

# Alexithymia

Alexithymia is a personality construct characterized by the subclinical inability to identify and describe emotions in the self. The core characteristics of alexithymia are marked dysfunction in emotional awareness, social attachment, and interpersonal relating.

Furthermore, individuals with alexithymia have difficulty in distinguishing and appreciating the emotions of others, which is thought to lead to unempathic and ineffective emotional responding.

Alexithymia is prevalent in approximately 10% of the general population and is known to be comorbid with a number of psychiatric conditions.

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Two children had a frontal syndrome with hyperkinesia, distractibility, aggressiveness, alexithymia, loss of the program of ideas. During the two months after the section of the anterior two thirds of the corpus callosum, we observed a progressive improvement of the frontal syndrome, with possibility to learn new praxies. The intellectual quotient was not altered and associative functions, depending of the posterior third of the corpus callosum were spared. Anti-epileptic medications were not stopped. We think that the improvement of the frontal syndrome is due to reduction of seizures. Therefore, we insist on the interest of the section of the anterior two thirds of the corpus callosum as treatment of tonic and atonic seizures but also as treatment of psychiatric symptoms depending of a frontal syndrome <sup>1)</sup>.

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Patrikelis et al., present the case of a patient who lost the ability to enjoy humour after the surgical removal of a [olfactory groove meningioma](#), although he was still able to detect it, while at the same time was diagnosed with organic alexithymia. The results indicate that problems in the affective appreciation of humour and in emotionalizing (alexithymic symptoms) may be the result of damage to the ventral-rostral portions of the ACG/mPFC, which prevent the patient from assessing the salience of emotion and motivational information, and generating emotional reactions; as a result he has trouble experiencing emotions, knowing how he and others feel, and enjoy humour <sup>2)</sup>.

<sup>1)</sup>

Septien L, Giroud M, Sautreaux JL, Brenot M, Marin A, Dumas R, Nivelon JL. [Effects of callosotomy in the treatment of intractable epilepsies in children on psychiatric disorders]. *Encephale*. 1992 Mar-Apr;18(2):199-202. French. PubMed PMID: 1639004.

<sup>2)</sup>

Patrikelis P, Konstantakopoulos G, Lucci G, Katsaros VK, Sakas DE, Gatzonis S, Stranjalis G. Possible common neurological breakdowns for alexithymia and humour appreciation deficit: A case study. *Clin Neurol Neurosurg*. 2016 Dec 12;153:1-4. doi: 10.1016/j.clineuro.2016.12.005. [Epub ahead of print] PubMed PMID: 27987387.

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