



Early warning signs

In this episode Dave learns how to spot the early warning signs of mental health issues so he can take preventative steps – without being a counsellor. Use this checklist to help identify early warning signs in your workplace, so you can address the risks by taking preventative action.

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Rate Your Workplace – Early Warning Signs Checklist

Areas of focus	Yes	No	Comment
Physical signs			
Do employees look tired? Do they complain about being tired all the time or are having difficulty sleeping?			
Is there an increase in reports of headaches or back aches? (Can be symptoms of tension.)			
Have you noticed that an employee is no longer "on the ball"?			
Do some employees look dishevelled or neglect personal hygiene?			
Have you noticed a colleague has developed skin rashes?			
Has there been an increase in gastrointestinal illness?			
Has there been noticeable weight loss or weight gain in some employees?			
Are employees generally sick and run down?			
Behavioural signs			
Is a staff member starting to miss deadlines or is there a reduction in the quality of their work?			
Are employees showing erratic/uncharacteristic behaviour?			
Are some employees preoccupied with HR/fair treatment issues?			
Are some employees starting to miss work events or team functions where they are usually involved?			
Are employees withdrawn from general workplace conversation or team discussions? Are they not speaking up in meetings?			
Are sick leave rates or other unplanned absences increasing?			
Has an employee lost confidence recently?			
Are employees regularly coming in late with no valid reason?			
Is an employee's workspace starting to become untidy when usually it is well kept?			

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Have you noticed an increase in use of cigarettes or alcohol? Is there the smell of alcohol on their breath in the morning?			
Are employees showing difficulty with recalling information (memory) or decision making?			
Is there an increased use of grievance procedures /formal complaints from some staff members?			
Are some employees showing difficulty with concentration?			
Has there been an increase in errors or accidents in the workplace?			
Are employees having unusual emotional responses to standard workplace communication? Is there an increase in conflict behaviours?			

Early intervention – management practice

Have you had a discussion with the worker to say you've noticed a change/ask if anything is wrong? Keep the discussions focused on wellbeing, not job performance.			
Have you offered help and arranged to check-in with the worker regularly?			
Are managers trained to recognise early warning signs of worker distress and low morale (as noted earlier)?			
Are workers aware of the support and assistance which may be available to them (e.g. Employee Assistance Program)?			
Are complaints of lack of management support being identified?			

What are the priority areas we're going to work on?

Focus area & action plan	Review by
1.	
2.	
3.	

Completed by:

Date: