



Psychological Evaluation Also Known as Assessment or Testing *What to Expect*

Center of Being welcomes you to the assessment process, one which we hope feels both relieving and revealing! As we go along in this process, we hope to work as a team with you/your family, making sure that everyone feels able and willing to move through the different pieces of an evaluation, which may include any or all of the following:

- Interviewing/getting to know you through background and historical information
- Questionnaires
- Activities and tasks, perhaps including those that are play-based
- Feedback to show you the results and talk about what it all means

Please know that the most important parts of the testing process are the people going through it! We recognize *you* and/or *your child* to be the experts about what is being experienced, as it is *you* who brings the most valuable information and insights to the whole process. We are here to help you put this information together in a way that is affirming, makes sense, and yields new forms of validation and support. Many aspects of this process can be modified, such as talking through questionnaires or providing different forms of feedback for school or other environments. If we are not already providing you with your needed or desired accommodations, please do let us know.

PREPARING

1. If you have prior testing, evaluations, assessments, or summaries from other practitioners or educational or support settings, please bring these to your appointment or email them to us through our secured email system. For example, information about academic and work life, medical and disability supports, or behavioral observations from others, will help us gain a well-rounded understanding and inform the assessment process in important ways.
2. A psychological evaluation is an important undertaking that requires a person to be ready, on both a physical and mental level...it can be taxing, especially for a child. It is important that you/your child come/s to the assessment situation well-prepared. Please consider the following recommendations as ways to prepare:
 - If at all possible, we would like to schedule evaluation times so that returning to a school or home environment afterwards will not be overly stressful. For example, please avoid scheduling a psychological evaluation session that would be followed up by a taxing



event or another testing/similarly stressful situation. It may be helpful to allow for some transition time, time away from work or class after any evaluation period.

- Ensure adequate rest and a good night's sleep before coming in.
- Try your best to eat well and enough.
- **Medications:** If you/your child take/s medication, including psychotropic medication (prescribed by a psychiatrist, psychiatric nurse practitioner, or an appropriately credentialed psychologist), please ensure these are taken as usual.
 - ***Possible exception:** If you/your child is taking medication for attention deficit (ADHD), please discuss with the evaluator if this medication should be taken prior to certain evaluation procedures. Often when being evaluated for ADHD, it is best to not be taking medication that might control for the symptoms. It is also likely that ADHD medication will be desirable for other portions of the evaluation, and thus further planning may be necessary to make sure this can happen.
- If your (or your child's) physical or emotional state is in some way compromised on the day of testing, please inform the person you are meeting with, and the session might be rescheduled. Some examples might be: feeling under the weather; taking medication that would make one drowsy; a poor night's sleep prior; a death in the family, etc. These types of things can affect performance on some of the tests used for psychological evaluation.
- Please have all accommodating accessories (such as prescription hearing aides and eye glasses) at the appointment.
- Bring snacks to have during breaks, as needed (some snacks will be available at the office as well).
- Feel free to have water or another drink available for appropriate times during assessment (water will be available at the office as well).
- You may bring in a favorite game or toy that you believe will help you or your child focus and manage certain portions of the interviewing or testing situation. Please know/let them know it might not be possible to hold or use this time at all times, depending on the task.
- It may be important to take breaks when offered and to ask for breaks if needed; please assure your child they can ask for these. Testing can feel tiresome at times. Breaks will be

offered during long appointments. Breaks are a good time to eat a snack, stretch, move around, use the restroom, or spend time playing with a favorite game, fidget, or toy.



