

Difficult Life Circumstances

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Difficult Life Circumstances is a 28-item scale that measures chronic family problems. The range of score is 0-28. The items were derived from clinical and research experience with high-risk families during pregnancy and early infancy. The sample of women had a mean age of 21 years; most had less than a high school education; seventy-five percent received government subsidy; and the majority were Euro-American. The DLC scales were administered during the second trimester of pregnancy and again when the index child was two and three years of age. The range of positive items ranged from 0-14. At intake the most frequently reported items were inadequate housing, unemployment, lack of privacy and emotional abuse by partner. At two years, the most frequent cited items were inadequate housing, lack of privacy, long term debt, and excessive absence of partner. At three years, the most frequent items reported were credit problems, long term debt, and excessive absence of partner. The DLC at intake showed consistent relationship with the Beck Depression score, a physical symptom checklist, and social support measures. The correlations ranged from .20 to .59. A high DLC score was correlated with more depression, more negative physical symptoms and less support. The intake DLC also correlated with poor child outcomes across physical, emotional and cognitive domains.

The image shows a screenshot of the Difficult Life Circumstances (DLC) questionnaire form. The form has a light pink background and a white border. At the top left is a logo consisting of three overlapping circles. To the right of the logo is the text "DLC" in large bold letters, followed by "DIFFICULT LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES" in smaller bold letters. In the top right corner, there is a "Date: _____" field. Below the title, there are several demographic fields: "Name: _____", "Marital Status: _____", "Age: _____", "Race: _____", "Sex: _____", "Education: _____", "Occupation: _____", "Number of Children: _____", and "under 5 yrs: _____". Below these fields is a paragraph of instructions: "Below are a list of problems. You must decide if a particular one is a problem for you. Check which ones apply. If any of these make you uncomfortable, you don't have to answer. We can help you the most by knowing the difficult circumstances you face". Below the instructions is a table with two columns: "Yes" and "No". The table contains 19 numbered items, each with a row for "Yes" and a row for "No".

	Yes	No
1. Are you having regular arguments or conflicts with your present partner/steady boy/girlfriend?		
2. Are you having some sort of problem with any one of your former spouses/partners?		
3. Is your partner in jail?		
4. Is your partner away from the home more than half of the time because of a job or other reason?		
5. Do you have long-term debts other than a house		
16. Have you had frequent minor illnesses in the past year?		
17. Do you have a problem with alcohol or drugs (prescription or street)?		
18. Does your partner have a problem with alcohol or drugs?		
19. Does someone in your household other than you or your partner have a problem with alcohol or drugs?		

Barnard, K.E. (1989). Difficult life circumstances (DLC). Seattle: NCAST Publications.

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