

Sometimes our emotions can be overwhelming and feel too painful to cope with. But we all have the resources within us to recognise that we can overcome these feelings if we know what steps to take.

The following plan will help you reduce your emotional distress and increase your ability to cope when it all gets too much.

What I need to do to reduce the risk of me acting irrationally if I'm feeling mentally unwell:

How to recognise my early warning signs and what triggers my emotional distress.

We all respond to events in different ways, and you know yourself better than anyone else does. Become aware of what your early warning signs are and what might trigger negative emotions for you.

Examples of early warning signs: Feeling more irritable, becoming increasingly nervous or forgetful, losing pleasure in things, a lack of motivation, avoiding others, crying more often etc.

Examples of triggers: Family arguments, friendships problems, bullying, stress, relationship issues, feeling too much pressure, spending too much time online etc.

My early warning signs are:

My triggers are:

What have I done in the past that helps? What ways of coping do I already have?

Remember, feelings pass and you won't feel this way forever. You will have more inner resources than you might be aware of at this time. Think about how you've coped with difficult times in the past. What helped you then? Do you think it could help you now?

What I have done in the past to help myself

Ways of coping I know about:

How can I be caring and compassionate towards myself?

We often treat ourselves far worse than we would treat a friend. Remember to be a good friend to yourself when you're in emotional pain. It helps to write down caring things you can say to yourself as if you were saying them to someone else, eg: 'It's hard to feel this way - try to be kind to yourself,' 'Remember your relaxation techniques,' or 'It's ok, you'll be ok, you'll get through this, it will pass.'

Kind things I can say to myself:

Who can I reach out to?

You may need someone near at hand, to help support you through a difficult time. Try to identify who this person is - or these people are. Let them know that you have identified them as being someone you can turn to for support as this gives them the opportunity to discuss their role with you

This person or people could be friends, parents or carer, relatives or another person you trust.

When I need support, I can turn to:

How can other people help support me?

Write down reminders of the kind of help you can ask other people for eg. listening to your concerns, checking-in with you, helping you to gain perspective, soothing you, making you laugh or keeping you company.

What I can ask others to do to help support me:

I will choose something from my self-soothing list and focus on it for at least 20 minutes:

Examples of self-soothing methods:

- Watch a tv/online show you like
- Go for a walk
- Tidy your room
- Take a relaxing bath
- Listen to music
- Focus on your breathing
- Listen to a relaxation or mindfulness exercise
- Use a wellbeing app
- Do something creative
- Talk to someone about how you feel.

My self-soothing list:

What other things might help me when I'm feeling low?

Professional Organisations that can help me:

If you or someone else is in serious risk of death or injury, call 999 and ask for the police and/or an ambulance.

If you need to talk to someone:

The Samaritans offer emotional support and a listening ear, 24/7, 365 days a year.
– Call them on 116 123 (24hr),
– Or email: jo@samaritans.org

Connection 24/7 Phonenumber for Dorset is a helpline for people of all ages experiencing mental health issues.
– Call 111 and select 'mental health'
– Or call 0300 1235440

Childline gives help on a wide range of issues.
– Call 0800 1111, 9am to midnight
– Email them from your online Childline account

Kooth provides FREE, safe anonymous support for young people. Live chat or message the team of counsellors online.
– Visit kooth.com

Shout (text service) provides a FREE 24/7 text service for anyone in crisis who needs immediate help.
– Text SHOUT to 85258

The Mix provides support for under 25s on sex, relationships, drugs, mental health, money & jobs.
– Call 0808 808 4994
– Text THEMIX to 85258