

How do I Know if I'm not OK?

We've all had our down days, the ones where something feels 'not quite right'. The days that you feel overly emotional, feeling empty or anxious, being quick to anger, snapping when we talk to others and generally blue. But how do we know when this 'not quite right' is the right signal to have the conversation, to put your hand up and say "I don't think I am okay."

Thinking back over recent weeks, have you been bothered by any of the following:

	Never	Occasionally	Often
Moodiness that is out of character	☐	☐	☐
Increased irritability and frustration	☐	☐	☐
Finding it hard to take minor personal criticisms	☐	☐	☐
Spending less time with friends and family	☐	☐	☐
Loss of interest in food or pleasurable activities	☐	☐	☐
Difficulty sleeping	☐	☐	☐
Increased alcohol and drug use	☐	☐	☐
Staying home from work or school	☐	☐	☐
Increased physical health complaints like fatigue or pain	☐	☐	☐
Being reckless or taking unnecessary risks	☐	☐	☐
Slowing down of thoughts and actions	☐	☐	☐
Feeling bad about yourself, or that you are a failure	☐	☐	☐
Decreasing concentration on things	☐	☐	☐
Considering suicide or self harm	☐	☐	☐

How difficult have these issues made it for you to do your work, take care of things at home, or get along with other people?

☐	☐	☐	☐
Not difficult at all	Somewhat difficult	Very difficult	Extremely difficult

Look at your responses and gauge whether this any of these factors are impacting on your life. If you have ticked 'often' or 'occasionally' in a number of areas you may like to assess whether you need to implement some support strategies, see a counsellor or speak to a trusted friend, family member, colleague or your doctor.

Feeling down, tense, angry or anxious are all normal emotions, but when these feelings persist for long periods of time they may be part of a mental health problem.

Mental health problems can influence how you think and your ability to function in your everyday activities, whether at home, at work or in relationships.

Self-awareness is a vital tool for helping ourselves identify emotional and behavioural danger signs, and can serve as a preventative measure in maintaining psychological health and wellbeing.

It is important to recognise when something is not quite right about our thinking, feelings, or behaviour, particularly as early intervention that can help reduce the severity of episodically poor mental health.

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DON'T THINK I'M OKAY – WHO CAN I TALK TO ABOUT IT?

Talk to a close friend, work colleague or family member

Engaging the help of a trusted person can assist in developing a greater sense of self-awareness about your psychological health and well-being. Ask a family member or friend to give you their opinion of any changes noted in your emotional and behavioural presentation. This can reassure you about your own feelings, and prompt you to take action regarding your mental health. Family, friends, and perhaps even work colleagues, can all be valuable sources of support, so ensure you utilise those loved and respected people in your life, in your quest for support.

Seek Professional Assistance Early

Early support can be vital in effectively managing various mental health problems. Early treatment can lead to a better outcome. Make an appointment to see a doctor, EAP consultant, mental health practitioner or psychologist for an assessment.



Call **1300 OUR EAP (1300 687 327)** to call Converge International for free EAP support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Other sources of support include:

- SuicideLine 1300 651 251
- Lifeline 13 11 14
- Kids Help Line 1800 55 1800
- Mensline Australia 1300 789 978
- MindSpot <http://www.mindspot.org.au>
- Beyond Blue 1800 22 46 36
www.beyondblue.org.au
- Headspace 1800 650 890
- Sane 1800 18 7263

I DON'T THINK I'M OKAY – WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

Addressing mental health isn't quick or easy, but it's far from impossible even though it can't be beaten through willpower alone. The key is to start small. Feeling better takes time, but you can get there if you make positive choices for yourself each day.

- **Start with a few small goals** and stay focused on building slowly, taking one day at a time.
- **Draw upon whatever resources you have.** You may not have much energy, but you probably have enough to take a short walk around the block or pick up the phone to call a loved one.
- **Remember to reward yourself for each goal achieved** - the steps may seem small, but they quickly add up. For all the energy you put into your recovery, you'll get back much more in return.

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Self Care

Taking care of yourself is imperative to your mental health and wellbeing. This includes following a healthy lifestyle, learning to manage stress, setting limits on what you're able to do, adopting healthy habits, and scheduling fun activities into your day.

Sleep well

Aim for eight hours of sleep. Whether you're sleeping too little or too much, your mood suffers.

Soak up some sun

Expose yourself to a little sunlight every day. Lack of sunlight can make some mental health conditions worse. Make sure you're getting enough - aim for at least 15 minutes of sunlight a day to boost your mood.



Stress less

This is one that is harder than it sounds. Not only does stress prolong and worsen mental health conditions, but it can also be a trigger. Identify the things in your life that stress you out and once you've identified your stressors, you can make a plan to avoid them or minimize their impact.

Practice relaxation techniques

A daily relaxation practice can help relieve mental health symptoms, reduce stress and boost feelings of joy and well-being. Try yoga, deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation or meditation.



Push yourself – just a little

It's important to push yourself to do things, even when you may not feel like it. You might be surprised at how much better you feel once you're out in the world. While you can't force yourself to have fun or experience pleasure, you can choose to do things that you used to enjoy. Don't expect your depression to lift immediately, but as you do the things you enjoy, you'll gradually feel more upbeat and energetic.

Develop a wellness toolbox

Create a list of things that you can do for a quick mood boost. Include any strategies, activities, or skills that have helped in the past. Try and implement a few of these ideas each day, even if you're feeling good.

Get regular exercise

Exercising may be the last thing you feel like doing. But exercise is a powerful tool for improving mental health. Studies show that regular exercise can be as effective as antidepressant medication at increasing energy levels and decreasing feelings of fatigue.



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