

Coding Criteria for Pleasant or Appealing Expressions (PAE)

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The Pleasant or Appealing Expressions code quantifies emotionally positive expressions that are antithetical to depressed moods. It is a complement to the Elevated Mood States (EMS) scale (Gritti et al., 2018; Meyer et al., 2019), which also quantifies expressions of positive affect states that are antithetical to depression and depressive states. EMS classifies instances when *objects in a response* are experiencing positive or highly energetic affective states. It also encompasses instances when *the respondent reports* positive, elevated, or euphoric mood states, which includes reports of feeling happy, cheerful, or self-confident. Finally, EMS encompasses instances when the *respondent manifests behavioral expressions* of positive affect, such as talking in an excited voice, making lighthearted statements, and laughing cheerfully.

Assign the Pleasant or Appealing Expressions code when the respondent states that the task or the cards are pleasant or appealing in some manner. However, the behaviors coded here do not encompass the behaviors already coded on the EMS scale (Gritti et al., 2018; Meyer et al., 2019). Taking into account EMS, assign a Pleasant or Appealing Expressions code under two conditions. First, code when the respondent identifies the *task or card features* as pleasant or appealing, while falling short of expressing positive mood states or manifesting clear positive affect. Second, code when the *percept* encompasses a pleasant or appealing scene, but the scene lacks objects experiencing positive or highly energetic affective states. If the respondent expresses a mixture of pleasant or appealing elements and unpleasant or unappealing elements do not assign a code to the response.

People differ in what they consider pleasant and appealing. With this scale, we aim to quantify healthy representations of what is pleasant and appealing. This certainly encompasses what most people consider pleasant or appealing (e.g., a sunset, an ocean vista, people or objects working together in harmony). It also encompasses percepts that most people would consider neutral but that the respondent considers pleasant or appealing (e.g., *“Oh, nice, that looks like a spaceship taking off”*). However, it does not encompass expressions of pleasure or appeal that occur in the context of negatively toned percepts. These include those that are salacious (e.g., *“It’s a sexy bra / dress / man”*), embody aggression (e.g., *“Ah, this is a good one; those two guys are shooting right at each other”*), evoke disgust (e.g., *“That’s great; a maggot infested hamburger”*), or encompass damage or dysphoria (e.g., *“It’s a crushed spider; I love it”*). In addition, this scale does not encompass objects that people may consider cute (e.g., puppies or bunnies), the simple identification of a flower or floral arrangement, or artwork. For the latter types of percepts, the respondent would have to express some pleasant reaction to the image to qualify for a code.

Examples Meeting Criteria:

“Ah, this is a good one.” [*“This is a fun one”* would be coded EMS.]

“I like this one.” [*“This one makes me happy”* would be coded EMS.]

“Oh, that’s a nice [pleasant / relaxing / serene / appealing] scene.” [If objects in a response were feeling pleasant, relaxing, or mildly euphoric states, the response would be coded EMS.]

“That’s a pretty / beautiful one [referring either to the card or the percept].”

“Oh, color!” [Typically said on Card VIII. The statement should convey a positive rather than negative reaction to the color.]

“Here’s a nice pink sunset”

“A butterfly. I like butterflies”

Card IX, CP, *“My favorite one, aerial photo, jungle colored green...”*

Card X, *"Oh, isn't this cute [referring to the card]. I see two crabs."*

Card IV, *"I never did these before – it's kind of exciting. Oh, this is a good one. Looks like a giant skin from a giant monster, really huge."* [Saying "it's kind of exciting" also qualifies this response for the Elevated Mood States code.]

Card VIII, *"Sort of looks like buffalo heads coming out of the middle, the front end of a bison. Verrrry in-TER-esting!"*

Card X inverted, *"Oh a flower. Tulip, kinda, or no, an orchid. An angel."* CP: *"(ERR) R: I see an orchid, the flower petals, pollen, stem, this stuff to highlight, to make it look pretty, colors look pretty like a big picture, spring, flowers, color, pretty, God's creation, angel coming down, fireworks, all to accentuate this flower."*

Card IV, *"Looks like a landscape of a lake, a nice, still lake."* CP: *"Obviously, it's reflected here. Maybe this is an old, dead, broken tree branch, with no foliage on it. Gives the impression of a reflection on a still surface, in a late afternoon."*

Card V, *"This is a butterfly. She is most beautiful."*

Card VI, *"Leopard skin, yeah, a pretty good one too. I'd like to have this hanging on my bedroom wall."*

Card VIII, *"Checkered flags. Hell, I don't know, colors are nice in it though."*

Card X, *"An abstract painting, quite a nice one... a very attractive abstract."*

Card X, *"Oh, icicles. It's a snowy day. It's a colorful snowstorm. ... Especially blue ones, perfect icicles."*

Examples Below Threshold:

Card VII, *"Could be a death wish, 2 imagination things, 2 creative thing that could conquer something, getting ready to hover or something. It's got a strain in its position. Don't ever lose those (cards) they're beautiful."* [Although the last sentence generally would qualify, the response does not because the statement emerges in the context of a fluid and changing response that encompasses a death wish.]

Card II, *"Two puppies of the same kind."*

Card X, *"This is a good abstract for a New York museum. Be very pretty for a New York museum. Only New York millionaires can understand these pictures. I can appreciate those (points to nature photos on wall), but not this abstract stuff that only millionaires can understand."* [Even though the respondent said 'very pretty,' they meant that it would be pretty for others; clearly, they do not find it pretty.]

Card X, *"With the exception of the upper part (D11), it looks like an abstract painting, quite a nice one, except the grey portion (D11)." CP: "Abstract painting, very much like I would've done, a very attractive abstract, with the exception of this grey part (D11). (What about the inkblot makes it look attractive?) Colors are good, lines are good, purpose of work is to be abstract. This portion is not good here (D11). Something like that I wouldn't mind having framed."* [In this unusual response, the respondent describes an image he finds very appealing except for the grey D11 area. The fact that he keeps returning to it, rather than decisively excluding it, indicates that it is interfering with his otherwise pleasant or appealing image.]

References

- Gritti, E. S., Marino, D. P., Lang, M., & Meyer, G. J. (2018). Assessing Narcissism Using Rorschach-Based Imagery and Behavior Validated by Clinician Reports: Studies With Adult Patients and Nonpatients. *Assessment, 25*(7), 898–916. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1073191117715728>
- Meyer, G. J., Gritti, E. S., Marina, D. P., & Sholander, L. E. (2019). Coding criteria for potential Rorschach grandiosity and narcissism variables. Department of Psychology, University of Toledo.