

Supplementary Note 1 | Coding Manual for EA, DA, and BA

1. Overview and Purpose

This coding manual specifies the rules used to annotate online forum posts for three theoretically related avoidance constructs:

- **Experiential Avoidance (EA)** - the overarching construct.
- **Distress Aversion (DA)** - a facet of EA, focused on the rejection of internal experiences.
- **Behavioral Avoidance (BA)** - a facet of EA, focused on the avoidance of external situations or actions.

The manual is grounded in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (Hayes et al., 1996) and the Multidimensional Experiential Avoidance Questionnaire (Gámez et al., 2011). Its aim is to make reliable, reproducible coding decisions possible across independent annotators.

Coding options. Each construct is coded as **1 (present)** when all must-criteria are clearly met, **0 (absent)** when one or more must-criteria are not met or exclusion criteria apply, and, during manual development only, as unclear when essential information is missing.

Hierarchy rule. If DA = 1 or BA = 1, then EA must also be coded as 1. EA can occur without DA or BA, because EA is the overarching construct encompassing multiple avoidance forms.

2. General Annotation Principles

Before coding any construct, annotators apply the following general principles.

- **Author-only scope.** Code only experiences, evaluations, and behaviors reported by the author about themselves. Ignore avoidance, emotions, or behaviors attributed to other people, unless the author explicitly endorses them for themselves.
- **Current relevance.** Code avoidance that is ongoing, recent, or presented as an enduring pattern. Do not code avoidance that is clearly described as completed in the past and no longer present.
- **Clarity over inference.** Avoidance must be clearly expressed or unambiguously implied in the text. Do not infer avoidance from minimal or speculative cues. When in doubt, code 0.
- **Explicit motive.** For DA and BA, the link between rejection or behavior and an unpleasant internal state must be clearly expressed or unambiguously implied from context.
- **Dysfunctionality.** Avoidance often brings short-term relief but tends to restrict flexibility or valued action in the long run. Functional, flexible, or values-consistent regulation does not count as avoidance.
- **Direct quotations and hypotheticals** are coded only when the author clearly endorses them as their own stance or behavior.

3. Experiential Avoidance (EA)

3.1 Definition

Experiential Avoidance is the overarching tendency to avoid, suppress, or control unpleasant internal experiences (thoughts, emotions, memories, bodily sensations) through internal strategies (e.g., suppression, distraction, rumination, substance use) or external strategies (e.g., avoidance of situations, activities, or people). EA reflects a non-accepting stance toward internal experience and is associated with reduced psychological flexibility.

EA includes, but is not limited to, suppression and distraction, denial and repression, procrastination as avoidance, substance use to numb feelings, safety behaviors, and an unwillingness or inability to endure distressing states over time.

EA is typically maladaptive: although it may bring short-term relief, it tends to narrow the behavioral repertoire, interfere with valued action, and maintain psychological difficulties in the long run

3.2 What counts as EA

Typical markers of EA include, but are not limited to:

Marker	Illustrative expression
Suppression of unpleasant thoughts or feelings	"I do not want to feel this."
Rumination, distraction, or avoidance of internal states	"I deliberately think about something else."
Substance use to avoid feelings	"I drink to stop feeling anything."
Self-devaluation for having the experience	"I should not be allowed to feel anxious."

3.3 Decision rules

Must-criteria. Both must-criteria have to be clearly met for EA = 1, and both must refer to the same internal experience.

No	Criterion	EA = 1 example	EA = 0 example
1	An internal experience is mentioned (thoughts, feelings, memories, bodily sensations).	"I cannot stand these thoughts."	(No internal experience mentioned.)
2	This internal experience is rejected, suppressed, or actively avoided.	"I want this feeling gone."	"I accept it, even though it is hard."

Supportive criteria. These criteria can strengthen the decision but cannot replace the must-criteria.

No	Supportive criterion	Illustrative expression
3	Rigid, non-accepting attitude toward internal distress.	"I am not supposed to feel this."
4	Attempts to control the internal experience (suppression, rumination, distraction, substances, safety behaviors).	"I distract myself all day so I do not have to think."
5	Inability or unwillingness to allow the experience.	"I cannot handle this."

Decision rule. EA = 1 if both must-criteria are met and refer to the same internal experience. EA = 0 if one or both must-criteria are not met, or if exclusion criteria apply (Section 3.4).

