

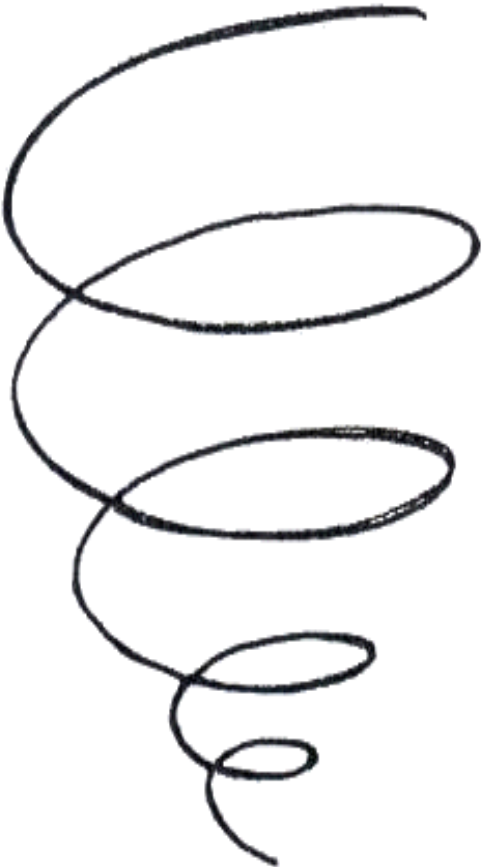
You can use the Stress Spiral to help you spot patterns in the things you do when you start to feel stressed or lower in mood.

Becoming familiar with what it looks and feels like when problems are coming back can help you stay well for longer. It means you can recognise it quicker, making it more likely you can respond early and in a helpful way. Some of the key signs that life is getting more stressful also go unnoticed by many people, so becoming familiar with them for yourself is important and useful.

Identifying Problem Patterns

What patterns tend to happen at each level of the spiral for you?

Write down behaviours, thoughts, feelings and body sensations for each level



Coping well e.g. 'Generally happy, getting on well with important people in my life'

Thoughts

Feelings

Body sensations

Early warning signs e.g. 'Stop responding to texts'

Thoughts

Feelings

Body sensations

Really struggling e.g. 'Easily get angry with myself and others'

Thoughts

Feelings

Body sensations

You can download and print out a copy of this worksheet from the EMCAVS website: bit.ly/32kGo3t or draw out your own version

Imagine that you could travel forward in time, say a few months, and visit your future self. You find your future self: (1) Doing well, (2) Experiencing early warning signs of stress, or (3) Really struggling. Imagine that you could send your future self a message. What advice would you give yourself that you would find helpful in that situation?

Using the patterns you identified in the Stress Spiral, ask yourself:

- ⇒ What actions could I choose to take that will lift my mood, give me energy, give me a sense of mastery or satisfaction, and nourish me, *even if I don't feel like doing them* at that point in the stress spiral?
- ⇒ What advice would be helpful for me at different levels of the stress spiral?

Aim for three actions or pieces of advice for each level, even if some are repeated

Coping well e.g. 'Congratulate yourself for the effort you are putting into the things that are important to you'

-
-
-

Early warning signs e.g. 'Stop and breathe. Take in your surroundings. What do you appreciate about where you are?'

-
-
-

Really struggling e.g. 'You're a resilient person. Your friends and family love you. Don't be afraid to lean on them now.'

-
-
-

If you forgot everything about what's helpful for you in staying well mentally, but could hold on to a few newspaper headline-style slogans to summarise what personally helps you – what would they say?

a) If I forget everything else, I would always want to remember....

e.g. 'Thoughts are not facts'



b) If in future I have similar difficulties, I would want to remind myself that...

e.g. 'I almost always feel better from being out in nature, no matter what the weather'



Keep these reminders somewhere you can easily come back to, in case you need to revisit them in the future