

# Conflict Tactics Scale

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## Keywords:

Parental Communication, Physical Abuse, Parent Attitudes, Child Discipline, Punishment, Emotional Abuse, Family Relations.

## Background:

The *Conflict Tactics Scale* measure consists of 80 items developed by Straus (1979) to explore intrafamily conflict and violence, focusing particularly on the adults in the family. Of these 80 items, 20 are administered to the parent about his/her relationship with the child. The next 20 questions are directed to the parent about the partner and his/her interactions with the child. If there is no partner, these questions are not asked. The last 40 questions of the measure address the interactions between the parent and the parent's partner using the same questions. The measure assesses how the parent reacts in a conflict with the child, such as trying to discuss an issue calmly, yelling at or insulting the child, stomping out of the room or house, threatening to spank the child, and hitting or trying to hit the child. The items gradually become more coercive and aggressive as they progress. The items are rated on a seven-point scale, ranging from 0=never to 6=almost every day. This instrument has four scales: Parent-Child (Scale 1), Partner-Child (Scale 2), Parent-Partner (Scale 3), and Partner-Parent (Scale 4). The parent-child and partner-child conflict scales each have five subscales and the two parent-partner scales have four subscales each.

The standard instructions for the CTS ask what happened in the previous year. However, this can be modified to ask about other referent periods, such as since a relationship started, since a previous stage of a treatment program, or the previous month or 6 months. An alternate to a time period referent is a specific conflict or situation. It may be easier to recall what happened in relation to a specific conflict or situation than a time period. If so, it could produce more accurate information but at the cost of losing information about other situations and thus annual prevalence rates for violence.

The CTS is scored by adding the midpoints for the response categories chosen by the participant. The midpoints are the same as the response category numbers for Categories 0, 1, and 2. For Category 3 (3-5 times) the midpoint is 4, for Category 4 (6-10 times) it is 8, for Category 5 (11-20 times) it is 15, and for Category 6 (More than 20 times in the past year) we recommend using 25 as the midpoint.

Number of items versus number of questions. The 39 items in the CTS2 are designed to be asked about both the participant and the partner. Thus there are two questions for each item, making a total of 78 questions. The CTS2 is almost twice as long as the CTS1 (39 compared with 19 items or 78 compared with 38 questions). Despite that, the administration time for the CTS2 (10-15 min) is still brief enough to be practical in clinical settings or for inclusion in epidemiological surveys.

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## Reliability:

### CTS1 (original)

Negotiation=0.86  
Psychological aggression=0.79  
Physical assault=0.86  
Sexual coercion=0.87  
Injury=0.95

### CTS2

The internal consistency reliability of the CTS2 scales ranges from .79 to .95.

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## Assessment:

**Response Categories**

never  
sometimes  
often  
frequently

**Revised Scale**

## Negotiation

Explained side of argument  
Suggested compromise to an argument  
Showed partner cared  
Said could work out problem  
Agreed to try partner's solution  
Respected partner's feelings  
Psychological aggression (alpha = .79)  
Insulted or swore at partner  
Shouted at partner  
Stomped out of room  
Threatened to Mt or throw something at partner  
Destroyed something of partners  
Did something to spite partner  
Called partner fat or ugly  
Accused partner of being a lousy lover

## Physical assault

Kicked, bit, or punched partner  
Slapped partner  
Beat up partner  
Hit partner with something  
Choked partner  
Slammed partner against wall  
Grabbed partner  
Threw something at partner that could hurt

Used knife or gun on partner  
 Pushed or shoved partner  
 Twisted partner's arm or hair  
 Burned or scalded partner on purpose

Sexual coercion

Used force to make partner have sex  
 Used threats to make partner have anal sex  
 Used force to make partner have anal sex  
 Insisted on anal sex (no force)  
 Used threats to make partner have sex  
 Insisted on sex (no force)  
 Insisted on sex without a condom (no force)

Injury

Partner was cut or bleeding  
 Partner went to doctor for injury  
 Partner needed to see doctor but didn't  
 Partner felt pain the next day  
 Partner had sprain or bruise could see  
 Partner's private parts were bleeding

### **Original Scale(Form R, 1985)**

Reasoning

- A. Discussed an issue calmly
- B. Got information to back up your side of things
- C. Brought in, or tried to bring in, someone to help settle things

Verbal aggression

- D. Insulted or swore at him/her
- E. Sulked or refused to talk about an issue
- F. Stomped out of the room or house or yard
- G. Cried (this item is not scored)
- H. Did or said something to spite him/her

