

Bipolar Spectrum Diagnostic Scale (BSDS)

A 25-point self-report screening tool for bipolar spectrum disorder, developed by Ronald W. Pies, MD, and validated by S. Nassir Ghaemi, MD, MPH, and colleagues. It combines a 19-item narrative checklist with a single story-fit rating. Print this page and have the patient complete it before their appointment.

PATIENT NAME

DATE

CLINICIAN

STEP 1 — READ THE PASSAGE

Please read through the entire passage below before filling in any blanks. Each sentence describes a mood or energy experience — tick the box next to every sentence that definitely describes you.

- 1 ☐ Some individuals notice that their mood and/or energy levels shift drastically from time to time.
- 2 ☐ These individuals notice that, at times, their mood and/or energy level is very low, and at other times, very high.
- 3 ☐ During their “low” phases, these individuals often feel a lack of energy; a need to stay in bed or get extra sleep; and little or no motivation to do things they need to do.
- 4 ☐ They often put on weight during these periods.
- 5 ☐ During their low phases, these individuals often feel “blue,” sad all the time, or depressed.
- 6 ☐ Sometimes, during these low phases, they feel hopeless or even suicidal.
- 7 ☐ Their ability to function at work or socially is impaired.
- 8 ☐ Typically, these low phases last for a few weeks, but sometimes they last only a few days.
- 9 ☐ Individuals with this type of pattern may experience a period of “normal” mood in between mood swings, during which their mood and energy level feels “right” and their ability to function is not disturbed.
- 10 ☐ They may then notice a marked shift or “switch” in the way they feel.
- 11 ☐ Their energy increases above what is normal for them, and they often get many things done they would not ordinarily be able to do.
- 12 ☐ Sometimes, during these “high” periods, these individuals feel as if they have too much energy or feel “hyper.”
- 13 ☐ Some individuals, during these high periods, may feel irritable, “on edge,” or aggressive.
- 14 ☐ Some individuals, during these high periods, take on too many activities at once.
- 15 ☐ During these high periods, some individuals may spend money in ways that cause them trouble.
- 16 ☐ They may be more talkative, outgoing, or sexual during these periods.
- 17 ☐ Sometimes, their behavior during these high periods seems strange or annoying to others.
- 18 ☐ Sometimes, these individuals get into difficulty with co-workers or the police, during these high periods.
- 19 ☐ Sometimes, they increase their alcohol or non-prescription drug use during these high periods.

STEP 2 — RATE HOW WELL THE STORY FITS

Now that the passage has been read, check ONE of the following four boxes.

☐ This story fits me very well, or almost perfectly6 points

☐ This story fits me fairly well4 points

☐ This story fits me to some degree, but not in most respects2 points

☐ This story does not really describe me at all0 points

SCORING

Each sentence checked on page 1 is worth **1 point** (maximum 19). Add the points from the story-fit rating above (0, 2, 4, or 6). The two totals combine for a score out of **25**.

Total scoreout of 25

INTERPRETATION

TOTAL SCORE	LIKELIHOOD OF BIPOLAR SPECTRUM DISORDER
0–6	Highly unlikely
7–12	Low probability
13–19	Moderate probability
20–25	High probability

Optimum threshold for a positive screen: a total score of **13 or above**.

The BSDS is a screening tool, not a diagnostic instrument. A positive score indicates that a full clinical evaluation for bipolar spectrum disorder is warranted — it does not confirm a diagnosis on its own.

Source: Ghaemi SN, Miller CJ, Berv DA, Klugman J, Rosenquist KJ, Pies RW. Sensitivity and specificity of a new bipolar spectrum diagnostic scale. J Affect Disord. 2005;84(2–3):273–277.