

# The Resilience, Adaptation and Well-Being Project



## Dual Employed Coping Scales

DECS

# DECS:

## Dual Employed Coping Scales

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### Overview

The Dual Employed Coping Scales (DECS) was developed by Denise Skinner and Hamilton McCubbin (1981) in an attempt to identify the coping behaviors spouses find helpful in managing work and family roles when both partners are employed outside the home. The successful management of the dual-employed lifestyle seems to call for an orchestrated response with family members employing a variety of coping behaviors. DECS is an attempt to more adequately and systematically assess such families' adaptation to the stresses of dual-employed living by identifying and measuring the coping behaviors these families utilize.

### Development of DECS

Dual-Employed Coping Scales (Skinner & H.I. McCubbin, 1981) was influenced by a hierarchical approach to the organization of behavior. Two levels of abstraction were used in this research: (a) coping behaviors (operationally defined through specific items), and (b) coping patterns (combinations of coping behaviors into specific patterns). The analytic procedure most appropriate for this approach and the specific data was factor analysis.

The DECS coping behavior items were factor analyzed using the principal factoring with iterations for the 138 subjects. Five factors emerged from this process. These five factors were then rotated using the varimax criterion with orthogonal rotation.

### Conceptual Organization

DECS consists of 58 items which spouses respond to individually. Each item addresses a specific coping behavior. These specific behaviors have been categorized into four coping patterns which have emerged as significant from prior dual-employed family research and from previous coping studies. These four coping patterns are:

- I. **Maintaining Family System.** Items in this pattern focus on coping behaviors utilized within the family system aimed at restructuring roles and maintaining the family system. Items: 1, 7, 9, 13, 17, 19, 21, 23, 38, 39, 40, 42, 43, 44, 45, 57 (Cronbach's alpha= .72).
- II. **Procurement of Support.** This pattern focuses on developing meaningful and supportive relationships outside the family as well as securing outside support, goods and services. Items: 18, 20, 28, 30, 31, 35, 47 (Cronbach's alpha= .74).
- III. **Modifying Roles and Standards.** These items focus on coping behaviors which attempt to accommodate work to family and family to work. Items: 2, 8, 10, 14, 15, 16, 24, 25, 26, 29, 46, 51, 52, 54, 58 (Cronbach's alpha= .78).
- IV. **Maintaining Perspective, Reducing Tension.** Items focus on behaviors for reducing the perceived stress and demands of the present situation and believing in the value of the lifestyle. Items: 6, 12, 32, 34, 36, 37, 49, 50, 53, 55, 56 (Cronbach's alpha= .76).

After initial categorization of behavior items by the authors, independent raters sorted items in order to establish face validity of DECS. DECS was administered to a sample of 60 individuals from dual-employed families in order to determine applicability, clarity, variance, and duplication of items.

### Reliability

Specific criteria were used in the refinement of DECS. Using the criterion of eigen value greater than two and with the last factor accounting for only a small percentage of the variance, the investigators decided to limit DECS to four factors and fifty-eight items, which accounted for 88.5 percent of the variance. In

addition, each factor was subjected to a test of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha). Items which did not load clearly on a single factor or were outliers in the test of internal consistency were eliminated from the final instrument. Each of the first four factors had respectable internal reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha =-.72, .74, .78, and .76). The final instrument consisted of fifty-eight items grouped into four subscales. The overall internal reliability for DECS composed of the 49 items within the four patterns is .86.

**Validity**

The intercorrelation matrix of the DECS scales, reported in Table 22.1, was examined and the patterns were found to correlate moderately, as might be expected with this type of instrument designed to assess dimensions of family life which are in reality related.

DECS	I. Maintaining Family Patterns	II. Procurement of Support System	III. Modifying Roles Standards	IV. Maintaining Perspective, Reducing Tension
I. Maintaining Family System	--	.25	.41	.37
II. Procurement of Support	.25	--	.27	.21
III. Modifying Roles & Standards	.41	.27	--	.28
IV. Maintaining Perspective, Reducing Tension	.37	.21	.28	--

**Test-Retest Reliability**

No additional studies to report at this time.

**Additional Validity Checks**

No additional validity information is available at this time.

