

1. Authors: K. Daniel O'Leary and Alison D. Curley
2. Name of Instrument: Spouse Specific Assertion/Aggression Scale
3. Variables Measured: This scale was developed in order to assess specific assertion with one's partner and compare it with general assertion of individuals in physically abusive relationships.
4. Instrument Description: The instrument contains 29 items that are rated on a 7-point scale from -3 (Extremely unlike me) to +3 (Extremely like me). The initial pool of items was rated by a panel of eight graduate student judges who classified the items as describing an assertive response, an aggressive response, or neither. Items were discarded when disagreement was apparent. A 29-item version of the scale resulted from this filtering process, with an inter-rater reliability of .86 obtained from the final version of this scale. To establish the validity of the two subscales, we decided to perform an exploratory factor analysis of the data using a generalized least squares algorithm (Jorkešog & Sorbom, 1978; 1979). Using this procedure, a two factor model was shown to best fit the observed data. Furthermore, item loadings on the two factors corresponded to our a priori notions about the placement in the subscales, i.e., assertiveness items all loaded on one factor and aggression items loaded on the other factor.

5. Sample items:

Spouse Specific Assertion: "I often let my mate know when I disapprove of his/her behavior."

Spouse Specific Aggression: "I often say nasty things to my mate, especially when I'm angrily discussing something with him/her."

6. Length: 29 items comprise the Spouse Specific Assertion/Aggression Scale; there are 17 assertion items and 12 aggression items.
7. Reliability:
In a study by O'Leary and Curley (1986), Cronbach's alpha was .87 for the assertiveness scale and .82 for the aggression scale (N=72).
8. Validity:
Men and women in discordant/physically abusive and discordant/non-physically abusive relationships have lower Spouse Specific Assertion scores than satisfactorily married couples. However, men and women in physically abusive relationships did not differ from men and women in discordant non-physically abusive relationships (O'Leary & Curley, 1986). In brief, low levels of spouse specific assertion are characteristic of men and women in discordant relationships whether they are abusive or not. In addition, men and women in physically abusive relationships did not differ in terms of general assertion from men and women in discordant/non-physically abusive relationships or men and women in

satisfactory marriages ($p < .059$); (Rosenbaum & O'Leary, 1981; Curley & O'Leary, 1986).

Women in physically abusive relationships (from a family violence center) reported that they were more aggressive with their partners than did the women in the happily married group, but they did not differ in their reported aggression from women in the discordant/non-physically abusive group. Interestingly, the women in the physically abusive relationships feared their husbands more than did the women in discordant/non-physically abusive relationship or in the satisfactory relationships.

Men in physically abusive relationships reported more spouse specific aggression than did men in the discordant/non-physically abusive relationships or in the satisfactory relationships. Interestingly, the abusive men were more fearful of their wives than were the men in the other two groups (O'Leary & Curley, 1986). Murphy and O'Leary (1987) found that in newly married couples, levels of spouse specific aggression predicted later physical aggression.

9. Availability: The scale is available through Dr. Daniel O'Leary, Psychology Department, State University of New York, Stony Brook, NY 11794 or through NAPS, National Auxillary Publication Service.

10. References: The main reference for this scale is as follows:

O'Leary, K.D. and Curley, A.D. (1986). Assertion and family violence: Correlates of Spouse Abuse. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 12, 281-289.

Other research manuscripts using measures of spouse specific assertion or spouse specific aggression include the following:

Rosenbaum, A. and O'Leary, K.D. (1981). Marital violence: Characteristics of abusive couples. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 49, 63-71.

Dutton, D.G., Strachan, C.E. (1987). Motivational needs for power and spouse-specific assertiveness in assaultive and nonassaultive men. Violence and Victims, 2(3), 145-156. (CHECK THIS)

Murphy, C. and O'Leary, K.D. (1987, July). Verbal aggression as a predictor of physical aggression in early marriage. Paper presented at the National Conference for Family Violence Researchers, Durham, New Hampshire.

Murphy, C. and O'Leary K.D. (1989). Psychological aggression predicts physical aggression in early marriage. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 57(5), 579-582.

O'Leary, K.D., Vivian, D., Malone, J. (1992). Assessment of physical aggression against women in marriage – The need for multimodal assessment. *Behavior Assessment*, 14(1), 5-14.

MacEwen, K., and Barling, J. (1993). Type-A behavior and marital satisfaction – Differential effects of achievement striving and impatience irritability. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 55(4), 1001-1010.

Cantos, A.L., Neidig, P.H., O'Leary, K.D. (1994). Injuries of women and men in a treatment program for domestic violence. *Journal of Family Violence*, 9(2), 113-124.

Christian, J.L., O'Leary, K.D., Vivian, D. (1994). Depressive Symptomatology in Maritally Discordant Women and Men: The role of individual and relationship variables. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 8(1), 32-42.

O'Leary, K.D., Malone, J., Tyree, A (1994). Physical aggression in early marriage – Prerelationship and relationship effects. *Journal of consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 62(3), 594-602.

Pan, H.S., Neidig, P.H., O'Leary, K.D. (1994). Male-Female and aggressor-victim differences in the factor structure of the modified conflict tactics scale. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 9(3), 366-382.

Cascardi, M., O'Leary, K.D., Lawrence, E.E., Schlee, K.A. (1995). Characteristics of women physically abused by their spouses and who seek treatment regarding marital conflict. *Journal of consulting and clinical psychology*, 63(4), 616-623.

Boyle, D.J., Vivian, D. (1996). Generalized versus spouse-specific anger/hostility and men's violence against intimates. *Violence & Victims*, 11(4), 293-317. (CHECK THIS)

Schlee, K.A., Heyman, R.E., O'Leary, K.D. (1998). Group treatment for spouse abuse: Are women with PTSD appropriate participants? *Journal of Family Violence*, 13(1), 1-20.

Fincham, F.D. (1998). Child development and marital relations. *Child development*, 69(2), 543-574.

Cascardi, M., O'Leary, K.D., Schlee, K.A. (1999). Co-occurrence and correlates of posttraumatic stress disorder and major depression in physically abused women. *Journal of Family Violence*, 14(3), 227-249.

O'Leary, K.D., Heyman, R.E., Neidig, P.H. (1999). Treatment of wife abuse: A comparison of gender-specific and conjoint approaches. *Behavior Therapy*, 30(3), 475-505.

Holtzworth-Munroe, A., Rehman, U., Herron, K. (2000). General and spouse-specific anger and hostility in subtypes of martially violent men and nonviolent men. *Behavior Therapy*, 31(4), 603-630. (CHECK THIS)

Zoellner, L.A., Feeny, N.C., Alvarez, J., Watlington, C., O'Neill, M.L., Zager, R., Foa, E.B. (2000). Factors associated with completion of the restraining order process in female victims of partner violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 15(10), 1081-1099.

Buttell, F.P. and Carney, M.M. (2002). Psychological and demographic predictors of attrition among batterers court ordered into treatment. *Social Work Research*, 26(1), 31-41.

Assertiveness Inventory

Directions: Please use the scale described below to indicate how characteristic or descriptive each of the following statements is of you. After reading each statement, choose a number from the scale and place it in the space provided.

EXAMPLE: "I often yell back when my mate yells at me."

	+3	extremely descriptive, very much like me
	+2	quite descriptive, rather like me
CODE:	+1	slightly descriptive, somewhat like me
	-1	slightly nondescriptive, somewhat unlike me
	-2	quite nondescriptive, rather unlike me
	-3	extremely nondescriptive, not at all like me

If you feel that you frequently yell back at your mate when he/she yells at you, then this statement describes you well. Rate it as a +3, "very much like me".

If you feel that you never say a word when your mate yells at you, then this statement does not describe you very well. Rate it as a -3, "not at all like me".

*Please note that there are also other possible responses (that is, +2, +1, -1, -2) that you can use to indicate a lesser degree of similarity or dissimilarity to yourself.

- _____ 1. Confronting my mate with problems as they come up is seldom a problem for me.
- _____ 2. I often yell back when my mate yells at me.
- _____ 3. When my mate tries to boss me around, I frequently do the opposite of what he/she asks.
- _____ 4. Telling my mate that he/she takes advantage of me is not difficult for me to do.
- _____ 5. I am able to tell my mate that I don't want to engage in sexual intercourse when he/she desires to.
- _____ 6. If my mate is annoying me, I do not find it difficult to express my annoyance to him/her.
- _____ 7. I often take my time "just to show" my mate, when he/she tries to boss me around.

- +3 extremely descriptive, very much like me
- +2 quite descriptive, rather like me
- +1 slightly descriptive, somewhat like me
- 1 slightly nondescriptive, somewhat unlike me
- 2 quite nondescriptive, rather unlike me
- 3 extremely nondescriptive, not at all like me

- _____ 8. Saying “NO” to my mate when I would like to say “NO” is easy for me to do.
- _____ 9. I frequently find that I am able to ask my mate to do me favors without any difficulty.
- _____ 10. I do not have difficulty telling my mate my true feelings.
- _____ 11. Challenging my mate’s beliefs is something I can do with little difficulty.
- _____ 12. In general, I am very direct in expressing my anger to my mate.
- _____ 13. In general, asserting myself with my mate is something I often do, even though I don’t think he/she would say or do anything negative to me.
- _____ 14. I do not have trouble saying something that might hurt my mate’s feelings when I feel he/she has injured me.
- _____ 15. I often make threats to my mate that I really don’t intend to carry out.
- _____ 16. Expressing criticism to my mate is not a problem for me.
- _____ 17. I can express a differing point-of-view to my mate without much difficulty.
- _____ 18. When I’m feeling insecure and jealous, I’ll often pick a fight with my mate rather than tell him/her directly what’s on my mind.
- _____ 19. Starting arguments with my mate when he/she disagrees with me is something I often do.
- _____ 20. Asking my mate to do one of my chores, even when I don’t feel well, is easy for me to do.
- _____ 21. I often say nasty things to my mate, especially when I’m angrily discussing something with him/her.
- _____ 22. Slamming doors is something I often do when I get mad at my mate.
- _____ 23. I’ll often do something on purpose to annoy my mate, and then apologize excessively when he/she accuses me of it.

- +3 extremely descriptive, very much like me
- +2 quite descriptive, rather like me
- +1 slightly descriptive, somewhat like me
- 1 slightly nondescriptive, somewhat unlike me
- 2 quite nondescriptive, rather unlike me
- 3 extremely nondescriptive, not at all like me

- _____24. I often let my mate know when I disapprove of his/her behavior.
- _____25. I will often break a “rule” my mate has made just to spite him/her.
- _____26. When my mate makes me do something that I don’t like, I often make a point of getting even later.
- _____27. In general, I am not afraid to assert myself with my mate.
- _____28. I often won’t do what my mate asks me to do if he/she asks in a nasty way.
- _____29. I do not give my spouse the “silent treatment” when I’m mad at him/her. Instead, I just tell him/her what has angered me.

Scoring Sheet for Spouse-Specific Assertiveness Scale

Spouse-Specific Assertiveness

Aggressive/Passive Aggressive

- 1. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____
- 8. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____
- 11. _____
- 12. _____
- 13. _____
- 14. _____
- 16. _____
- 17. _____
- 20. _____
- 24. _____
- 27. _____
- 29. _____
- TOTAL: _____

- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 7. _____
- 15. _____
- 18. _____
- 19. _____
- 21. _____
- 22. _____
- 23. _____
- 25. _____
- 26. _____
- 28. _____
- _____ TOTAL
- AGGRESSION

Total Score for Assertiveness: Simply sum the responses to the 17 items.

Total Score for Aggressiveness: Simply sum the responses to the 12 items.

NOTE: Items on the Spouse Specific Assertion Scale have been revised from the original version. Items that were originally keyed negatively are now keyed positively so that all items now answered positively (+3, +2, +1) reflect assertion. Basically, these modifications simply reflect changes in phraseology from a negative approach to a positive approach (i.e. changing from “is not descriptive” to “is descriptive”).