

Recognising Distress Quiz

“How can you know when you are becoming distressed?”

Here’s a self-discovery **quiz to help you recognize the mind-body warning signals of distress** — physical, emotional, and behavioural signs that often show up before you consciously realize you're overwhelmed, anxious, or shutting down. Learning to notice these early signs can help you intervene with self-care or ask for support **before** things escalate. This quiz is for gentle self-exploration and is not meant to be used as a diagnostic tool.

Instructions: For each statement in each category, choose the answer that best describes how often you experience it:

- **A = Never**
 - **B = Rarely**
 - **C = Sometimes**
 - **D = Often**
 - **E = Almost Always**
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Section 1: Physical Signs of Distress

1. My heart races or pounds, even when I’m not moving.
 2. My breathing gets shallow or I hold my breath without noticing.
 3. I get headaches, stomach aches, or tightness in my chest or jaw.
 4. I feel restless, fidgety, or like I can’t sit still.
 5. I feel tense or frozen, like my body is shutting down.
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Section 2: Emotional Shifts

6. I suddenly feel irritable, overwhelmed, or like I could snap.
 7. I feel numb or disconnected from my emotions.
 8. I cry easily or unexpectedly.
 9. I feel a wave of dread or panic without knowing why.
 10. I feel emotionally flat, blank, or like I’ve “shut off.”
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Section 3: Cognitive/Thinking Changes

11. My thoughts race and I can’t focus on anything clearly.
12. I get stuck in looping thoughts or “what if” scenarios.
13. I start catastrophizing or imagining worst-case outcomes.
14. I can’t remember things I just did or said when I’m stressed.
15. I have trouble making even small decisions under pressure.

Section 4: Behavioural Patterns

16. I avoid things that feel overwhelming, even if they're important.
 17. I isolate or withdraw from people without meaning to.
 18. I lash out or snap at others when I feel stressed.
 19. I overeat, under-eat, scroll endlessly, or use substances to escape.
 20. I keep myself too busy to feel what's going on inside.
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Section 5: Early Warning Signs (Subtle Clues)

21. I sigh a lot or feel pressure in my chest.
 22. I feel "off" or uneasy but can't explain why.
 23. I find myself being more forgetful, clumsy, or scattered.
 24. I feel like I'm trying to act "fine" but it takes effort.
 25. I ignore how I'm feeling until my body forces me to stop.
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Scoring & Insight:

Count how many items you marked **D** or **E** in each section. The areas with the highest scores reveal your **early and late-stage signs of distress**.

Section	Distress Signal Type
1. Physical	Your body feels it first — somatic warning signs
2. Emotional	Mood shifts signal emotional overload or numbing
3. Cognitive	Thinking changes indicate inner overwhelm or spiralling
4. Behavioural	Actions reveal how you try to cope, escape, or control
5. Subtle Signs	Your system tries to warn you early — are you listening?

Reflection Questions

- Which section(s) had the most "D" or "E" answers?
 - What are *your top 3 early warning signs* that you're becoming distressed?
 - When you notice these signs, what's one thing you can do to slow down or soothe yourself?
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Why This Matters

Recognizing your own distress signals helps you:

- Prevent burnout, shutdown, or panic
- Practice self-regulation and emotional safety
- Know when to ask for help or pause
- Respond instead of react