**Scoring Procedures**

To obtain a total score for DECS, the values of all the responses (i.e., Strongly Disagree =-1, Moderately Disagree =-2, Neither Agree nor Disagree = 3, Moderately Agree = 4, and Strongly Disagree = 5) should be summed. For one of the items (45), however, the value's should be reversed before summing (i.e., Strongly Disagree = 6, Moderately Disagree = 4, Neither Agree nor Disagree =3, Moderately Agree = 2, and Strongly Disagree =1). This will ensure that all items are weighted in the same positive direction for both analysis and the interpretation of results.

Subscale scores may be obtained by summing the numbers circled by the respondent for each of the items in a subscale. One item in the Maintaining Family System subscale (46) must be reversed before scoring and is marked with an asterisk in the following list.

- Subscale 1: Maintaining Family System: 1, 7, 9, 13, 17, 19, 21, 23, 38, 39, 40, 42, 43, 44, 45\*, 57
- Subscale 2: Procurement of Support: 18, 20, 28, 30, 31, 35, 47
- Subscale 3: Modifying Roles and Standards: 2, 8, 10, 14, 15, 16, 24, 25, 26, 29, 46, 51, 52, 54, 58
- Subscale 4: Maintaining Perspective, Reducing Tension: 6, 12, 32, 34, 36, 37, 49, 50, 53, 55, 56

### **Norms and/or Comparative Data**

A summary of the means and standard deviations for the DECS scales are presented in Table 22.2.

Discriminant analysis was used to distinguish between the coping patterns of husbands and those of wives in this sample. Table 22.3 outlines the results of the comparison between wives' and husbands' coping patterns. Examination of this table reveals that wives utilized all of the coping patterns to a greater extent than did husbands.

Significant differences between husbands and wives were reflected in three of the four DECS subscales as well as for the total instrument. Wives were significantly higher on their utilization of coping patterns aimed at *Maintaining, Restructuring and Strengthening the Family System* (Coping Pattern I), *Modifying Roles and Standards to Maintain a Work/Family Balance* (Coping Pattern III) and *Maintaining a Positive Perspective on the Lifestyle and Reducing Tension and Strain* (pattern IV). The difference between husbands and wives in *Procuring Support* (Pattern II) was not statistically significant.

In an effort to render clarity as to what were the specific coping behavioral items which discriminated between husbands and wives, the same analysis was done for each of the items in DECS. The results, presented in Table 22.4, reveal that of the 49 items in DECS, 14 discriminated between wives and husbands; predictably, with wives scoring higher.

The data regarding the 14 discriminating coping behaviors reveal the following observations: (a) wives' emphasis upon coping behaviors to maximize efficiency and organization; (b) wives coping to obtain social support; (c) wives' emphasis on coping behaviors which involve compromise and flexibility in order to achieve a work/ family balance, and (d) wives developing a coping repertoire which emphasizes the positive aspects of their work and lifestyle.

The data clearly indicate spousal differences with regard to the utilization of coping behaviors. Based on these findings discriminant analysis was used to classify the DECS data in an attempt to see how effective DECS is as a predictor of male or female group membership. As a classification technique, DECS correctly identified 91.3 percent of the cases by sex.

### **Instrument Utilization for Research**

The DECS instrument is currently being tested within the Family Stress, Coping and Health Project and by other investigators. The few studies that have included this instrument have already been cited in the validity section of this chapter and are included in the references. Therefore, a summary table of related publications is not available at this time.

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### **Notes**

1. The earlier writings on this instrument included a comprehensive description of the instrument's development. For the sake of brevity we limited the chapter to the basic information that users have requested and needed. If you desire a copy and are unable to find our earlier publications, either the 1987 or the 1991 edition, please write to us at the Center for Excellence in Family Studies, Family Stress, Coping and Health Project, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1300 Linden Drive, Madison WI 53706 or send email to [manual@macc.wisc.edu](mailto:manual@macc.wisc.edu). There will be a charge for these additional materials.
2. When referencing this instrument, the proper citation is: Skinner, D. & McCubbin, H.I. (1981). Dual-Employed Coping Scales (DECS). In H.I. McCubbin, A.I. Thompson, & M.A. McCubbin (1996). *Family assessment: Resiliency, coping and adaptation-Inventories for research and practice*. (pp. 687-699). Madison: University of Wisconsin System.