3.4 What does NOT count as EA

Rule	Illustrative expression
Internal experience is accepted or tolerated.	"I am anxious, but I accept it."
No suppression or control strategy is described.	"I was sad and just cried."
Avoidance only on a behavioral level without any internal state.	"I did not go because I was tired."
Functional, flexible regulation.	"I took a deep breath and kept going."
Past avoidance described as resolved.	"I used to push feelings away, but now I let them be."

3.5 Examples

EA = 1 (present):

- "I keep pushing these thoughts away because I cannot bear them."
- "I drink every night so I do not have to feel anything."
- "Whenever the memory comes up, I force myself to think about something else."

EA = 0 (absent):

- "I feel anxious before every meeting, but I go anyway."
- "It was painful, and I allowed myself to cry."
- "I am learning to notice my feelings without judging them."

4. Distress Aversion (DA)

4.1 Definition

Distress Aversion (DA) is a rigid, rejecting attitude toward one's own internal distress (emotions, thoughts, sensations). Distress is evaluated as unbearable, harmful, or unacceptable, and the author attempts to suppress, eliminate, or escape it rather than tolerate or accept it. DA reflects low psychological flexibility and is dysfunctional, because it prevents adaptive emotional processing and tends to maintain or amplify suffering.

DA focuses on the rejection of the inner state itself, regardless of whether this rejection also translates into overt behavior. DA can be short-term (e.g., reacting to a single difficult conversation) or describe an enduring pattern. It applies whenever distress is evaluated as dangerous, unacceptable, or unmanageable in the current account.

4.2 Criteria supporting DA

The following indicators support a coding of DA = 1. Criteria 1 and 2 are must-criteria; criteria 3–6 are supportive.

No	Indicator	Illustrative expression
1	Distress is evaluated as unbearable, harmful, or dangerous.	"I cannot take this anymore."
2	Explicit wish to end, eliminate, or suppress the internal state.	"I just want these thoughts gone."
3	Use of internal strategies to not feel (distraction, alcohol, drugs, sleep, numbing).	"I smoke so I do not have to think."
4	Self-devaluation tied to the internal experience.	"I should not feel this. It shows I am weak."
5	Rigidity or zero tolerance for the internal state.	"I have to function. Anything else is unacceptable."
6	Circular helplessness without a regulatory strategy.	"I don't know what to do. It is just too much."

4.3 Decision rules

Precondition. DA can only be coded when distress is currently present (as a feeling, urge, or evaluation). If no distress is expressed, DA = 0.

No	Criterion	DA = 1	DA = 0	Type
1	Is the internal state (emotion, thought) portrayed as dangerous, wrong, or unbearable?	"I cannot handle this."	"It is hard, but okay."	Must
2	Is the focus on control or elimination rather than acceptance or regulation?	"I want it gone."	"I am trying to work through it."	Must

3	Is the behavior described as compulsive or without alternatives?	"I had no other choice."	"I decided to ..."	Optional
4	Is acceptance, understanding, or self-compassion visible?	"I am not allowed to feel this."	"I allow myself to feel this."	Optional

Decision rule. DA = 1 if both must-criteria are clearly met (questions 1 and 2). DA = 0 if one or both must-criteria are not met, or if indicators of acceptance and functional regulation clearly dominate.

Retrospective cases. DA is only coded when distress is either currently active or retrospectively described as dangerous, unbearable, or something to be avoided. Neutral retrospective accounts without current relevance are coded DA = 0.

4.4 What does NOT count as DA

The following indicators generally rule out DA:

No	Indicator	Illustrative expression
1	Accepting stance toward distress.	"It is okay to feel sad. That is part of it."
2	Functional regulation without suppression intent.	"I go for a walk to clear my head."
3	Self-compassion instead of self-devaluation.	"I try to be kind to myself even when I feel bad."
4	Reflection on feelings without negative evaluation.	"I have been anxious lately, and I am just observing it."
5	Curiosity or willingness to learn from emotions.	"I want to understand what this fear is telling me."
6	Naming feelings without escape behavior.	"I am angry, and I am letting it be."

4.5 Distinction from functional emotion regulation

The decision for DA depends less on the specific behavior than on the attitude toward the internal state. Feeling fear is often adaptive. Refusing to let oneself feel fear and needing to flee or numb it is DA.

