

Global Assessment of Relational Functioning (GARF) Scale*

Instructions The GARF scale can be used to indicate an overall judgement of the functioning of a family or other ongoing relationship on a hypothetical continuum ranging from competent, optimal relational functioning to a disrupted, dysfunctional relationship. The GARF scale permits the clinician to rate the degree to which a family or other ongoing relational unit meets the affective or instrumental needs of its members in the following areas:

A. Problem solving – skills in negotiating goals, rules and routines; adaptability to stress; communication skills; ability to resolve conflict.

B. Organisation – maintenance of interpersonal roles and subsystem boundaries; hierarchical functioning; coalitions and distribution of power, control and responsibility.

C. Emotional climate – tone and range of feelings; quality of caring, empathy, involvement, and attachment/commitment; sharing of values; mutual affective responsiveness, respect and regard; quality of sexual functioning

Note: Use specific, intermediate codes when possible, for example 45, 68,72. If detailed information is not adequate to make specific ratings, use midpoints of the five ranges, that is 90, 70, 50, 30 or 10.

81-100 Overall: Relational unit is functioning satisfactorily from self-report of participants and from perspectives of observers.

Agreed on patterns or routines exist that help meet the usual needs of each family/couple member; there is flexibility for change in response to unusual demands or events; and occasional conflicts and stressful transitions are resolved through problem-solving communication and negotiation.

There is a shared undertaking and agreement about roles and appropriate tasks, decision making is established for each functional area, and subsystem (eg parents-spouses, siblings and individuals).

There is a situationally appropriate, optimistic atmosphere in the family; a wide range of feelings is freely expressed and managed within the family; and there is a general atmosphere of warmth, caring and sharing of values among all family members. Sexual relations of adult members are satisfactory.

61-80 Overall: Functioning of relational unit is somewhat unsatisfactory. Over a period of time, many but not all difficulties are resolved without complaints..

Daily routines are present but there is some pain and difficulty in responding to the unusual. Some conflicts remain unresolved but do not disrupt family functioning.

* Table from DSM-IV, American Psychiatric Association, Washington, 1994

Decision making is usually competent, but efforts at control of one another are often greater than necessary or are ineffective. Individuals and relationships are clearly demarcated but sometimes a specific subsystem is depreciated or scapegoated.

A range of feeling is expressed, but instances of emotional blocking or tension are evident. Warmth and caring are present but are marred by a family member's irritability and frustrations. Sexual activity of adult members may be reduced or problematic.

41-60 Overall: Relational unit has occasional times of satisfying and competent functioning together, but clearly dysfunctional, unsatisfying relationships tend to predominate.

Communication is frequently inhibited by unresolved conflicts that often interfere with daily routines; there is significant difficulty in adapting to family stress and transitional change.

Decision making is only intermittently competent and effective; either excessive rigidity or significant lack of structure is evident at these times. Individual needs are quite often submerged by a partner or coalition.

Pain or ineffective anger or emotional deadness interfere with family enjoyment. Although there is some warmth and support for members, it is usually unequally distributed. Troublesome sexual difficulties between adults are often present.

21-40 Overall: Relational unit is obviously and seriously dysfunctional; forms and time periods of satisfactory relating are rare.

Family/couple routines do not meet the needs of members; they are grimly adhered to or blithely ignored. Life cycle changes, such as departures or entries into the relational unit generate painful conflict and obviously frustrating failures of problem solving.

Decision making is tyrannical or quite ineffective. The unique characteristics of individuals are unappreciated or ignored by either rigid or confusingly fluid coalitions.

There are infrequent periods of enjoyment of life together; frequent distancing or open hostility reflect significant conflicts that remain unresolved and quite painful. Sexual dysfunction among adult members is commonplace.

1-20 Overall: Relational unit has become too dysfunctional to retain continuity of contact and attachment.

Family/couple routines are negligible (eg no mealtime, sleeping or waking schedule); family members often do not know where others are or when they will be in or out; there is a little effective communication among family members.

Family/couple members are not organised in such a way that personal or generational responsibilities are recognised. Boundaries of relational unit as a whole and subsystems cannot

be identified or agreed on. Family members are physically endangered or injured or seriously attacked.

Despair and cynicism are pervasive; there is little attention to the emotional needs of others: there is almost no sense of attachment, commitment or concern about one another's welfare.

0: Inadequate information.