

EWSSs & SUDs

Early Warning Signs & Subjective Units of Distress

In situations that trigger anger, stress, anxiety, depression, and trauma responses, it is crucial that we can recognise the level of distress that we are experiencing so that we can regain control of our emotional reactions.

1. Consider the signs that may serve as an early warning that your happy emotional baseline is being compromised. If your concerns are around anxiety you may feel that you go from calm to panicked, but I can assure you that you don't. Knots in your tummy, sweaty palms, racing thoughts, raised voice, rapid speech, etc. are all types of EWSs that form links in the chain that elevate you from calm to anxious/panic. Take a moment to put them into sequence; first leads to second leads to third, etc.

2. Now take this chain of behaviours/responses and draw a line where the signs change from warm to hot. Remember, warm signs are where you've escalated above your happy baseline, but you are still capable of thinking through your emotions. Hot signs are when you feel that you are at the mercy of your emotions and you need to ride the wave until the intensity naturally drops back to warm. The aim of the game is to *prevent* hot signs from occurring; raise your awareness of the warm signs and know the strategies that will help you tame them.

In the beginning, check your SUDs at least twice a day. The more familiar you become with checking in with your emotional state and using strategies to tame, the more in control you will feel, and the fewer episodes you will have.