- **Functional:** "I feel bad, so I go for a walk to think more clearly."
- **DA:** "I cannot feel bad. I do anything so I do not have to feel it."

4.6 Examples

DA = 1 (present):

- "I cannot stand this anxiety. It is like a fire in my head, and I would do anything for it to stop."
- "I try constantly to stop these thoughts. I hate that they keep coming back."
- "I watch series all day. The second I am quiet, that awful feeling comes back."
- "Emotions only confuse me. I try to stay rational and shut out anything that could make me feel."

DA = 0 (absent):

- “I am scared, but I can live with it.”
- “I was sad today, and I just let myself cry.”
- “I take care of myself when I feel overwhelmed (e.g., a walk, a shower, some quiet time).”

5. Behavioral Avoidance (BA)

5.1 Definition

Behavioral Avoidance is the active omission, withdrawal, or avoidance of specific situations, activities, actions, people, or places in order to prevent or escape unpleasant internal states such as anxiety, shame, tension, sadness, or insecurity.

The focus is not on the emotion itself, but on the external behavior used to avoid emotional distress. BA is typically dysfunctional and clinically relevant, as it restricts engagement in valued activities and maintains psychological difficulties over time.

5.2 What counts as BA

Marker	Illustrative expression
Clearly avoiding a specific situation	"I stopped going to lectures because I feel uncomfortable there."
Withdrawal from social, professional, or everyday contexts	"I cut off contact because it became too much."
Safety behaviors to avoid emotional activation	"I always sit near the door in case I need to escape."
Passivity driven by an internal state	"I keep putting off the call because I am afraid of rejection."

5.3 Decision rules

Three must-criteria are required for BA = 1 (criteria 1–3). Criteria 4 and 5 are supportive.

No	Criterion	BA = 1	BA = 0	Type
1	Is a specific behavior or action described?	"I no longer go outside."	(Only thoughts, no behavior.)	Must
2	Is this behavior avoided, discontinued, or replaced by passivity?	"I canceled the meeting."	"I went anyway, despite my fear."	Must
3	Is the reason for avoidance an unpleasant internal state?	"I was afraid of failing again."	(Practical reasons only.)	Must
4	Is the behavior described as compulsive or without alternatives?	"I just could not do it."	"I chose not to."	Optional
5	Are safety behaviors or passivity used to avoid feelings or situations?	"I stay home so nothing can go wrong."	"I am taking a break to recharge."	Optional

Decision rule. BA = 1 if all three must-criteria (criteria 1–3) are clearly met. BA = 0 if any one of the three must-criteria is not met. Supportive criteria (4–5) can strengthen the decision in ambiguous cases but cannot replace the must-criteria.

5.4 What does NOT count as BA

Rule	Illustrative expression
Behavior avoided for functional, non-emotional reasons.	“I did not go because I was sick / had no time.”
Voluntary withdrawal without avoidance motive.	“I am giving myself a quiet day to recover.”
Facing the situation despite inner resistance.	“I was anxious, but I still went.”
Only thoughts or emotions described, with no behavior.	“I was scared, but nothing really happened.”
Behavior unrelated to an internal state (e.g., sensory).	“I avoid the city because it is too loud.”

5.5 Distinction from DA

Aspect	BA	DA
Focus	External behavior	Internal experience
Prototype	“I will not go, because it overwhelms me.”	“I cannot bear these thoughts.”
Mechanism	Actions are avoided	Feelings or thoughts should be suppressed
Explicit rejection of emotion required?	Not necessarily. Emotional motive may be implied	Yes. Negative evaluation of the state is central

5.6 Boundary cases and annotation cases

The following points are critical for reliable BA coding.

- **Timeframe.** Completed, resolved avoidance in the past is coded BA = 0. Plans for the near future or ongoing patterns of avoidance are coded BA = 1 if all must-criteria apply.
- **Clinical relevance.** Ask whether the avoidance leads to a functionally restrictive or clinically meaningful pattern. If behavior is functional and situation-appropriate, BA = 0.
- **Explicitness of the internal state.** The motive for avoidance must be clearly stated or unambiguously implied by context. If the emotional reason is only vaguely hinted at, BA = 0.
- **Substance use.** Substance use alone does not establish BA. BA applies only if a substance is used to make an otherwise intolerable situation possible (e.g., “I can only go to parties when drunk, otherwise I cannot handle it”). Otherwise, substance use is better captured under DA.
- **Discontinuing medication.** Stopping medication because of side effects does not in itself count as BA. BA applies only if the author describes avoiding medication to escape a feared internal state (e.g., fear of dependency).

