



The Judging Brain: In Danger (D) or Safe (S)?



Your "D" Score: Circle the most accurate number AFTER reading the descriptions

Pain stress

- 0- You have full control over your pain; it is manageable and mild
- 10- You have no control over your pain; it is unpredictable, constant and severe... it's as if the pain has a mind of its own

☺ 0 1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9 10 ☹

Work stress

- 0- You have no work stress, your job situation is perfect
- 10- You have tremendous stress and anxiety at your work or your current lack of work

☺ 0 1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9 10 ☹

Family stress

- 0- You have no family stress or issues, everything is lovely
- 10- You are dealing with a lot of family issues and stresses including spouse, parents, kids, in laws

☺ 0 1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9 10 ☹

Friend/social stress

- 0- You have a great social life and have close friends that you regularly see and get along with
- 10- You do not have a social life at all and/or are dealing with conflicts with friends

☺ 0 1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9 10 ☹

Financial stress

- 0- You have no financial stresses or worries, money is not an issue
- 10- You are dealing with a lot of financial stresses and have tremendous worries over your current money situation

☺ 0 1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9 10 ☹

Insurance/legal stress

- 0- You have no insurance or pending legal issues
- 10- You are very stressed about your dealings with your insurance company, adjustor, and/or lawyer and have an ongoing litigation

☺ 0 1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9 10 ☹

Fear of not recovering

- 0- You are 100% hopeful and optimistic of recovery
- 10- You are extremely fearful and worried about never getting better

☺ 0 1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9 10 ☹

Low mood /sadness

- 0- You rarely feel sad and rarely feel down
- 10- You have been diagnosed with depression and feel it is not still well controlled

☺ 0 1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9 10 ☹

Worry over x-rays & MRIs

- 0- You are not at all concerned about your x-ray or MRI
- 10- You are extremely worried about your x-ray and MRI results and have searched the internet to learn more, making things worse

☺ 0 1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9 10 ☹

Other health problems

- 0- You have no other health problems outside of your current pain condition
- 10- You have other health issues such as diabetes, high blood pressure, digestion issues, heart issues, weight gain, etc.

☺ 0 1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9 10 ☹

Place a beside each section that you circled **6 or over** and count the # of : ___ /10

Now add up all the scores for the questions (Note: Every score of 10 is counted as 20). Your D Score is ___



Your “S” Score: Circle the most accurate number AFTER reading the descriptions

Current level of physical activity

- 0- You are currently not involved in any physical activity and basically rest and lie down for most of the day
- 10- You do at least 1 hour of mild to moderate physical activity everyday such as walking, Yoga, swimming, gardening, etc.

☹ 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ☺

Level of family support

- 0- You have no family support and feel no one cares about your situation
- 10- You have a great supportive family that is always there to listen and help you if needed

☹ 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ☺

Job/employer/co-worker satisfaction

- 0- You hate your job, your employer and your coworkers
- 10- You absolutely love your job, your employer and all your coworkers

☹ 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ☺

Quality of diet/smoking/alcohol habits

- 0- You skip meals, eat fast food for every meal, smoke and regularly drink more than 3 servings of alcohol
- 10- You eat fresh fruits and vegetables every day, don't smoke and occasionally drink one serving of alcohol

☹ 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ☺

Satisfaction with health care providers

- 0- You are extremely dissatisfied with your doctors and therapists and regularly search for answers on Google/internet
- 10- You are extremely happy with your doctors and therapists; they are caring, knowledgeable and have your best interest in mind

☹ 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ☺

Time spent outdoors/in nature

- 0- You are basically always indoors, either in your home or at work and spend no time outdoors
- 10- You spend at least one hour a day outdoors with nature or in a park seven days a week

☹ 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ☺

Practicing relaxation & mindfulness

- 0- You don't put any time aside for relaxation, are constantly on the go and your mind chatters the entire day and even nights
- 10- You consciously put at least one hour aside every day for relaxation, breathing, meditation and mindfulness

