'm upset, I believe that I'll end up feeling very depressed	1	2	3	4	5
17	When I'm upset, I believe that my feelings are valid and important	5	4	3	2	1



		Almost Never	Sometimes	About half the time	Most of the time	Almost always
18	When I'm upset, I have difficulty focusing on other things	1	2	3	4	5
19	When I'm upset, I feel out of control	1	2	3	4	5
20	When I'm upset, I can still get things done	5	4	3	2	1
21	When I'm upset, I feel ashamed with myself for feeling that way	1	2	3	4	5
22	When I'm upset, I know that I can find a way to eventually feel better	5	4	3	2	1
23	When I'm upset, I feel like I am weak	1	2	3	4	5
24	When I'm upset, I feel like I can remain in control of my behaviours	5	4	3	2	1
25	When I'm upset, I feel guilty for feeling that way	1	2	3	4	5
26	When I'm upset, I have difficulty concentrating	1	2	3	4	5
27	When I'm upset, I have difficulty controlling my behaviours	1	2	3	4	5
28	When I'm upset, I believe that there is nothing I can do to make myself feel better	1	2	3	4	5
29	When I'm upset, I become irritated with myself for feeling that way	1	2	3	4	5
30	When I'm upset, I start to feel very bad about myself	1	2	3	4	5
31	When I'm upset, I believe that wallowing in it is all I can do	1	2	3	4	5
32	When I'm upset, I lose control over my behaviours	1	2	3	4	5
33	When I'm upset, I have difficulty thinking about anything else	1	2	3	4	5
34	When I'm upset I take time to figure out what I'm really feeling.	5	4	3	2	1
35	When I'm upset, it takes me a long time to feel better	1	2	3	4	5
36	When I'm upset, my emotions feel overwhelming	1	2	3	4	5

Developer Reference:



Assessment powered by

NovoPsych



NovoPsych

Gratz, K. L., & Roemer, L. (2004). Multidimensional assessment of emotion regulation and dysregulation: Development, factor structure, and initial validation of the difficulties in emotion regulation scale. *Journal of psychopathology and behavioral assessment*, 26(1), 41-54.

[Administer Now](#)

Sample Result

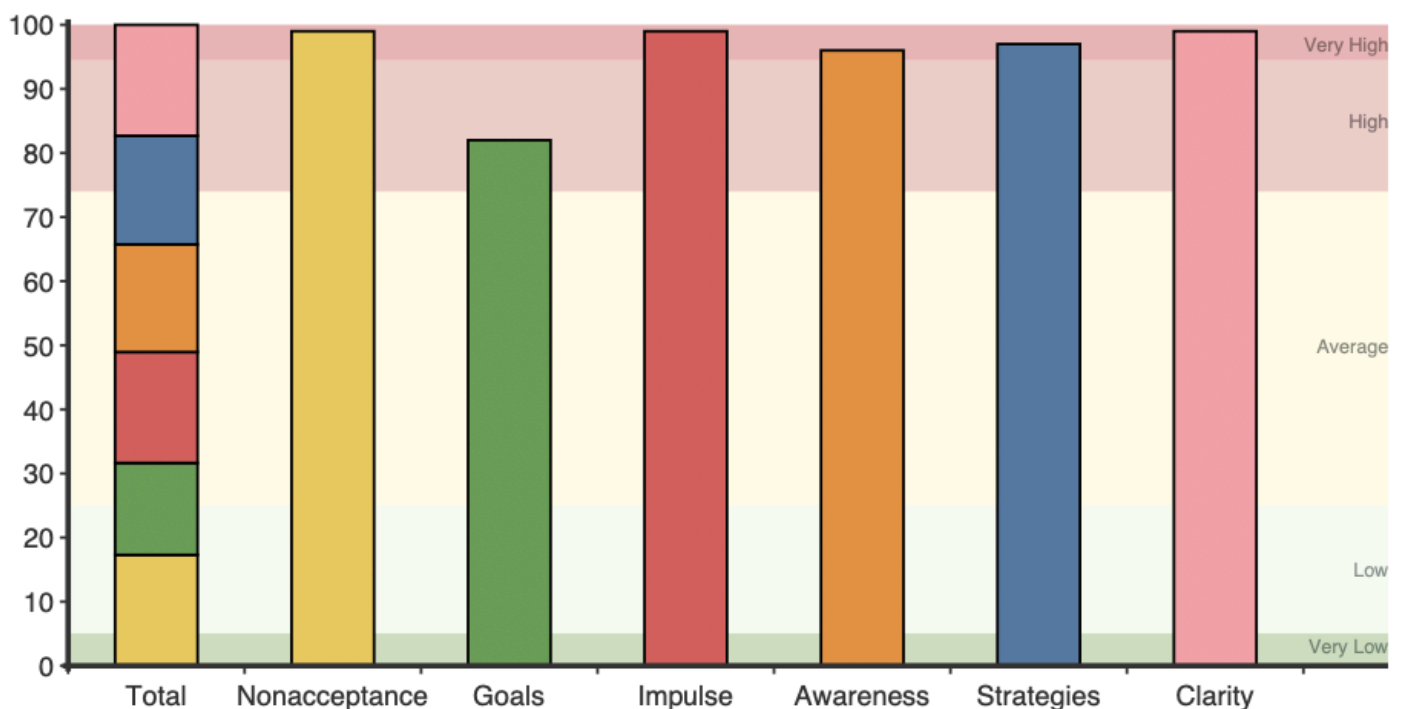
Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS)

