

Spotting your early warning signs of emotional distress.

You'll find this framework useful when you first notice that you're struggling and may benefit from support. Keep in mind that extended periods of unchecked distress can lead to mental and/or physical health problems. This is a simple way to help you monitor how you're coping so that you can step back and take a breather.

Remember that we can all experience a number of distress-related symptoms and it doesn't mean that we have, or are developing, a mental health condition. The only person who can conclusively determine if you have a mental health condition is a professional, so if you're concerned, see your GP as soon as you can. Regardless of whether someone has a mental health problem or is simply struggling with day-to-day challenges which are piling up, the most important thing is to ensure that you seek help and don't suffer in silence.

As you start to note the signs that you might be feeling overwhelmed, check the following:

- ASK what's 'normal' for you
- BASE your findings on patterns and not a few signs in isolation
- CONSIDER whether or not your symptoms of distress are becoming more frequent and/or severe

Remember signs of distress don't appear overnight but can take time to develop – sometimes over a period of months – so seek support as soon as you start to feel like you're not coping as well as you usually do.

Early warning signs that you might need help to manage stress

NOTE: when populating the framework, you may find that you repeat the same sign in each of the three columns (For example crying is physical, emotional and behavioural). It's absolutely fine to repeat when needed – the most important thing is that you note all of the signs you notice.

Physical signs	Emotional or cognitive signs	Behavioural signs