Recognising my warning signs

Prepare while you have capacity

A crisis plan is a practical guide to use when distress makes thinking, communicating or making decisions difficult. Create it when you feel able, ideally with a trusted person or professional. You do not need to describe traumatic events. A plan can change as your needs change.

My early warning signs

Consider changes in sleep, thoughts, energy, eating, withdrawal, agitation or feeling disconnected.

Situations that increase my distress

Notice patterns without needing to revisit painful memories.

Signs that I need urgent help

Consider feeling unable to stay safe, thoughts of suicide, escalating self-harm or being unable to meet essential needs.

You can skip any question, take a break or complete this plan with someone you trust.

What helps me feel safer

Build a practical grounding toolkit

Distress may make familiar coping strategies harder to remember. Choose simple actions you have tried before. Grounding is optional: if a technique increases distress, stop and try something different. If your surroundings are unsafe, prioritise getting to safety.

Things I can try when I notice early signs

Examples: reduce noise, orient to the room, drink water, sit somewhere comfortable or contact someone.

My safer places and supportive routines

Identify accessible places and arrangements that help, including a backup if your first choice is unavailable.

Making my environment safer

Plan with a trusted person to reduce access to things you could use to harm yourself, and arrange support rather than managing risk alone.

You can skip any question, take a break or complete this plan with someone you trust.

People and services I can contact

Make support easier to reach

You can ask for support before distress becomes a crisis. Agree with trusted people what they can realistically offer and identify alternatives. If speaking is difficult, prepare a short written message. Do not wait for a reply if you are in immediate danger.

Trusted person 1 and contact details

Name, number, availability and what I can ask them to do.

Trusted person 2 and backup support

Name, number, availability and preferred way to contact them.

My professional support contacts

GP, therapist, crisis team or other service; include numbers and opening hours.

You can skip any question, take a break or complete this plan with someone you trust.

Communicating my needs

Keep choice and accessibility in view

During a crisis, communication can become difficult. Let others know what helps you understand information, make choices and feel respected. You can share only the parts of your plan you choose, while recognising that immediate safety may require urgent help.

What I want people to know

My communication preferences, sensory needs and signs that I am struggling.

What helps and what makes things harder

Consider tone, personal space, touch, questions, practical help and consent.

A message I can send when I need help

Example: I am struggling and need support. Can you contact me or help me reach a crisis service?

You can skip any question, take a break or complete this plan with someone you trust.

My crisis support plan

Keep this page somewhere accessible

Use this page as a quick reference. Share it with a trusted person if you wish and review it after a crisis or when circumstances change. The plan is not a substitute for emergency care.

When I notice warning signs, I will…

Write two or three simple steps and who I can contact.

When I cannot keep myself safe, I will…

Identify urgent support and how I can reach it. Do not rely on self-help alone.

After a crisis: my follow-up and review

Who will check in with me? What practical support do I need? Review date:

Urgent help in the UK: If you are in immediate danger or have seriously harmed yourself, call 999 or go to A&E. In England, call NHS 111 and select the mental health option for urgent mental health support. Samaritans: 116 123 (emotional support, not emergency response).