<i>Client Name</i>	Generic Client	<i>Date administered</i>	23 Jan 2025
<i>Date of birth (age)</i>	1 Jan 1999 (26)	<i>Time taken</i>	1 min 15s
<i>Assessor</i>	Dr Emerson Bartholomew		

Results

	Raw Score	Community percentile	Clinical percentile	Descriptor
Total	134	100	98	Very High
Nonacceptance of emotional responses	22	99	89	Very High
Difficulty engaging in goal-directed behaviour	19	82	80	High
Impulse control difficulties	22	99	97	Very High
Lack of emotional awareness	23	96	94	Very High
Limited access to emotion regulation strategies	28	97	87	Very High
Lack of emotional clarity	20	99	98	Very High

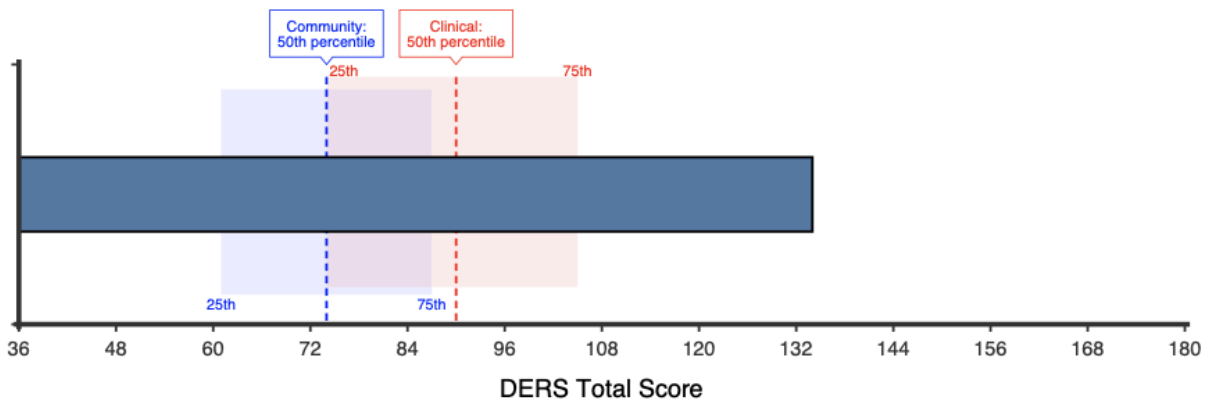
DERS Community Percentiles





Client Name | Generic Client

DERS Score Compared to Community and Clinical Populations



Interpretation

The client's score indicates substantial difficulties with emotion regulation compared to peers. These individuals likely experience pervasive challenges across multiple domains of emotion regulation that may significantly impact their functioning. Their score is higher than 100% of the general population and 98% of individuals in clinical settings.

Responses to the following items contributed to the client's very high score:

- 24. *When I'm upset, I feel like I can remain in control of my behaviours (Almost Never)*
- 1. *I am clear about my feeling (Sometimes)*
- 2. *I pay attention to how I feel (Sometimes)*
- 3. *I experience my emotions as overwhelming and out of control (Most of the time)*
- 4. *I have no idea how I am feeling (Most of the time)*

Area(s) of Difficulty:

The responses on the Clarity subscale indicate significant confusion about emotions being experienced, with marked difficulty understanding or identifying specific feelings. Their score is on the 99th percentile when compared to a community adult sample. In therapy, this individual may benefit from psychoeducation about emotions, as well as structured emotional differentiation exercises that progress from basic to complex emotions. Narrative techniques might help develop a richer emotional vocabulary, supported by gentle emotional monitoring.

Items with the highest ratings were:

- 1. *I am clear about my feeling (Sometimes)*
- 4. *I have no idea how I am feeling (Most of the time)*

The responses on the Non-acceptance subscale indicate strong negative secondary reactions to their own emotions, often feeling guilty, ashamed, embarrassed, or angry at themselves for experiencing negative emotions. Their score is on the 99th percentile when compared to a community adult sample. In therapy, this individual may benefit from psychoeducation about



Client Name	Generic Client
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Interpretation (cont.)

secondary emotions followed by self-compassion exercises. ACT-based acceptance strategies and trauma-informed approaches could help build emotional tolerance when appropriate.

