



Subjective Units of Distress Scale (SUDS)

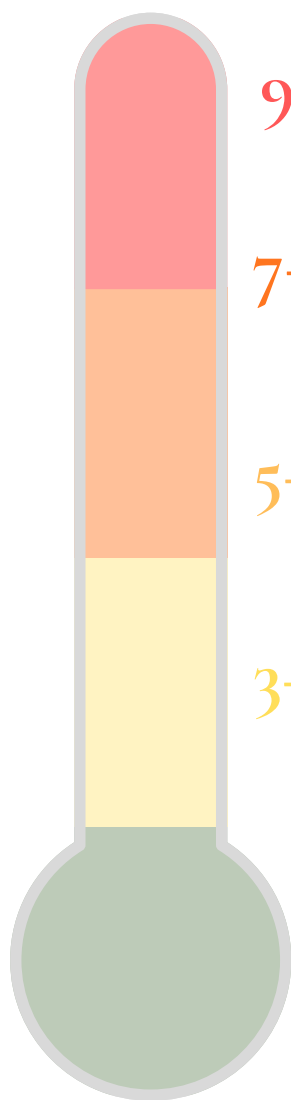


Understanding Your Distress

The Subjective Units of Distress Scale, or SUDS, is a simple tool for rating how distressed, anxious, overwhelmed, or uncomfortable you feel in a particular moment.

Rather than asking, “Am I anxious or not?” the SUDS scale helps you notice how intense the feeling is.

There is no right or wrong number. Your rating is based on your own experience.



9–10 VERY HIGH DISTRESS

This feels like the highest level of distress I can imagine experiencing in this moment.

7–8 HIGH DISTRESS

My distress feels extremely intense. I may feel panicked, emotionally flooded, or strongly driven to escape the situation.

5–6 MODERATE DISTRESS

My emotions are harder to ignore. I may have difficulty concentrating, feel physically tense, or notice stronger anxious thoughts.

3–4 MILD TO MODERATE DISTRESS

My discomfort is noticeable. I may feel distracted, tense, worried, or restless, but I can still function

1–2 VERY MILD DISTRESS

I notice a little discomfort, worry, or tension, but it is easy to manage.

0 CALM

I feel comfortable, calm, and at ease.



A HELPFUL REMINDER

Your SUDS number does not need to reach zero for a coping strategy to be helpful. A change from an 8 to a 6, for example, may mean your nervous system is beginning to settle.

The goal is to notice what you are experiencing, respond to yourself with care, and identify what helps.



Using the SUDS

Check in with yourself



PAUSE AND ASK: WHAT NUMBER AM I AT RIGHT NOW?

Then notice what is happening in a few different areas.

WHAT AM I NOTICING?

IN MY BODY:

IN MY THOUGHTS:

IN MY EMOTIONS:

WHAT DO I FEEL LIKE DOING RIGHT NOW?

WHAT MIGHT HELP RIGHT NOW?



Slow Breathing



Movement or Stretching



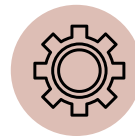
Reach out to a trusted friend



Grounding



Take a break



Use a coping skill

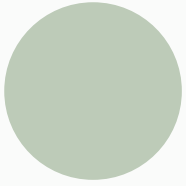
SUDS Before: ____ /10

What I tried:

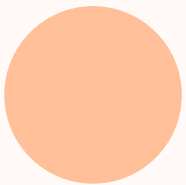
SUDS After: ____ /10

Learn Your Distress Patterns

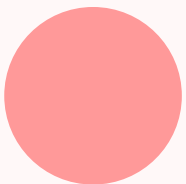
Over time, noticing how distress shows up at different levels can help you recognize your needs earlier and choose what helps.



WHEN I AM AROUND 2-3, I TEND TO NOTICE:



WHEN I AM AROUND 5-6, I TEND TO NOTICE:



WHEN I AM AROUND 8-9, I TEND TO NOTICE:

WHAT HELPS ME MOST

When my distress is mild: _____

When my distress is moderate: _____

When my distress is high: _____



Remember:

The SUDS scale is a tool for awareness, not judgment. You do not need to make uncomfortable emotions disappear. Learning to notice changes in your distress can help you understand your patterns, recognize when you need support, and identify what helps you cope.