**Table 22.2**  
**Means and Standard Deviations for DECS Scales**

Scale	Number of Items	Wife		Husband	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
I. Maintaining Family System	16	54.3	7.6	51.8	8.0
II. Procurement of Support	7	19.6	8.6	17.8	5.3
III. Modifying Roles & Standards	15	53.4	7.9	47.9	8.3
IV. Maintaining Perspective, Reducing Tension	11	46.9	5.5	44.8	5.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>174.3</b>	<b>20.4</b>	<b>162.3</b>	<b>19.1</b>

**Table 22.3**  
**Spousal Differences in Coping**

Coping Pattern	Wife Mean	Husband Mean	F	p*
I. Maintaining Family System	54.5	51.8	3.77	.0545*
II. Procurement of Support	19.4	17.8	1.63	.2042
III. Modifying Roles & Standards	53.3	47.9	14.01	.0003*
IV. Maintaining Perspective, Reducing Tension	46.8	44.8	4.01	.0475*
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>173.9</b>	<b>162.3</b>	<b>10.93</b>	<b>.0012*</b>

\*p ≤ .05 accepted

**Table 22.4**  
**Spousal Differences in Coping Behavior**

Coping Pattern	Wife Mean	Husband Mean	F	p*
<b>Coping Pattern I:</b>				
Becoming more efficient; making better use of my time at work.	4.17	3.65	13.09	.004
Deciding I will do housekeeping tasks at a regular time each week.	3.66	3.03	9.03	.0032
Having good friends whom I can talk to about how I feel.	3.95	3.23	11.55	.0009
<b>Coping Pattern II:</b>				
Limiting job involvement in order to have time for my family.	3.88	3.22	13.69	.0003
Lowering my standards for how well household tasks must be done.	3.73	3.16	7.90	.0058
Leaving some things undone around the house (even though I would like to have them done).	4.17	3.48	14.49	.0002
Planning for time alone with my spouse.	3.95	3.59	3.84	.0524
<b>Coping Pattern III:</b>				
Modifying my work schedule (i.e., reducing amount of time at work or working different hours).	3.36	2.79	5.80	.0175
Having friends at work whom I can talk to about how I feel.	3.77	3.00	11.55	.0005
Planning work changes (i.e., transfer promotion, shift change) around family needs	3.80	3.23	6.86	.0099
<b>Coping Pattern IV:</b>				
Believing that, overall, there are more advantages than disadvantages to our lifestyle.	4.50	4.14	3.84	.0524
Encouraging our children to help each other out when possible (e.g., homework. rides, etc.).	4.68	4.29	9.95	.0020
Trying to be flexible enough to fit in special needs and events (e.g., child's concert at school, etc.).	4.64	4.31	7.13	.0058
Believing that working is good for my personal growth.	4.50	4.25	3.83	.0526

\*p ≤ .05 accepted

# DECS

## DUAL EMPLOYED COPING SCALES

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*English Version*



# DECS

## DUAL-EMPLOYED COPING SCALES<sup>©</sup>

Denise A. Skinner      Hamilton I. McCubbin

**Purpose**

The Dual-Employed Coping Scale is designed to record what spouses find helpful to them in managing family and work roles when both spouses are employed outside the home. Coping is defined as personal or collective (with other individuals, programs) efforts to manage the demands associated with the dual-employed family.

**Directions**

First, read the list of “Coping Behaviors” one at a time.

Second, decide how well each statement describes your coping. If the statement describes your coping very well, then circle the number 5 indicating that you Strongly Agree; if the statement does not describe your coping at all, then circle the number 1 indicating that you Strongly Disagree; if the statement describes your coping to some degree, then select a number 2, 3, or 4 to indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement about your coping behavior.

<i>I “cope” with the demands of our dual-employed family by:</i>	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree	No Child
1. Becoming more efficient; making better use of my time “at home”	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Using modern equipment (e.g., microwave oven, etc.) to help out at home	1	2	3	4	5	
3. Believing that we have much to gain financially by both working	1	2	3	4	5	
4. Working out a “fair” schedule of household tasks for all family members	1	2	3	4	5	
5. Getting by on less sleep than I’d ideally like to have	1	2	3	4	5	
6. Ignoring comments of how we “should” behave as men and women (e.g. women shouldn’t work; men shouldn’t clean house)	1	2	3	4	5	
7. Deciding I will do certain housekeeping tasks at a regular time each week	1	2	3	4	5	
8. Buying convenience foods which are easier to prepare at home	1	2	3	4	5	
9. Believing that my working has made me a better parent that I otherwise would be	1	2	3	4	5	NC

