

## Terms Used in the Mental Status Examination

Association	Relationship between ideas or emotions by contiguity, continuity, or by similarities.
Confabulation	The more or less unconscious, defensive "filling in" of actual memory gaps by imaginary or fantastic experiences, often complex, that are recounted in a detailed and plausible way as though they were factual.
Neologism	In psychiatry, a new word or condensed combination of several words coined by a patient to express a highly complex meaning related to his conflicts; not readily understood by others; common in schizophrenia.
Blocking	Difficulty in recollection, or interruption of a train of thought or speech, due to emotional factors usually unconscious.
Dissociation	A psychological separation or splitting off; an intra-psychic defensive process which operates automatically and unconsciously. Through its operation, emotional significance and affect are separated and detached from an idea, situation, or object. Dissociation may unconsciously defer or postpone experiencing the emotional impact as for example, in selective amnesia.
Clang Association	Associations that are governed by rhyming sounds, rather than meaning, e.g., "This is what I thought, bought, knot, caught, rot, sought."
Flight of Ideas	Verbal skipping from one idea to another before the last one has been concluded; the ideas appear to be continuous, but are fragmentary and determined by chance associations.
Loss of Goal	Failure to follow a chain of thought through to a logical conclusion - usually elicited by asking a question which the patient starts to answer, then he seems to wander off the subject.
Circumstantial	A characteristic of conversation that proceeds indirectly to its goal idea, with many tedious details and parenthetical and irrelevant additions.
Autism (autistic thinking)	A form of thinking which attempts to gratify unfulfilled desires without due regard for reality. Objective facts are distorted, obscured, or excluded in varying degree.
Euphoria	An exaggerated feeling of physical and emotional well-being not consonant with apparent stimuli or events; usually of psychologic origin, but also seen in organic brain disease and toxic states.
Depression	Psychiatrically, a morbid sadness, dejection or melancholy; to be differentiated from grief, which is realistic and proportionate to what has been lost. A depression may vary in depth from neurosis to psychosis.
Anxiety	Apprehension, tension or uneasiness which stems from the anticipation of danger, the source of which is largely unknown or unrecognized. Anxiety is primarily of intra-psychic origin, in distinction to fear, which is the emotional response to a consciously recognized and usually external threat or danger. Anxiety and fear are accompanied by similar physiologic changes. Anxiety may be regarded as pathologic when it is present to such extent as to interfere with effectiveness in living; the achievement of desired realistic goals or satisfactions, or reasonable emotional comfort.

Apathetic	Showing lack of interest, indifference, or lacking feeling.
Flattened Affect	Displaying an abnormally small range of emotional expression.
Labile Affect	Rapidly shifting emotions, seen in extreme form in brain syndromes.
Inappropriate Affect	Emotional expressions that are not in accord with the situation, or what is being said, e.g., giggling when talking about the death of a parent.
Delusion	<p>A false belief out of keeping with the individual's level of knowledge and his cultural group. The belief is maintained against logical argument and despite objective contradictory evidence. Common delusions include:</p> <p><b>Delusions of Grandeur:</b> Exaggerated ideas of one's importance or identity.</p> <p><b>Delusions of Persecution:</b> Ideas that one has been singled out for persecution.</p> <p><b>Delusions of Reference:</b> Incorrect assumption that certain casual or unrelated remarks or the behavior of others applies to oneself.</p>
Illusion	The misinterpretation of a real, external sensory experience.
Hallucination	A false sensory perception in the absence of an actual external stimulus. May be of emotional or chemical (drugs, alcohol, etc.) origin, and may occur in any of the five senses.
Phobia	An obsessive, persistent, unrealistic fear of an external object or situation such as heights, open spaces, dirt, and animals. The fear is believed to arise through a process of displacing an internal (unconscious) conflict to an external object symbolically related to the conflict.
Compulsion	An insistent, repetitive, intrusive, and unwanted urge to perform an act which is contrary to the person's ordinary conscious wishes or standards. A defensive substitute for hidden and still more unacceptable ideas and wishes. Anxiety results from failure to perform the compulsive act.
Obsession	Persistent, unwanted idea or impulse that cannot be eliminated by logic or reasoning.
Sensorium	Roughly approximates consciousness. Includes the special sensory perceptive powers and their central correlation and integration in the brain. A clear sensorium conveys the presence of a reasonably accurate memory together with a correct orientation for time, place and person.
Orientation	Awareness of oneself in relation to time, place and person.
Perseveration (stereotype)	Persistent, mechanical repetition of an activity, common in schizophrenia.
Insight	Self-understanding; a major goal of psychotherapy; the extent of the individual's understanding of the origin, nature, and mechanisms of his attitudes and behavior. More superficially, recognition by patient that he is mentally ill.
De-personalization	Feelings of unreality or strangeness concerning either the environment or the self.