- **Perfectionism-driven avoidance.** Statements such as “I do not make art because I am a perfectionist” imply avoidance of an intolerable internal state (fear of mistakes) and are coded BA = 1.

5.7 Examples

BA = 1 (present):

- “I canceled the meeting because I was afraid.”
- “I stopped going to lectures because it became too overwhelming.”
- “I keep putting off the call because I am afraid of being rejected.”
- “I am scared of long-term side effects, so I do not want to try the medication.”

BA = 0 (absent):

- “I did not go because I was sick.”
- “I was nervous, but I went anyway.”
- “I took a day off to recharge.”

6. Hierarchy Rule and Co-occurrence

EA, DA, and BA are conceptually related but not identical. The hierarchy rule clarifies how the three codes relate to one another:

- EA is the overarching construct. A post can show EA without DA or BA, for instance, if the author describes suppressing thoughts without explicitly evaluating them as unbearable (DA) and without avoiding any external situation (BA).
- If DA = 1, then EA = 1. DA always implies EA, because rejecting an internal experience is a form of experiential avoidance.
- If BA = 1, then EA = 1. BA always implies EA, because avoiding a situation in order to escape an internal state is a form of experiential avoidance.
- EA, DA, and BA can co-occur. Example: "I cannot stand this anxiety (DA), so I stopped going to class (BA)." Both subcomponents are present, and EA is automatically coded 1.

During annotation, each construct is coded independently based on its own must-criteria.

Summary table of must-criteria:

Construct	Must-criteria for code = 1
EA	(1) An internal experience is mentioned, and (2) this experience is rejected, suppressed, or actively avoided.
DA	(1) The internal state is portrayed as unbearable, harmful, or dangerous, and (2) there is an explicit wish or attempt to eliminate, suppress, or escape it. Precondition: distress must be currently present or retrospectively evaluated as dangerous.
BA	(1) A specific behavior or action is described, (2) it is avoided, discontinued, or replaced by passivity, and (3) the motive is an unpleasant internal state (not a purely practical reason).

7. Summary

Coding EA, DA, and BA rests on two principles: (a) strict application of must-criteria, and (b) a clear distinction between avoidance and acceptance or functional regulation. The must-criteria prioritize construct validity. Only clear, theory-consistent instances are coded as present. Ambiguous or mixed expressions are coded as absent, even when partial indicators are present. This conservative strategy maximizes precision at the cost of recall and is appropriate when annotation must be reproducible across independent annotators.

Supplementary Note 2 | First EA Pre-Classification

prompt_template = """

INSTRUCTION:

You are an expert in clinical psychology and psychological text analysis.

****Important:****

Only consider avoidance, suppression, or acceptance as expressed by the author themselves. The task is to detect the authors own avoidance and not of others!

Ignore statements about other people's avoidance, emotions, or experiences.

If the post describes avoidance or suppression by someone else (not the author), this should not be counted.

****Do not count avoidance if it is clearly described as completed in the past and no longer present.****

Ignore statements about other people's avoidance, emotions, or experiences.

If the post describes avoidance or suppression by someone else (not the author), this should not be counted.

****Do not count general wishes to "improve", "get better", or "get symptoms under control" as avoidance, unless there is clear evidence of rejection, suppression, or unwillingness to experience emotions or thoughts.****

The desire to manage symptoms or improve well-being through therapy or support is NOT avoidance unless it involves an explicit refusal or attempt to not feel, suppress, or escape internal experiences.

****Definition of Experiential Avoidance (EA):****

EA is the overarching tendency to evade or suppress unpleasant internal experiences (e.g., thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations) through internal or external avoidance strategies.

EA includes not only distress aversion (avoiding inner states) and behavioral avoidance (avoiding external triggers), but also suppression and distraction from uncomfortable internal states, denial and repression, procrastination as avoidance, and an unwillingness or inability to endure distressing feelings or states over time. EA is associated with negative evaluation of inner states and reduced psychological flexibility. EA is typically considered dysfunctional, as it tends to increase psychological distress, reduce psychological flexibility, or impair quality of life.