☹ 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ☺

Quality and quantity of sleep

- 0- You do not sleep well at all, your sleep is interrupted and every morning you wake up tired
- 10- You are a perfect sleeper; get 7-8 hours of sleep every night and every morning you wake up refreshed

☹ 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ☺

Detailed life goals and plans set

- 0- You don't have any specific short or long term goals with your recovery or with your life in general (being pain-free is not a goal)
- 10- You have clear short term and long term health, social life and career goals; all written down on paper knowing exactly what you would like to achieve in 3 month, 1 year and in 5 years from now

☹ 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ☺

Current level of “fun” in your life

- 0- You don't put any time aside for fun activities and there is nothing that you consider as fun or enjoyable anymore
- 10- You consciously put at least one hour aside every day for fun activities; e.g. *you regularly listen to music, draw, paint, read books you love, smile, laugh, go out to movies or have dinner with friends*

☹ 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ☺



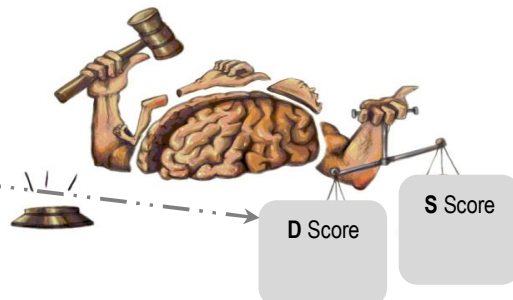
Place a beside each section that you circled 6 or over and count the # of : ___ /10

Now add up all the scores for the questions (Note: Every 0 score is counted as -10). **Your S Score is** ___

The terms **DIMs** and **SIMs** are described in "**The Explain Pain Handbook: Protectometer**" written by two world-renowned physiotherapists and pain educators, GL Moseley & DS Butler. A **DIM (Danger in Me)** is anything that your brain perceives as being dangerous and a **SIM (Safety in Me)** is anything that your brain perceives as being safe.

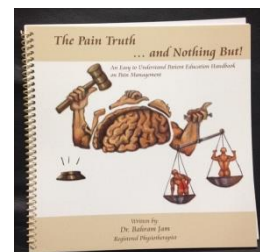
Imagine that your brain is holding an apothecary scale and is constantly judging if it is more in danger or more in safety. If the scale tips more towards the **danger side (DIMs)**, the brain and the nervous system become more sensitive to pain. If the scale tips more towards the **safety side (SIMs)**, the brain and the nervous system calm down, relax and become less sensitive to pain. However, the scale is not perfectly linear; sometimes just one single stress factor can be enough to heavily tilt your scale. For instance fear, job or family stress scores of 9 or 10 ...are really **heavy DIMs!**

Go ahead write your D & S scores in the grey boxes. Your goal must be to increase your overall S score and lessen your D score. Look again at the questionnaire; can you see specific areas where you could improve in?

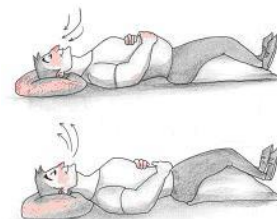


Here are 10 ways to help you tilt your scale towards the safety side and, in time, reduce your nervous system hypersensitivity and improve the quality of your life.

1. **Understand the truth about pain.** Understand and fully appreciate that, although your pain may be severe, it does not necessarily mean that you have a severe injury. Studies show that those who truly understand that their brain is a contributing factor to their pain recover much better than those who continue to believe that the problem lies only in the specific part of their body. There have even been cases where the brain calms down immediately in those who receive pain education and understand the concept of nervous system hypersensitivity. To learn more please read **The Pain Truth** book available on www.amazon.ca



2. **Breathe and be mindful.** Put one hour a day aside for relaxation, focused breathing or mindfulness meditation. You may or may have not done this in the past. There are so many studies to support those who do daily mindfulness meditation have significant reduction in their pain and a reduced need for pain medications. This is as easy as joining a Yoga class or typing "Mindfulness meditation" on Youtube (specifically look into Jon Kabat-Zinn).



3. **Drink water.** I don't know exactly how many cups, but a few cups of plain water. Limit your caffeinated drinks, sugary drinks and juices. You can surely appreciate that highly sugary and caffeinated drinks stimulate nerves and can increase nervous system hypersensitivity that you are trying to decrease.



4. **Eat food.** By food I mean anything that looks like real actual food and that is not out of a box, package or out of a drive through window. It's simple, have **2 servings of fruit and 2 servings of fresh vegetables every day**, or consider seeing a registered dietician. I know it's a cliché, but what you eat does affect how you feel. So do your best to eat well for your pain.



5. **Start moving.** You must devote at least **one hour each and every day** to consciously moving. This doesn't mean that you have to do the one hour all at once. You could break it up into four 15 minute sessions or six 10 minute sessions in a day. The movement can be walking in the park, Tai chi, Yoga, aqua fitness, lifting dumbbells – whatever works for you. Your physical therapist can help you set realistic physical goals and help prescribe the ideal physical activity for you.



6. **Sleep well.** Try every trick in *The Pain Truth* book to help you sleep better; things as simple as going to bed at the same time every night and avoiding computer or phone screens before bed time. Speak to your doctor about your sleep issues; medications should be the last resort.



7. **Spend time outside.** Did you know that humans now are the only true generation of cavemen? At no time in the history of mankind have we ever spent more time indoors than we do now. The human body was meant to be outside, not locked up day and night in a room or an office. We need to see light, we need to see and feel the sun. If plants had our lives most of them would surely wilt away. Have your doctor check your vitamin D levels; you may benefit from supplements, but that still doesn't replace going for a walk or sitting outside **for one hour!**



8. **Write down a plan.** The brain is amazing; it will not do anything unless it has a purpose. If it has a clear purpose and a goal it will do everything to achieve it. Grab a piece of paper now and write down what you would ideally like to be able to do in 3 months, one year and five years from now. Sorry, being pain-free cannot be a goal. Without clear and exciting goals, your brain will find it hard to get motivated to do anything including just getting out of bed. Go ahead, write down on a piece of paper all the things that you would like to achieve in your career, physical health, and socially. Then break the goals down to smaller bits with a timeline to do them. This is a key factor in your recovery.



9. **Write down your DIMs, stresses and emotions.** Certainly stress can increase pain, but did you know that buried or suppressed emotions may be the reason your pain is not getting better? Sit down and write a list of all the emotional issues you can think of (*e.g. anger, hurt, shame, fear, guilt, etc.*). Don't



underestimate the power of writing therapy. There is no right or wrong way of writing out your feelings... just write whatever you feel. There is no need to "fix" anything, it's only important that you become aware of your emotions. If there are issues in your life that make you feel angry or guilty for feeling angry, write them down. No longer hide them. There is no need to share your writings with anyone; you have the option of tearing the paper and throwing it out. Do this for **15 minutes every day**; you may be surprised how good writing therapy feels and how it can reduce your pain. If your current job is a major source of stress, then make a plan to do something; you can't just keep ignoring the stress, as your health depends on it.



10. **Write down SIMs and do fun things.** Write a list of everything that you've ever enjoyed doing or have considered fun. These could be activities you did when you were a child or many years ago. Do something fun for at least **an hour every day**. It doesn't have to be expensive, exotic or physical. Make a point of listening to music or an old record that you once enjoyed, draw, paint, go dancing, join a walking group, go to a movie with a friend, play an instrument, meet an old friend for lunch and talk about anything **but** your pain, sing in the shower, smile for no reason.



Although hard to believe, just keeping a constant 'fake' smile can make a person feel better and reduce pain. Try it for **one whole minute**. Then try a 'fake' laugh for **15 seconds**. You've got to try it...endorphins are very powerful painkillers without any side effects!



Focus on bringing joy to someone else; compliment others, hold the door open for the person behind you, hug someone, volunteer in a hospital or seniors' home, etc. It is really the single best way of focusing away from your DIMs, problems and stresses. **It is guaranteed to make you feel better.**