- I. Threatened to hit or throw something at him/her
- J. Threw or smashed or hit or kicked something
- Minor violence
- K. Threatened something at him/her
- L. Pushed, grabbed, or shoved him/her
- M. Slapped him/her
- Severe Violence
- N. Kicked, bit or hit him/her with a fist
- O. Hit or tried to hit him/her with something
- P. Beat him/her up
- Q. Choked him/her
- R. Threatened him/her with a knife or gun
- S. Used a knife or fired a gun

## Partner CTS2

### RELATIONSHIP BEHAVIORS

No matter how well a couple gets along, there are times when they disagree, get annoyed with the other person, want different things from each other, or just have spats or fights because they are in a bad mood, are tired, or for some other reason. Couples also have many different ways of trying to settle their differences. This is a list of things that might happen when you have differences. Please circle how many times you did each of these things in the past year, and how many times your partner did them in the past year. If you or your partner did not do one of these things in the past year, but it happened before that, circle "7."

How often did This happen?

- 1 = Once in the past year
- 2 = Twice in the past year
- 3 = 3-5 times in the past year
- 4 = 6-10 times in the past year
- 5 = 11-20 times in the past year
- 6 = More than 20 times in the past year
- 7 = Not in the past year, but it did happen before
- 0 = This has never happened

- I. I showed my partner I cared even though we disagreed.

2. My partner showed care for me even though we disagreed.
3. I explained my side of a disagreement to my partner.
4. My partner explained his or her side of a disagreement to me.
5. I insulted or swore at my partner.
6. My partner did this to me.
7. I threw something at my partner that could hurt.
8. My partner did this to me.
9. I twisted my partner's arm or hair.
10. My partner did this to me.
11. I had a sprain, bruise, or small cut because of a fight with my partner.
12. My partner had a sprain, bruise, or small cut because of a fight with me.
13. I showed respect for my partner's feelings about an issue.
14. My partner showed respect for my feelings about an issue.
15. I made my partner have sex without a condom.
16. My partner did this to me.
17. I pushed or shoved my partner.
18. My partner did this to me.
19. I used force (like hitting, holding down, or using a weapon) to make my partner have oral or anal sex.
20. My partner did this to me.
21. I used a knife or gun on my partner.
22. My partner did this to me.
23. I passed out from being hit on the head by my partner in a fight.
24. My partner passed out from being hit on the head in a fight with me.
25. I called my partner fat or ugly.
26. My partner called me fat or ugly.
27. I punched or hit my partner with something that could hurt.
28. My partner did this to me.
29. I destroyed something belonging to my partner.
30. My partner did this to me.
31. I went to a doctor because of a fight with my partner.
32. My partner went to a doctor because of a fight with me.
33. I choked my partner.
34. My partner did this to me.

35. I shouted or yelled at my partner.
36. My partner did this to me.
37. I slammed my partner against a wall.
38. My partner did this to me.
39. I said I was sure we could work out a problem.
40. My partner was sure we could work it out.
41. I needed to see a doctor because of a fight with my partner, but I didn't.
42. My partner needed to see a doctor because of a fight with me, but didn't.
43. I beat up my partner.
44. My partner did this to me.
45. I grabbed my partner.
46. My partner did this to me.
47. I used force (like hitting, holding down, or using a weapon) to make my partner have sex.
48. My partner did this to me.
49. I stomped out of the room or house or yard during a disagreement.
50. My partner did this to me.
51. I insisted on sex when my partner did not want to (but did not use physical force).
52. My partner did this to me.
53. I slapped my partner.
54. My partner did this to me.
55. I had a broken bone from a fight with my partner.
56. My partner had a broken bone from a fight with me.
57. I used threats to make my partner have oral or anal sex.
58. My partner did this to me.
59. I suggested a compromise to a disagreement.
60. My partner did this to me.
61. I burned or scalded my partner on purpose.
62. My partner did this to me.
63. I insisted my partner have oral or anal sex (but did not use physical force).
64. My partner did this to me.

65. I accused my partner of being a lousy lover.
66. My partner accused me of this.
67. I did something to spite my partner.
68. My partner did this to me.
69. I threatened to hit or throw something at my partner.
70. My partner did this to me.
71. I felt physical pain that still hurt the next day because of a fight with my partner.
72. My partner still felt physical pain the next day because of a fight we had.
73. I kicked my partner.
74. My partner did this to me.
75. I used threats to make my partner have sex.
76. My partner did this to me.
77. I agreed to try a solution to a disagreement my partner suggested.
78. My partner agreed to try a solution I suggested.

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