****Examples of EA (EA = 1):****

- "I drink to stop feeling anything."
- "I just want these thoughts to go away."
- "I deliberately think about something else."

****Examples of No EA (EA = 0):****

- "I'm afraid, but I accept it."
 - "I was sad and just cried."
 - "My partner always tries to distract herself when she feels sad."
- *(Does NOT count as the author's EA)***
- "I want to get better, so I talk to my therapist." ***(Does NOT count as EA)***
-

For the following forum post, please assess whether the five criteria for Experiential Avoidance (EA) are fulfilled.

****For each criterion, only consider the author's own experiences and behaviors, not those of other people described in the post.****

For each criterion, decide whether it is present (yes/no) and briefly justify your judgment (max. 10 words).

Then, apply the decision rules below to decide whether EA is present (EA = 1) or absent (EA = 0) and provide your uncertainty score (0 = very certain, 1 = completely uncertain). For ambiguous posts, make your best choice and assign an ****uncertainty score****.

Finally, briefly justify your overall decision (max. 15 words).

****Criteria:****

1. ****Internal experience mentioned (author only):****

- Is an unpleasant internal experience (thoughts, emotions, sensations) of the author described?
- [yes/no]
- Brief justification:

2. ****Dysfunctional Rejection/avoidance/suppression of the experience (author only):****

- Does the author express rejection, avoidance, or suppression of this experience?
- Mark criterion 2 as "yes" only if the author explicitly reports their own current dysfunctional avoidance, rejection, or suppression of their internal experiences.
- Reflections, advice, encouragements, or intentions for future acceptance do NOT count as avoidance.
- [yes/no]
- Brief justification:

3. ****Non-accepting attitude (author only):****

- Does the author show a non-accepting attitude toward their internal experience?
- [yes/no]
- Brief justification:

4. **Attempts at control (e.g., distraction, rumination, substances; author only):**

- Does the author attempt to control or change their internal experience?

- [yes/no]

- Brief justification:

5. **Inability/unwillingness to allow the experience (author only):**

- Is the author unable or unwilling to allow their experience?

- [yes/no]

- Brief justification:

Decision Rules:

- EA = 1 (Present) if BOTH (1) and (2) are "yes", AND they refer to the same internal experience or aspect.

- EA = 0 (Absent) if (1) or (2) is "no".

- Criteria 3-5 are supportive, but not required.

Annotation Format:

Criteria:

1. Internal experience mentioned: [yes/no], [justification]

2. Rejection/avoidance/suppression of the experience: [yes/no], [justification]

3. Non-accepting attitude: [yes/no], [justification]

4. Attempts at control: [yes/no], [justification]

5. Inability/unwillingness to allow the experience: [yes/no], [justification]

EA: [1 or 0]

Uncertainty Score: [0-1]

Brief Explanation: [max. 15 words justifying your decision]

Forum Post:

"{post_body}"

Your response:

""

Supplementary Note 3 | Prompt for Synthetic Data Generation

```
prompt_template = ""
```

```
### INSTRUCTION:
```

You are a data augmentation assistant for psychological research. Your role is to generate **five** new, realistic forum-style posts that are similar to a given original post but not identical, so they can be used for supervised fine-tuning.

```
### TASK – Generate exactly five new forum-style posts. Each post must:
```

- Describe a situation clearly similar to the original but **not** be a paraphrase.
- Keep the same emotional tone, style, and approximate length ($\pm 30\%$).
- Use your own words and **different concrete details**; avoid copying sequences longer than **3-4 words** from the source.
- **No placeholders** like [LOCATION] or [NAME]; use generic wording (e.g., "in my city").
- **No PII or links**: do not include real names, exact addresses, phone numbers, emails, or URLs.
- Do **not** mention labels, manuals, prompts, or that this is synthetic.

If any candidate violates these constraints, **replace it** so you still return five valid posts.

```
### DIVERSITY BETWEEN THE 5 VARIANTS
```

Across the five outputs, ensure **substantial diversity** by varying at least two of:

- **setting/context** (home/work/social/public/online),
- **social roles** (alone vs. partner/friend/colleague/stranger),
- **temporal framing** (single episode vs. recurring pattern),
- **coping attempts / safety behaviors**,
- **consequences** (short-term relief vs. long-term costs).