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree	No Child
<i>I “cope” with the demands of our dual-employed family by:</i>						
10. Leaving some things undone around the house (even though I would like to have them done)	1	2	3	4	5	NC
11. Getting our children to help out with household tasks	1	2	3	4	5	
12. Ignoring criticisms of others about parents who both work outside the home	1	2	3	4	5	NC
13. Making friends with other couples who are both employed outside the home	1	2	3	4	5	
14. Specifically planning “family time together” into our schedule; planning family activities for all of us to do together	1	2	3	4	5	
15. Hiring outside help to assist with our housekeeping and home maintenance	1	2	3	4	5	
16. Overlooking the difficulties and focusing on the good things about our lifestyle	1	2	3	4	5	
17. Planning for various family relations to occur at a certain regular time each day or week (e.g., “from the time we get home until their bedtime, is the ‘children’s time’”)	1	2	3	4	5	
18. Eating out frequently	1	2	3	4	5	
19. Believing that my working has made me a better spouse	1	2	3	4	5	
20. Hiring help to care for the children	1	2	3	4	5	NC
21. Relying on extended family members for encouragement	1	2	3	4	5	
22. Covering household family responsibilities for each other when one spouse has extra work	1	2	3	4	5	
23. Leaving work and work-related problems at work when I leave at the end of the day	1	2	3	4	5	
24. Having friends at work whom I can talk to about how I feel	1	2	3	4	5	
25. Planning for time alone with my spouse	1	2	3	4	5	
26. Modifying my work schedule (e.g., reducing amount of time at work or working different hours)	1	2	3	4	5	
27. Relying on extended family members for financial help when needed	1	2	3	4	5	
28. Negotiating who stays home with an ill child on a “case by case” basis	1	2	3	4	5	NC
29. Planning work changes (e.g., transfer, promotion, shift change) around family needs	1	2	3	4	5	
30. Relying on extended family members for childcare help	1	2	3	4	5	NC
31. Identifying one partner as primarily responsible for childrearing tasks	1	2	3	4	5	NC

Please continue on other side 

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree	No Child
<i>I “cope” with the demands of our dual-employed family by:</i>						
32. Believing that we are good “role models” for our children by our both working	1	2	3	4	5	NC
33. Identifying one partner as primarily responsible for household tasks	1	2	3	4	5	
34. Planning time for myself to relieve tensions (jogging, exercising, meditating, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	
35. Buying more goods and services (as opposed to “do-it-yourself” projects	1	2	3	4	5	
36. Encouraging our children to help each other out when possible (e.g., homework, rides to activities, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	NC
37. Trying to be flexible enough to fit in special needs and events (e.g., child’s concert at school, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	
38. Planning ahead so that major changes at home (e.g., having a baby) will not disturb our work requirements	1	2	3	4	5	
39. Making better use of time at work	1	2	3	4	5	
40. Having good friends whom I can talk to about how I feel	1	2	3	4	5	
41. Limiting our home entertaining to only our close friends	1	2	3	4	5	
42. Believing that, with time, our lifestyle will be easier	1	2	3	4	5	
43. Planning schedules our ahead of time (e.g., who takes kid(s) to the doctor, who works late)	1	2	3	4	5	
44. Sticking to an established schedule of work and family-related activities	1	2	3	4	5	
45. Believing that I must excel at both my work and my family roles	1	2	3	4	5	
46. Cutting down on the amount of “outside activities” in which I can be involved	1	2	3	4	5	
47. Establishing whose role responsibility it is to stay home when child(ren) are ill	1	2	3	4	5	NC
48. Identifying one partner as primarily responsible for bread-winning	1	2	3	4	5	
49. Believing that working is good for my personal growth	1	2	3	4	5	
50. Believing that, overall, there are more advantages than disadvantages to our lifestyle	1	2	3	4	5	
51. Limiting job involvement in order to have time for my family	1	2	3	4	5	
52. Lowering my standards for “how well” household tasks must be done	1	2	3	4	5	
53. Encouraging our child(ren) to be more self sufficient, where appropriate	1	2	3	4	5	

Please continue on other side 

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Moderately Disagree</b>	<b>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</b>	<b>Moderately Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>No Child</b>
<i>I “cope” with the demands of our dual-employed family by:</i>						
54. Eliminating certain activities (home entertaining, volunteer work, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	
55. Frequent communication among all family members about individual schedules, needs and responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5	
56. Maintaining health (eating right, exercising, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	
57. Believing that I need a lot of stimulation and activity to keep from getting bored	1	2	3	4	5	
58. Limiting my involvement on the job – saying “no” to some of the things I could be doing	1	2	3	4	5	