

Green Zone

How to avoid the mental health continuum creep

Learn how to spot early signs of mental health continuum creep and discover simple ways to stay in the green zone with awareness, balance and daily habits.

Staying in the green zone: how to avoid the mental health continuum creep

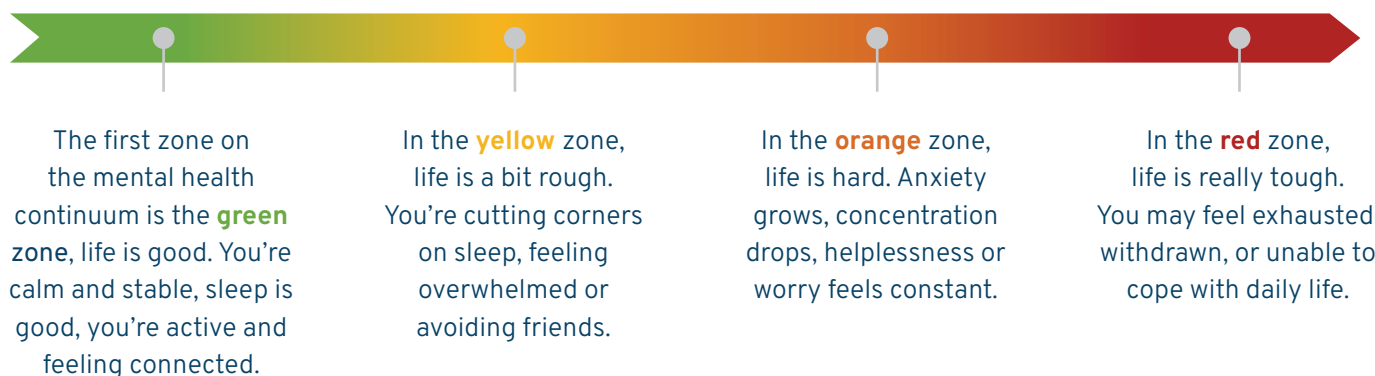
We often think of mental health as being 'good' or 'bad'. In reality, it's more of a spectrum. At one end of the continuum is the green zone, where you show healthy behaviours and coping strategies. At the other end is the red zone, with unhealthy patterns, burnout or even crisis.

Most of us don't leap from green to red overnight. We creep. Slowly, and often without noticing. That's where the idea of continuum creep comes in.

Just like exercising improves our physical health, there are many ways to strengthen our mental health so we can try to stay in the green zone.

Positive wellbeing matters - we all have a role to play

The mental health continuum



What are some early signs you're moving away from the green zone?

The mental health continuum creep happens when healthy habits quietly slip away and are replaced by less helpful ones. Your habits and behaviours gradually move from the green through the yellow and orange to the red zone.

The hard part is seeing the early shifts of continuum creep. Here are some subtle cues and things to ask yourself:

- **Energy dips** – Are you feeling drained even after rest?
- **Loss of joy** – Are activities you usually enjoy feeling more of an effort than usual?
- **Short fuse** – Are you getting annoyed by small things?
- **Avoidance** – Are you dodging calls or skipping social plans?
- **Numbing habits** – Are you leaning on screens, snacks, or substances more often?

Negative experiences that impact on your mental health and wellbeing are treatable

One sign alone isn't necessarily a red flag, but patterns matter. Just like when you ignore physical niggles, they can lead to bigger injuries. If you ignore the subtle signs that you're moving away from the green zone, you could easily tip into the orange or red zone before you realise. The earlier you catch the creep, the easier it is to get back on track.

Some ways to stay in the green zone

1 What does being in the green zone look like for you?

Everyone's green zone is different. How do you behave, act and feel in the green zone? What activities or coping mechanisms help you stay there? Do you have professional support or important family or friends to talk to?

2 Check in with yourself

Regularly ask yourself how you're feeling and what you need today to make it a green-zone day. If you know how you're feeling, you're more likely to react if something feels off.

3 Get the basics right

Having enough sleep, getting exercise, social connection and a healthy diet are crucial elements for a healthy mind and body.

4 Ask for help from family or friends

Reach out to some of your loved ones like family members or trusted friends. Tell them how you feel and ask them to flag if they notice any behaviour that isn't in your usual green zone.

5 Notice your early stress signals

Stress signals show up differently for everyone. Some people get physical symptoms, others feel overwhelmed or are irritable. Work out your stress signal and try to lighten the load or take a break if it's getting too much.

6 Talk early

By sharing early, it can help before things build up. Talk to a trusted friend or colleague or formal support services when things are getting tough.

Empower your family members with permission to contact Wellbeing Support if you move towards the red

The earlier you seek support, the quicker your recovery



Mental health isn't about never leaving the green zone. Life throws challenges, and we'll all shift along the continuum at times.

What matters most is noticing when we're moving away from the green zone and gently steering ourselves back. Staying green is about awareness, balance, and small daily choices that add up.



References:

- <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/benefits-military/health-support/road-to-mental-readiness/mental-health-continuum-model.html>
- MyPulse Wellbeing Support 'Our Mental Health Continuum' (provided)
- <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/stress>
- <https://quantico.usmc-mccs.org/news/know-your-zone-the-stress-continuum>

Wellbeing Support 24 Hours 6173 2873
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