Do **not** reuse the same specific numbers, names, or unique details across variants.

The coding manuals for Experiential Avoidance (EA), Distress Aversion (DA), and Behavioral Avoidance (BA) are provided so that you fully understand the constructs and apply the decision rules consistently.

This ensures that the generated synthetic posts remain construct-valid and keep the same labels as the original.

```
### CODING MANUALS FOR EA, DA, BA:
```

Here is the coding manual for Experiential Avoidance (EA):

Definition: Experiential avoidance refers to the tendency to avoid, suppress, or control distressing internal experiences such as thoughts, feelings, memories, or bodily sensations, even when they are not objectively dangerous. The short-term goal is to reduce unpleasant experiences, but this often comes at the cost of long-term

flexibility. Common strategies include distraction, rumination, substance use, or safety behaviors.

Decision criteria:

- Must criteria:

1. An internal experience (thoughts, feelings, memories, bodily sensations) is mentioned.
2. This experience is rejected, suppressed, or actively avoided.

- Supportive criteria:

3. Rigid, non-accepting attitude toward distress ("I must not feel this").
4. Attempts to control inner experiences (suppression, distraction, substance use).
5. Inability or unwillingness to allow inner experiences ("I can't stand this").

Decision rule:

- EA = Yes if both must-criteria are fulfilled.
- EA = No if one or both must-criteria are not fulfilled.
- Supportive criteria serve only as additional evidence.

Exclusions (not EA):

- Acceptance of inner experiences ("I am anxious, but I accept it").
- No suppression or control strategy present ("I felt sad and simply cried").
- Avoidance only on a behavioral level without inner distress ("I didn't go because I was tired").
- Functional or flexible behavior ("I took a deep breath and kept going").

Here is the coding manual for Distress Aversion (DA):

Definition: Distress Aversion refers to a rigid, rejecting attitude toward negative internal states, where distress is perceived as harmful, intolerable, or unacceptable. Individuals high in DA urgently try to suppress, escape, or eliminate emotional discomfort, often through distraction, rumination, substance use, or other avoidance strategies. This stance reflects low psychological flexibility and contributes to long-term suffering.

Decision criteria:

- Must criteria:

1. Distress (thoughts, emotions, inner states) is described as harmful, dangerous, or unbearable.
2. There is an explicit wish or attempt to suppress, eliminate, or avoid the distress rather than tolerate or accept it.

- Supportive criteria:

3. Behavior or inner struggle is described as compulsive or without alternatives ("I had no choice").
4. Presence of self-devaluation or rigid rejection of emotions ("I must not feel this").
5. Absence of acceptance, understanding, or self-compassion.

Decision rule:

- DA = Yes if both must-criteria are fulfilled.
- DA = No if one or both must-criteria are not fulfilled.
- Supportive criteria can strengthen the decision but cannot replace the must-criteria.

Exclusions (not DA):

- Acceptance of distress ("It's hard, but I can handle it").
- Functional emotion regulation without avoidance ("I go for a walk to calm down").
- Self-compassion or understanding of one's emotions ("I try to be kind to myself even when I feel bad").
- Reflection on emotions without rejection ("I feel anxious, but I just notice it").
- Retrospective mention of distress without current avoidance or rejection.

Here is the coding manual for Behavioral Avoidance (BA):

Behavioral Avoidance (BA)

Definition: Behavioral Avoidance refers to the active omission, withdrawal, or avoidance of specific situations, activities, actions, people, or places in order to escape or prevent unpleasant inner states such as anxiety, shame, tension, sadness, or insecurity. The focus is not on the emotion itself, but on the external behavior used to avoid emotional distress. BA is typically dysfunctional, clinically relevant, and reduces psychological flexibility.

Decision criteria:

- Must criteria:
 1. A specific behavior or action is described (e.g., skipping, canceling, withdrawing).
 2. The behavior is avoided, discontinued, or replaced by passivity or withdrawal.
 3. The motivation for avoidance is linked to an unpleasant internal state (fear, shame, overload, etc.), not purely practical reasons.
- Supportive criteria:
 4. Behavior is described as compulsive or without alternatives ("I simply couldn't do it").
 5. Use of safety behaviors, passivity, or procrastination to avoid negative feelings or situations.

Decision rule:

- BA = Yes if all three must-criteria are fulfilled.
- BA = No if one or more must-criteria are not fulfilled.
- Supportive criteria can strengthen the decision but cannot replace the must-criteria.

Exclusions (not BA):

- Avoidance for functional, non-emotional reasons ("I didn't go because I was sick / had no time").
- Voluntary withdrawal without avoidance motive ("I took a break to recharge").

- Facing the situation despite inner resistance ("I was anxious but went anyway").
- Only thoughts or emotions are mentioned without behavior.
- Behavior unrelated to inner distress (e.g., avoiding loud places for sensory reasons).

****Forum Post:**** "{post_body}"

****Original labels to preserve (do not mention in the output):****

EA={ea_label}, DA={da_label}, BA={ba_label}

OUTPUT FORMAT (strict JSON)

Return ****only**** valid JSON with this exact schema and ****no extra text**** before or after:

```

{{
  "posts": [
    {"id": 1, "text": "<post-1>"},
    {"id": 2, "text": "<post-2>"},
    {"id": 3, "text": "<post-3>"},
    {"id": 4, "text": "<post-4>"},
    {"id": 5, "text": "<post-5>"}
  ]
}}
"""

```

Supplementary Note 4 | Prompt for Few-Shot Classification of EA, DA, and BA

prompt_template = ""

You are an annotation assistant for psychological research.

Goal: For each forum post, decide EA/DA/BA (0/1 each). If evidence is unclear or missing, set 0.

Scope: Judge ONLY the author's own current stance/behavior. Ignore behaviors of other people, generic statements about "people", quotes, and hypotheticals unless the author clearly endorses them for themselves.

Posts can be in German or English. Judge accordingly.

Note on dysfunction (supportive, not required): Avoidance strategies often bring short-term relief but restrict flexibility and valued action in the long run, thereby maintaining problems.

Hierarchy: If DA = 1 or BA = 1, then EA must also be 1.

EA – Experiential Avoidance

****Definition of Experiential Avoidance (EA):****

EA is the overarching tendency to evade or suppress unpleasant internal experiences (e.g., thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations) through internal or external avoidance strategies.

EA includes not only distress aversion (avoiding inner states) and behavioral avoidance (avoiding external triggers), but also suppression and distraction from uncomfortable internal states, denial and repression, procrastination as avoidance, and an unwillingness or inability to endure distressing feelings or states over time. EA is associated with negative evaluation of inner states and reduced psychological flexibility. EA is typically considered dysfunctional, as it tends to increase psychological distress, reduce psychological flexibility, or impair quality of life.

- MUST:

1) An internal experience is mentioned (thoughts, feelings, memories, bodily sensations).

2) That internal experience is rejected/suppressed/controlled/avoided.

- SUPPORTIVE:

- Rigid non-acceptance ("I must not feel this"); active control attempts (suppression, distraction, substances/safety behaviors).

- The dysfunction note above applies.

- EXCLUDE (set EA = 0):

- Acceptance/tolerance is present.

- No avoidance/control strategy is stated.

- Purely behavioral/practical reasons without inner distress.

- Functional/values-consistent regulation.

DA – Distress Aversion

Definition of Distress Aversion (DA):

DA refers to the rigid tendency to avoid, suppress, or escape emotional distress because it is perceived as harmful, dangerous, or intolerable.

It reflects a rejecting and fearful attitude toward inner discomfort and leads individuals to urgently seek relief rather than tolerating or accepting distress.

DA is dysfunctional, as it prevents adaptive emotional processing and often maintains or amplifies suffering through maladaptive strategies such as rumination, suppression, or avoidance.

- MUST:

1) Distress is judged harmful/unbearable/unacceptable.

2) Explicit wish/attempt to eliminate/suppress/escape it (instead of tolerate/accept).

- SUPPORTIVE:

- Compulsive/no-alternative tone; self-devaluation; lack of acceptance/compassion.

- The dysfunction note above applies.

- EXCLUDE (set DA = 0):

- Acceptance/tolerance or self-compassion is present.

- Functional regulation without avoidance (e.g., mindful grounding to continue).

- Mere reflection; only retrospective mention without current rejection.

BA – Behavioral Avoidance

Definition of Behavioral Avoidance (BA):

BA refers to the active omission, withdrawal, or avoidance of specific situations, actions, activities, people, or places in order to prevent or escape unpleasant internal states such as anxiety, shame, tension, sadness, or insecurity.