Items with the highest ratings were:

- 11. *When I'm upset, I become angry with myself for feeling that way (Most of the time)*
- 12. *When I'm upset, I become embarrassed for feeling that way (Most of the time)*

Scoring and Interpretation Information

For comprehensive information on the DERS, [see here](#).

Total raw scores range from 36-180, with higher scores indicating greater difficulties in emotion regulation. Subscale raw scores have several ranges listed below:

-Non-acceptance (6 items: 11, 12, 21, 23, 25, 29): The Nonacceptance of Emotional Responses subscale assesses negative secondary responses to negative emotions and non-accepting reactions to distress (range 6-30)

-Goals (5 items: 13, 18, 20, 26, 33): The Difficulties Engaging in Goal-Directed Behavior subscale measures difficulties concentrating and accomplishing tasks when experiencing negative emotions (range 5-25)

-Impulse (6 items: 3, 14, 19, 24, 27, 32): The Impulse Control Difficulties subscale reflects difficulties remaining in control of behaviour when experiencing negative emotions (range 6-30)

-Awareness (6 items: 2, 6, 8, 10, 17, 34): The Lack of Emotional Awareness subscale focuses on inattention to and lack of awareness of emotional responses (range 6-30)

-Strategies (8 items: 15, 16, 22, 28, 30, 31, 35, 36): The Limited Access to Emotional Regulation Strategies subscale assesses the belief that little can be done to regulate emotions effectively when upset (range 8-40)

-Clarity (5 items: 1, 4, 5, 7, 9): The Lack of Emotional Clarity subscale reflects the degree to which individuals know and understand the emotions they experience (range 5-25)

On first administration, a stacked bar graph shows the total and each of the six subscale scores in community percentiles. Percentiles give context to a client's score, showing how they compare to their peers. For example, a percentile of 50 represents the typical level of difficulties with emotional regulation among adults in the community. A horizontal comparison graph is also presented showing where a respondent's score is in comparison to the normative and clinical samples.

When administered more than once, a line graph is presented for the raw total score with clinical percentile labels on the right. A second line graph is presented plotting each of the six subscales in clinical percentiles. Significant improvements or deterioration in the total score is indicated by shifts of half a standard deviation or greater (approximately 9 total score points or more) following the guidelines of the Minimally Important Difference (Turner et al., 2010).



Client Name	Generic Client
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Scoring and Interpretation Information (cont.)

Severity categories were created based on community percentiles derived from the combined community sample:

-Percentiles 1st-5th = "Very Low"

-Percentiles 6th-25th = "Low"

-Percentiles 26th-75th = "Average"

-Percentiles 76th-95th = "High"

-Percentiles 96th+ = "Very High"

Client Responses

		Almost Never	Sometimes	About half the time	Most of the time	Almost always
1	I am clear about my feeling	5	4	3	2	1
2	I pay attention to how I feel	5	4	3	2	1
3	I experience my emotions as overwhelming and out of control	1	2	3	4	5
4	I have no idea how I am feeling	1	2	3	4	5
5	I have difficulty making sense out of my feelings	1	2	3	4	5
6	I am attentive to my feelings	5	4	3	2	1
7	I know exactly how I am feeling	5	4	3	2	1
8	I care about what I am feeling	5	4	3	2	1
9	I am confused about how I feel	1	2	3	4	5
10	When I'm upset, I acknowledge my emotions	5	4	3	2	1
11	When I'm upset, I become angry with myself for feeling that way	1	2	3	4	5
12	When I'm upset, I become embarrassed for feeling that way	1	2	3	4	5





Client Name	Generic Client
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Client Responses (cont.)

		Almost Never	Sometimes	About half the time	Most of the time	Almost always
13	When I'm upset, I have difficulty getting work done	1	2	3	4	5
14	When I'm upset, I become out of control	1	2	3	4	5
15	When I'm upset, I believe that I will remain that way for a long time	1	2	3	4	5
16	When I'm upset, I believe that I'll end up feeling very depressed	1	2	3	4	5
17	When I'm upset, I believe that my feelings are valid and important	5	4	3	2	1
18	When I'm upset, I have difficulty focusing on other things	1	2	3	4	5
19	When I'm upset, I feel out of control	1	2	3	4	5
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29	When I'm upset, I become irritated with myself for feeling that way	1	2	3	4	5
30	When I'm upset, I start to feel very bad about myself	1	2	3	4	5
31	When I'm upset, I believe that wallowing in it is all I can do	1	2	3	4	5





Client Name | Generic Client

Client Responses (cont.)

		Almost Never	Sometimes	About half the time	Most of the time	Almost always
32	When I'm upset, I lose control over my behaviours	1	2	3	4	5
33	When I'm upset, I have difficulty thinking about anything else	1	2	3	4	5
34	When I'm upset I take time to figure out what I'm really feeling.	5	4	3	2	1
35	When I'm upset, it takes me a long time to feel better	1	2	3	4	5
36	When I'm upset, my emotions feel overwhelming	1	2	3	4	5

