



Psychological Assessment

Psychological assessment (also known as a psych-ed or a psycho-educational assessment) is meant to answer a question or provide information about a specific area of functioning. While the process is a little different for everyone, it generally follows this pattern.

1. The person (or the person's parent/guardian if the child is 12 or younger) meet with the psychologist. During this meeting we talk about informed consent, what is working for the person, what is not working, and what has been tried before. If the person has had a previous assessment, please bring it to this meeting. Together, we decide on an assessment plan and what questions we will try to answer.
2. Depending on the age of the person and other circumstances, the psychologist may wish to observe them at school or daycare.
3. The person then meets with the psychologist to complete the direct assessment. This usually takes place over 2 or 3 sessions which are about 2 hours in length.
4. The psychologist then examines and interprets the results and writes up the assessment report.
5. The person (or their parent/guardian) and the psychologist then meet to debrief the report, talk about the findings, and discuss strategies and recommendations that might be helpful.

Focus of an Assessment

As mentioned, an assessment can help to answer a question or explore an area of functioning. During the first meeting, the person and the psychologist talk about the focus of the assessment or what question they will try to answer. Some of the questions or areas of focus that can be examined with an assessment are:

- Why is this person having difficulties with test taking?
- Why is this person having difficulties in school or at work?
- How can we best support them at school or work?
- Why are they having difficulties remembering appointments or supplies?
- Why does this person struggle to fulfill their duties at school or work?
- They are having difficulties remembering information. What is the extent of their memory challenges? How can we help this person to best learn and remember?
- This person has great intentions, but cannot seem to get all the pieces together. What is the extent of their organizational challenges and what can be done to support them in planning and remembering?



Areas That Can Be Assessed

To answer these questions, or other similar questions, a psychologist may examine the following areas of functioning:

- Intelligence – this is how we learn and solve novel or new problems
- Academics – this includes reading, writing, math, and listening comprehension
- Memory – this is how we remember verbal (spoken) and visual (seen) information and can include working or short-term memory, as well as how well we learn information and remember it later
- Executive Functions – these are a set of abilities that we use to organize and plan so that we can have goal-directed action and can include organization, planning, time management, shift, emotional regulation, and behavioural regulation
- Attention – this is how well we can sustain attention and focus, while ignoring distractions
- Mental Health or Social-Emotional Functioning – this includes concerns like anxiety (excessive worry) and depression (sadness) and also more specific concerns like the extent to which traumatic events are impacting the person
- Adaptive Functioning – this includes daily life skills like managing finances, social skills, following routines, and using community resources

Information from a psycho-educational assessment is used to offer suggestions and recommendations that can help a person with their challenges and can help those that support a person by offering suggestions on how the person learns, remembers, and may function best. A psycho-educational assessment may also, when appropriate, offer a diagnosis for the person. The information gathered in a psycho-educational assessment is compiled into a report. The person and the psychologist each keep a copy of the report.

Important things to keep in mind:

- If the person is an adult, the person decides who has access to the information provided in the report. If the person is not an adult or is not competent to give consent, the legal guardian decides who has access to the report. They may or may not wish to share the report or information with other professionals or agencies.
- If a third-party is paying for the assessment and report, then the payee and the person will discuss with the psychologist whom may access the report, before the assessment begins.