

What Is the Global Assessment of Functioning (GAF) Scale?

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The Global Assessment of Functioning, or GAF, scale is used to rate how serious a [mental illness](#) may be. It measures how much a person's symptoms affect his or her day-to-day life on a scale of 0 to 100.

It's designed to help mental health providers understand how well the person can do everyday activities. The score can help figure out what level of care someone may need and how well certain treatments might work.

The GAF is based on a scale that was first used in 1962. It's been updated over time. In 2013, the manual that psychiatrists in the U.S. use to define and classify mental disorders dropped it in favor of a scale designed by the World Health Organization. But government agencies and insurance companies, as well as others, still use it and aren't expected to replace it any time soon.

The Scale

A GAF rating can be based on many things, including:

- An interview or questionnaire
- Medical records
- Information from the person's doctor, care givers, or close relatives
- Police or court records about violent or illegal behavior

It's broken into 10 sections. These are known as anchor points. The higher your score, the better you're able to handle daily activities:

The Global Assessment of Functioning (GAF)

Source: *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Fourth Edition

- **100-91:** Superior functioning in a wide range of activities, life's problems never seem to get out of hand, is sought out by others because of his or her many positive qualities. No symptoms.
- **90-81:** Absent minimal symptoms (e.g. mild anxiety before an exam), good functioning in all areas, interested and involved in a wide range of activities, socially effective, generally satisfied with life, no more than everyday problems or concerns (e.g., an occasional argument with family members).
- **80-71:** If symptoms are present, they are transient and expectable reactions to psychosocial stressors (e.g., difficulty concentrating after family argument); no more than slight impairment in social, occupational, or school functioning (e.g., temporarily falling behind in school work).
- **70-61:** Some mild symptoms (e.g., depressed mood and mild insomnia) OR some difficulty in social, occupational, or school functioning (e.g., occasional truancy, or theft within the household), but generally functioning pretty well, has some meaningful interpersonal relationships.
- **60-51:** Moderate symptoms (e.g., flat and circumstantial speech, occasional panic attacks) OR moderate difficulty in social occupational, or social functioning (e.g., few friends, conflicts with co-workers).
- **50-41:** Serious symptoms (e.g., suicidal ideation, severe obsessional rituals, frequent shoplifting) OR any serious impairment in social, occupational, or school functioning (e.g., no friends, unable to keep a job).
- **40-31:** Some impairment in reality testing or communication (e.g., speech is at times illogical, obscure, or irrelevant) OR major impairment in several areas, such as work or school, family relations, judgment, thinking, or mood (e.g., depressed man avoids friends, neglects family, and is unable to work, child frequently beats up younger children, is defiant at home, and is failing at school).
- **30-21:** Behavior is considerably influenced by delusions or hallucinations OR serious impairment in communication or judgment (e.g., sometimes incoherent, acts grossly inappropriately, suicidal preoccupation) OR inability to function in almost all areas (e.g., stays in bed all day, no job, home, or friends).
- **20-11:** Some danger of hurting self or others (e.g., suicide attempts without clear expectation of death, frequently violent, manic excitement) OR occasionally fails to maintain minimal personal hygiene (e.g., smears feces) OR gross impairment in communication (e.g., largely incoherent or mute).
- **10-1:** Persistent danger of severely hurting self or others (e.g., recurrent violence) OR persistent inability to maintain minimal personal hygiene OR serious suicidal act with clear expectation of death.
- **0:** Inadequate Information.