



the institute for *girls'* development
A Psychological Corporation

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**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
ABOUT PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT**

What is psychological assessment used for?

Psychological assessment, sometimes called psychological testing, provides information that will help guide you and the professionals (teachers, therapists, etc) working with your daughter. Assessment provides an analysis of your child's strengths and difficulties. The assessment provides information about how your daughter can maximize her strengths as well recommendations about the most effective learning environment, communication styles and/or the best remedies or treatment for any challenges she faces.

When is psychological assessment most useful?

It is sometimes said that psychological assessment cannot find out anything that a good clinician could not find out by talking to someone. This may sometimes be true, however, there are times when assessment is very useful:

(1) *When there is not a lot of time.*

A good clinician can find out a lot about a person, but it generally takes quite a bit of time to glean the same amount of information that a psychological assessment can obtain in a few sessions. This can be important for many reasons. For example, you may have a child who is not doing well in school, and you want to rectify that as soon as possible, or your child may be acting in ways that are potentially harmful and there is a need to answer some questions quickly to improve the situation.

(2) *When it is not possible or easy for your daughter to express herself.*

This is the case especially with children, who are not very good yet at identifying their feelings or expressing themselves. The younger the child, the more difficult these tasks are. In addition, some older children (and adults) are not comfortable or skilled at assessing their problems or describing their inner worlds verbally.

(3) *When there is really no other good way to get the information needed.*

This is especially true with areas such as learning style and neuropsychological functioning or situations in which your daughter may be facing multiple challenges. Sorting these things out is the job of this type of assessment.

What if my child doesn't do well on the tests?

The word "test" brings up thoughts of schools and grades and doing well or poorly. That is not how these "tests" work. There are no right or wrong answers. The tests (which psychologists prefer to call "assessment instruments") are designed to find out about how you or your child functions. For example, they might provide information about how your daughter is best able to learn, whether she has sufficient coping resources, or how she responds to stress.

What are psychological assessment sessions like?

There are a vast number of psychological tests, each designed to look at a different aspect of a person's functioning or to answer a different type of question. When your child comes in for psychological assessment it is often because you; your child's teacher; or your child's physician, psychologist, or other health-care provider has questions or concerns which need to be addressed. The psychologist doing the assessment will try to determine what the specific concerns are and will select an appropriate group of tests (called a test battery) based on that information. These tests come in a variety of forms. Some are pencil and paper tests in which your daughter will answer lots of True/False questions about herself. Others are more "hands-on" and ask that she organize pictures or work with puzzles. In some, the psychologist will ask lots of questions, or she might be asked to respond to cues on a computer screen or make up stories to go along with pictures she is shown.

Should I begin or continue my daughter's therapy while the testing process is going on?

Yes. You, your daughter and her therapist should determine the initial goals of therapy and begin or continue. Your daughter can benefit from her therapy sessions even before the assessment results are available. The process is similar to being treated by a physician: The doctor will begin treating the symptoms and stabilizing the situation before all of the diagnostic information is collected. The diagnostic test results, when available, assist with the fine tuning of the work. This is true in psychological assessment as well.

How much does psychological assessment cost?

It depends. There is a considerable range of charges for assessment which depend on the purpose of the tests and whether they involve individual or group administration or administration by computer. Assessments done here are individually administered, and the assessment instruments making up the battery are individually selected for the particular client and situation. Such an assessment provides a comprehensive profile of cognitive functioning, personality structure and emotional functioning. This includes

- A preliminary interview with the client and/or his or her parents
- Two or three sessions of 2 to 4 hours each
- Scoring and interpretation of the test information
- Comprehensive written report with recommendations for school, home, therapy, and other services if applicable
- A 1 to 2 hour session explaining results.

Additional charges may apply if significant time is allocated to the review of previous assessment documents or history or to consultation with parents, teachers, or other practitioners involved in the client's care. So, the best plan is to speak to Dr. Chris Cooper, Clinical Director of Assessment, to discuss the goals of the testing and the best plan reaching those goals. Once you have collaborated together on this, she will then be able to discuss the specific costs.

Will insurance pay for psychological assessment?

Some insurance will pay for at least a part of the assessment costs. You should contact your insurance company and see what your policy offers. Often insurance companies will not pay unless they have approved the testing prior to it beginning. You should check with them about this. My policy is to charge you for the assessment, and give you a receipt that you can submit to your insurance company for reimbursement. Partial payment is expected at the beginning of the testing process, and payment in full by the last session. Credit cards can be used.

What are Dr. Cooper's qualifications?

Dr. Cooper graduated from the Clinical Psychology program at the University of Southern California in 1995. She trained extensively in the areas of personality, cognitive and neuropsychological testing including an assessment clerkship at the LAC+USC Medical Center's Psychiatric Hospital and an internship at the LAC+USC Medical Center's Psychiatric Outpatient clinic. In addition, she trained in neuropsychological testing at the USC/Saint Barnabas Senior Center and LAC+USC Medical Center. She has attended numerous courses and seminars in personality testing and especially in the use of the Rorschach Inkblot test.

Dr. Cooper is licensed in both Massachusetts and California. Dr. Cooper is Clinical Director of Assessment Services at the Institute for Girls' Development and maintains a private practice in Pasadena, California. She is also currently employed by Children's Friend, Inc of Worcester, Massachusetts to provide psychological assessment of children at that facility several times a year.