

# HEADSS for Adolescents (HEADSS)

---

## Keywords:

Adolescents

## Background:

This is an interview instrument for finding out about issues in adolescents' lives. It was developed by Cohen and colleagues (Cohen et al., 1991)

## Developer(s):

Eric Cohen, Richard G. MacKenzie, and Gary L. Yates

## Copyright:

Publisher: Elsevier

---

---

## Assessment:

### Home

- Who lives with the young person? Where?
- Do they have their own room?
- What are relationships like at home?
- What do parents and relatives do for a living?
- Ever institutionalized? Incarcerated?
- Recent moves? Running away?
- New people in home environment?

### Education and employment

- School/grade performance--any recent changes? Any dramatic past changes?
- Favorite subjects--worst subjects? (include grades)
- Any years repeated/classes failed

- Suspension, termination, dropping out?
- Future education/employment plans?
- Any current or past employment?
- Relations with teachers, employers--school, work attendance?

## Activities

- On own, with peers (what do you do for fun?, where? when?)
- With family?
- Sports--regular exercise?
- Church attendance, clubs, projects?
- Hobbies--other activities?
- Reading for fun--what?
- TV--how much weekly--favorite shows?
- Favorite music?
- Does young person have car, use seat belts?
- History of arrests--acting out--crime?

## Drugs

- Use by peers? Use by young person? (include tobacco, alcohol)
- Use by family members? (include tobacco, alcohol)
- Amounts, frequency, patterns of use/abuse, and car use while intoxicated?
- Source--how paid for?

## Sexuality

- Orientation?
- Degree and types of sexual experience and acts?
- Number of partners?
- Masturbation? (normalize)
- History of pregnancy/abortion?
- Sexually transmitted diseases--knowledge and prevention? Contraception?  
Frequency of use?
- Comfort with sexual activity, enjoyment/pleasure obtained? History of sexual/physical abuse?

## Suicide/Depression

- Sleep disorders (usually induction problems, also early/frequent waking or greatly increased sleep and complaints of increasing fatigue)

- Appetite/eating behavior changes
  - Feelings of 'boredom'
  - Emotional outbursts and highly impulsive behavior
  - History of withdrawal/isolation
  - Hopeless/helpless feelings
  - History of past suicide attempts, depression, psychological counseling
  - History of suicide attempts in family or peers
  - History of recurrent serious 'accidents'
  - Psychosomatic symptomology
  - Suicidal ideation (including significant current and past losses)
  - Decreased affect on interview, avoidance of eye contact--depression posturing
  - Preoccupation with death (clothing, media, music, art).
- 

## References:

- Goldenring, J, Cohen, E (1988) Getting into adolescents heads. Contemporary Pediatrics, July: 75-80.
- Cohen, E, MacKenzie, R.G., Yates, G.L. (1991). HEADSS, a psychosocial risk assessment instrument: Implications for designing effective intervention programs for runaway youth. Journal of Adolescent Health 12 (7): 539-544.

**Download this page as a PDF file**