

Module 13:

Early warning signs



This module will help you:

- identify early warning signs
- develop a plan for responding to your early warning signs

Authors: Caroline O'Connor, Kevin Duffy,
Caroline Brilly.

Edited by Caoimhe Black and Brian Fitzmaurice



Plan for today's session

How was your week?

What would you like to talk about today?

Evaluating today's session

Summary of what we talked about today

What will I do during the week?

How was today for me?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Identifying early warning signs

How do we know it is about to rain? Perhaps we hear thunder in the distance. The skies might be dark and full of clouds. It might be very windy. What do we do? If we do not want to be caught in the rain, we might go home, close all the windows and bring in our washing.

Distressing experiences or signs of psychosis can be like rain. We can learn to spot when these are developing, and then we can take steps to prevent the distressing experiences from getting worse.

You will need to learn to recognise your own early warning signs. There are some experiences and signs that are common to people when they are developing psychosis, but you will also have experiences or signs that are unique to you.

Think again about the signs of rain. You might know that thunder, dark skies and clouds mean rain, but if you don't pay attention to those signs you will still get wet. You need to pay attention to your own early warning signs of a psychotic episode developing, so that you can prevent it happening. Do this just like you pay attention to dark skies to avoid getting wet.

How to pay attention to your signs and distressing experiences

- Keep a list of your early warning signs and distressing experiences on a small card. Always carry this card with you.
- Check your list of early warning signs and distressing experiences once a week.
- Ask people that you trust to let you know when they notice your early warning signs.
- Ask your doctor to review your early warning signs at each appointment.

When you are able to recognise early warning signs and distressing experiences of a psychotic episode, the next step is to monitor them regularly.

Activity: Write your early warning signs and distressing experiences on the worksheet **My early warning signs**.

Developing a plan to manage your signs and distressing experiences

After you have identified your early warning signs and worked out a way to monitor them, you can take the next step. It is important to make a plan, so you know what to do when you recognise your early warning signs.

In your plan, include:

- what you will do
- what you will say and
- what you will ask your friends and family to do for you

For example, your action plan may include calling to request an appointment with your doctor or asking a friend to drop by to visit you.

Activity: Write your plan on the worksheet **My plan for managing my distressing experiences**.



Keep your plan on your fridge or by your bed or somewhere that you can get to easily.

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My early warning signs

Worksheet

These are signs that it is possible I am becoming unwell.

What I do

What I think

How I feel

How I get along with others

What friends and family notice about me

What stresses me

Name: _____ Date: _____

My plan for managing early warning signs and preventing relapse

Page 1 of 2

My top three early warning signs (from My Early Warning Signs)

What I will do

What I will say to my friends and family

What I will ask my friends and family to help me with

People who can support me

Friends

Family

Community

Doctors, nurses and other health professionals

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My plan for managing early warning signs and preventing relaps

Page 2 of 2

What situations might cause me problems?

What are my common unhelpful thoughts?

What are all the things I can do to help myself?

What coping strategies have helped me the most?

What are my coping statements?

Name: _____ Date: _____