

Well-Being Assessment for Older Adults – the SET-SEA Instrument

Goal: According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), 40% of adults over age 65 have a disability that impacts a major part of their life, defined as a limitation in self-care, independence, physical challenges like mobility, vision or hearing, or cognitive challenges.



Family members and loved ones are often challenged by the desire to help older adults they care about age well and maintain as much healthy independence and well-being as possible.

The SET-SEA Instrument is designed to meet the needs of family members and loved ones who want to get a sense of whether their older adult is thriving and identify areas of potential concern that might be an indicator of further needed assessment or monitoring.

Assessment Tool: the SET-SEA

Instrument can be easily completed by a combination of direct observation of the older

adult in the context of their home, and by documenting their responses to a few conversational items. The SET-SEA Instrument was designed by healthcare providers based on professional experience, personal experience, and credible aging literature.

SET-SEA stands for Sleeping Well, Eating Healthy, Taking Good Care of Oneself, Safe – At Home and On the Road, Enjoying Others, and Active Living. These areas define the essentials of well-being for older adults. SET-SEA can be completed during a visit to the home of the older adult combining simple observations with responses to a few unobtrusive questions asked during the visit. Family members can easily complete the instrument in about 20 minutes and reveals a customized profile of well-being that can be used to identify areas of additional needs, and to open areas of further discussion between the family members and their older adult. The instrument is intended for older adults that are beginning to experience early signs of decline or beginning to experience a challenge with some level of disability challenge like memory, physical decline, self-care, mobility, vision or hearing.

Instructions: Complete the attached form after a visit to the home of an older adult. There is no need to train or instruct the senior, but it is always a good idea to share any areas of concern you may uncover with them, so they do not become skeptical of your motives. During your home visit, specifically look at/ for the following:

Observe the older adult:

- Do they appear well-groomed and shaved; is their hair trimmed and combed?
- Are their clothes properly fastened, clean, appropriate to the season/ weather?
- Can they bend down to tie their own shoes?
- Do you notice any unusual smells from soiled clothing?
- Do they have difficulty walking without assistance or without holding onto furniture?
- Can they get themselves up from a cushioned chair without assistance?
- Can they go up and down a flight of stairs without having to stop or hold onto a railing?



- Do they appear tired, less alert, or doze off if not stimulated?
- Can you tell if they need to use a magnifying tool to read?
- Do they hear the phone or doorbell ring from another room?
- Can they hear you speak in a normal voice from around a corner in the next room?

Observe the kitchen/ eating area:

- Are there any signs of expired foods left in the refrigerator?
- Are there a variety of foods around?
- Can you tell if meals are being prepared by the older adult?
- Are the dishes cleared, washed and surfaces clean?

Observe the laundry area:

- Does it appear clothes are being washed regularly?
- Are clothes being left in the washer or dryer?



Observe the living areas:

- Is the mail being opened and read?
- Are there signs of unusual solicitations for donations?
- Is technology being used regularly such as a phone, computer or TV?
- Does the older adult appear to understand how to use common technologies such as an answering machine or voice mail, remote controls, Internet service?
- Are the exterior doors closed and locked?
- Is the TV volume appropriate or too loud?
- Does it look like current newspapers, newsletters, book or magazines are being read?

Observe the automobile/ garage

- Are there any unexplainable dents or scrapes?
- If possible, ask your older adult when they last drove the car, and when they last had the oil changed.

Check medication bottles

- Does the older adult know which medicines they take, where they keep them and when they take them?
- Does the older adult know where to get their medications refilled when they run out?
- Look to see if the number of pills left in the bottles approximately matches expected.

Ask the older adult:

- How often they get out of the home?
- How often someone calls or comes to visit?
- Do they enjoy grocery shopping and meal preparation?
- Do they have a favorite social activity outside of the house and how often they participate?
- Do they feel safe in their home when alone?
- What are they most looking forward to doing in the next week?



Assessment Scoring and Next Steps: Based on your observations and interactions, score each area listed below between 1-5. (1 being of No Concern, 2 being A Little Concern, 3 being Moderate Concern, 4 being Significant Concern, and 5 being Very Concerned). Don't make adjustment for the circumstances or individual limitations of the older adult as this will tend to skew the scoring results. Remember the scores are YOUR impressions, not that of the older adult.

- ✓ Sleeping Well
- ✓ Eating Healthy
- ✓ Taking good care of oneself
- ✓ Safe at home and on the road
- ✓ Enjoying Others
- ✓ Active Living

If your older adult scores 3 or greater in more than one category, you can learn more about ways to monitor and support your older adult by visiting www.Start-MyDay.com/ Resources. Then, bring these concerns to the attention of your older adult as well as their healthcare provider. As with any screening tool, results will vary, and are not intended to be a replacement for good professional advice, such as from your healthcare provider.