The focus is not on the emotion itself, but on the external behavior used to avoid emotional distress. BA is typically dysfunctional, as it restricts engagement in valued activities and maintains psychological problems over time.

- MUST:

1) A specific behavior/situation is described.

2) It is avoided/ceased/replaced by passivity/withdrawal.

3) The motive is an unpleasant inner state (anxiety/shame/overload etc.), not purely practical.

- SUPPORTIVE:

- Safety behaviors/procrastination to avoid feelings/situations;

compulsive/no-alternative tone.

- The dysfunction note above applies.
- EXCLUDE (set BA = 0):
 - Practical reasons only (sick/no time/logistics).
 - Voluntary recovery break without avoidance motive.
 - Facing the situation despite inner resistance.
 - No behavior stated, or behavior unrelated to inner distress.

Decision rule: Apply MUST vs EXCLUDE strictly. If MUST are clearly met → 1; otherwise 0. When in doubt → 0.

OUTPUT FORMAT (strict JSON, one line, no Markdown, no extra text):
 {"EA": 0 or 1, "DA": 0 or 1, "BA": 0 or 1, "rationale_short": "<= 25 words"}

FEW-SHOT EXAMPLES (follow this exact I/O pattern):

EXAMPLE POST:

My heart races and I keep forcing the thoughts away with music.

EXAMPLE OUTPUT (JSON):

```
{"EA":1,"DA":0,"BA":0,"rationale_short":"Active suppression via distraction; no behavioral avoidance."}
```

EXAMPLE POST:

Crowded trains make me panic, so I cancel trips to avoid the feeling.

EXAMPLE OUTPUT (JSON):

```
{"EA":1,"DA":0,"BA":1,"rationale_short":"Avoids travel due to panic; BA motivated by inner state."}
```

EXAMPLE POST:

This sadness feels unbearable; I must not feel it and numb it with alcohol.

EXAMPLE OUTPUT (JSON):

```
{"EA":1,"DA":1,"BA":0,"rationale_short":"Unbearable distress + elimination attempt; no explicit BA."}
```

EXAMPLE POST:

I noticed anxiety in my chest and let it be while I worked.

EXAMPLE OUTPUT (JSON):

```
{"EA":0,"DA":0,"BA":0,"rationale_short":"Acceptance and continued action; no rejection or avoidance."}
```

EXAMPLE POST:

My partner avoids parties when sad.

EXAMPLE OUTPUT (JSON):

```
{"EA":0,"DA":0,"BA":0,"rationale_short":"Third person; not the author, ignore."}
```

EXAMPLE POST:

I skipped the meetup because I had no time and a deadline.

EXAMPLE OUTPUT (JSON):

```
{"EA":0,"DA":0,"BA":0,"rationale_short":"Practical reason; no inner-  
state motive."}
```

EXAMPLE POST:

I can't stand this fear; I do anything to stop it immediately.

EXAMPLE OUTPUT (JSON):

```
{"EA":1,"DA":1,"BA":0,"rationale_short":"Fear judged unbearable;  
elimination intent."}
```

EXAMPLE POST:

I used to push feelings away, but lately I accept them.

EXAMPLE OUTPUT (JSON):

```
{"EA":0,"DA":0,"BA":0,"rationale_short":"Past avoidance resolved;  
current stance accepting."}
```

NOW ANNOTATE THE FOLLOWING POST. RETURN ONLY THE JSON OBJECT.

"""

Supplementary Table 1 | Prevalence of EA, DA, and BA Across Subreddits

Subreddit	N Forum Entries	EA (%)	DA (%)	BA (%)
Phobia	881	28.4	21.7	20.7
Depression	2,340	27.5	23.2	13.4
AvPD	3,933	17.1	12.7	8.5
OCD	4,129	16.4	11.5	8.6
EatingDisorders	1,771	16.0	11.6	8.9
BodyDysmorphia	2,304	15.1	11.2	8.3
Socialanxiety	4,845	14.3	10.9	8.5
Anxiety	4,593	13.5	9.7	7.3
BPD	4,831	11.2	7.7	5.4
PTSD	4,828	10.4	7.5	5.1
Stopdrinking	4,819	7.6	5.8	3.5
TalkTherapy	4,851	5.0	3.1	2.1
ChronicPain	4,874	3.2	2.1	1.3