

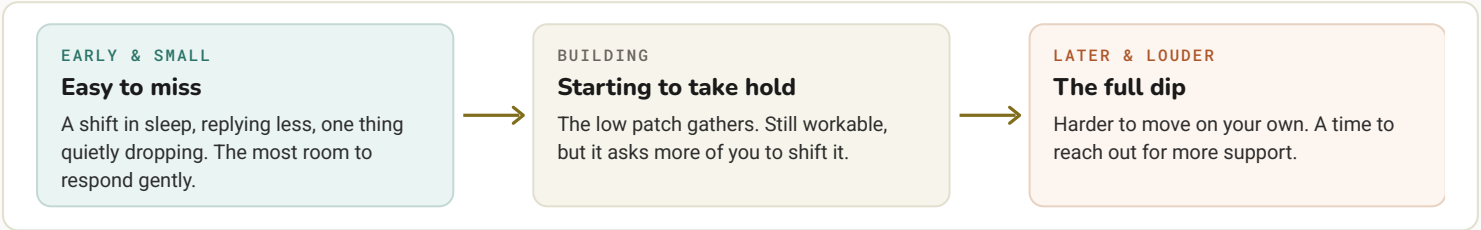
Knowing your own early signs

Recovery from low mood is often not a straight line. It can move in dips and lifts, and a dip on its own does not have to mean it is all coming back.

This is a place to map your own early signs: the small shifts that, for you, tend to come before a low patch. Knowing them is not about bracing for the worst. It is so you and the people supporting you can notice early and respond gently. Everything you need is on these two pages.

i For use alongside therapy, not as a substitute, and not a safety plan. This is for noticing early and responding gently with support, not for managing a low patch on your own. If things feel unsafe or are escalating quickly, contact your GP, your clinician, or a crisis service rather than working from this sheet.

WHY EARLY SIGNS ARE WORTH KNOWING small and early is easier to work with



This map is about the early end. Noticing the small shifts can give you, and the people supporting you, more room to respond gently, before a low patch is in full swing.

WHAT EARLY SIGNS TEND TO BE LIKE

PERSONAL, NOT UNIVERSAL

Yours may not look like a symptom

In one study, many personal warning signs were not classic symptoms but things like irritability, withdrawing, or letting time slip (Slofstra et al., 2021).

OFTEN THE SAME EACH TIME

A pattern that repeats

Early signs tend to be fairly consistent within a person across episodes, which is what makes your own pattern worth knowing (Benasi et al., 2021).

NOTICING, NOT BRACING

A map, not a guard you mount

This is not about watching yourself anxiously. It is something you glance at now and then, not a reason to feel on alert.

BETTER SHARED

Not the only one watching

It can help to bring it to therapy or share it with someone you trust, so you are not carrying the noticing alone.

HOW TO USE IT

1

Think back to a low patch

Recall the lead-up, if you can. What shifted while things still looked mostly fine?

2

Fill in what fits you

Use the rows as starting points. A few words each; skip any that do not fit.

3

Share it with support

Bring it to therapy, or to someone you trust, so the noticing is shared.

WHAT ONE ROW MIGHT LOOK LIKE

WHERE TO LOOK	WHAT MY EARLY SIGN LOOKS LIKE	WHAT IT MIGHT BE TELLING ME	A SMALL STEP, OR WHO I'D TELL
Pulling away	<i>I stop replying to messages and start cancelling plans</i>	<i>I am starting to withdraw, before I have noticed feeling low</i>	<i>Reply to one person; mention it at my next session</i>

REMEMBER A dip can be part of recovery; it does not mean you have failed. Your early signs are your own, and knowing them is for responding gently and early, with support, not for managing it alone.

Slofstra, C., Castelein, S., Pieper, A., Dijkstra, G., Hoenders, R., & Booij, S. (2021). Personalized warning signals for depressive relapse: A qualitative study. *European Psychiatry*, 64(S1), S620. · Benasi, G., Fava, G. A., & Guidi, J. (2021). Prodromal symptoms in depression: A systematic review. *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*, 90(6), 365–372.

Your early signs map



One area per row.

A few words per cell, and leave any cell or row blank. The rows are starting points, not a list to complete. Use the last row for anything that is yours alone. It can help to fill it in with, or share it with, someone supporting you.

WHERE TO LOOK	WHAT MY EARLY SIGN LOOKS LIKE	WHAT IT MIGHT BE TELLING ME	A SMALL STEP, OR WHO I'D TELL
Sleep & energy <i>can be the first thing to shift</i>			
Pulling away <i>cancelling, not replying, going quiet</i>			
The things that drop first <i>what you stop doing early on</i>			
How you talk to yourself <i>the tone your thoughts take</i>			
Appetite & body <i>eating, restlessness, a physical heaviness</i>			
Something else <i>that is yours:</i>			



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WHEN YOU HAVE MAPPED WHAT YOU CAN

Bring it into a session, or share it with someone you trust.

Your early signs are useful information whether or not you are currently in therapy. If you would like to talk them through, the Meet and Greet is a short call to see if we are the right fit.

MEET AND GREET

- Free
- 15 minutes
- Online or in-person
- No obligation