Specific to Children: Properly preparing your child for testing will help your child do their best, allow for a pleasant (or even fun!) testing experience, and help the evaluator gather the most reliable results possible. Children may have questions (that they may not ask) about why they are having to take “tests,” and may wonder if something is wrong with them. Here are a few ideas for how to help your child through such thoughts or emotions, and how to orient them to the concept of the this type of testing:

- a. Prioritize preparing your child to be comfortable, relaxed, and as motivated as possible on the day(s) of testing.
- b. Open up a conversation with your child about what they might be concerned about. Try to be straightforward about the process, and in your answers to what your child says they are concerned about.
 - Talk about the testing experience as a special kind of “meeting,” instead of using a word like test, assessment, or evaluation, which often sounds much scarier than it actually usually is!
 - Explain that these types of meetings are not unusual and that many other children participate in them, too.
 - Reassure your child that the reason for doing this kind of meeting is so that you and others who care about them can understand exactly what is going well and not so well for them, in order to be able to help them in the best way possible. This means getting to know their experiences, like what things seem easy or hard for them, as well as what they like and do not like.
 - Offer possible feelings that you imagine they might feel, letting them know that all kinds of different feelings would be normal.
 - Emphasize that the testing/meeting is not being done because they are or have been bad in any way, nor will it result in any kind of “bad grade.”
 - Let them know that some of the activities they do might be fun or like playing, some activities might seem strange or different for them, other activities might seem not as fun, and some of it might feel a bit like school.
 - Let them know they can ask for breaks as needed and yet will be asked to complete certain tasks altogether.



- Encourage them to do their best and try their hardest with all the activities, explaining that this will aid in helping to solve the problems they might be having.
- After the assessment meetings, your child may question you about it, or be concerned that they took a “test” or performed poorly. It is important to discuss this after, checking in with them to reassure them of what you went over with them before (see “b.” above).

TYPICAL SEQUENCING OF EVENTS:

1. The initial testing intake interview will be with a psychologist, or with a psychology doctoral student.
 - An intake session is 30-90 minutes, most typically 1 hour.
2. Administration time for assessments varies, and an estimate would be between 2 and 3 hours per evaluation block on a given day; sometimes there are 2-4 of these blocks of time needed to complete all assessments and interviews.
3. After all test administration is complete, it will take time to score and interpret the tests, and then write up the report, which might take anywhere between 4-20 hours, depending on complexity.
4. Once the above is completed, the psychologist or lead evaluator will contact you, as guardians, to schedule a 1-hour feedback session to review the results.

For children:

1. the initial intake interview session requires that at least one guardian be present to discuss the history as pertains to the evaluation and plan for assessments, although all involved guardians are recommended to provide input into this so that all perspectives can be taken into account.
 - An intake session is 30-90 minutes, most typically 1 hour. Guardians can be seen at separate times, for 30-90 minutes each as well.
 - Typically the child is not a part of this initial meeting, and their own interview takes place during the follow-up testing block. If you have a teenager or it is agreed your child should meet with this clinician at the outset of the evaluation for clinically relevant purposes (such as to develop comfort, build rapport, etc.), it is likely that they will still be spending some time in the waiting room, and so it is best to come prepared with something to do while there. We do have some activities in the waiting spaces that might also help keep them occupied.



2. Administration time for assessments varies, and an estimate would be between 2 and 3 hours per evaluation block on a given day; sometimes there are 2-4 of these blocks of time needed to complete all assessments and interviews.
3. After all test administration is complete, it will take time to score and interpret the tests, and then write up the report, which might take anywhere between 4-20 hours, depending on complexity.
4. Once the above is completed, the psychologist or lead evaluator will contact you, as guardians, to schedule a 1-hour feedback session to review the results.
 - Separate results sessions may be scheduled for guardians who wish to come in separately.

*It is recommended that young children who are evaluated be present for only 10 minutes or so at the end of the feedback hour, and depending on the case, older children may be in the feedback session for longer than this. Please prepare your child ahead of time to have something to do while in the waiting room during the feedback session, although we do have a few toys, activities, and books that might entertain them.

Please Note*

Center of Being will make efforts to use affirming, respectful, and culturally sensitive language whenever possible. However, please know that many assessment tools use language that is pathologizing or that sounds negative. We welcome your feedback about words and expressions that sound and feel best for you.