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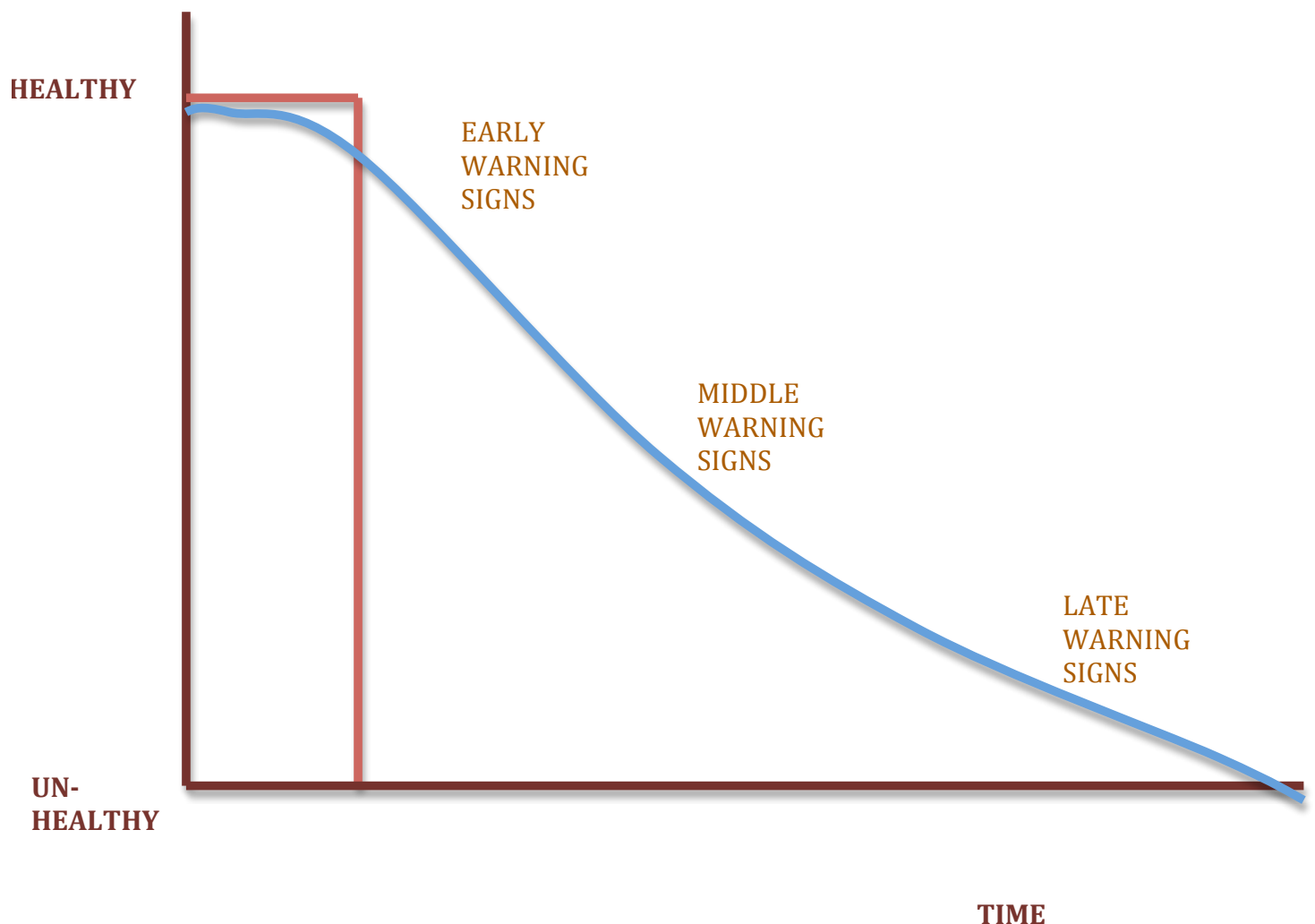
**Relapse Prevention**

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## Relapse Prevention

Relapse prevention work is an integral component of the cognitive behavioural therapy process and much research has shown that having worked through your problems using a CBT approach you are better equipped to deal with any future lapses in your symptoms than if you had been treated with medication alone. This section will consolidate what you have learnt in your recovery and assist you in developing a plan to help you to act early in any future lapses you may experience enabling you to recover quickly and help to prevent a full relapse.

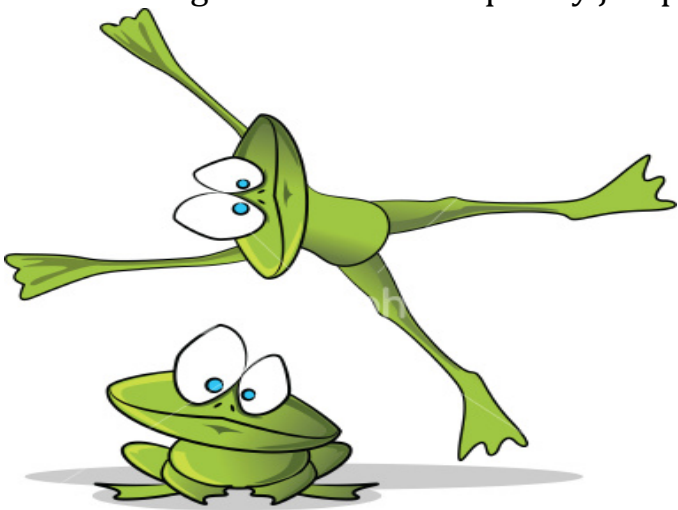
Relapse prevention work is based on the principle that in the majority of cases our symptoms of ill health do not appear dramatically overnight, (the red line in the graph below) but that they develop gradually over a period of time (the blue line in the graph below). This gradual onset of symptoms is termed our early, middle and late warning signs (WS).



Warning signs are individual for each of us and they develop gradually over time. Because of this we are often unaware that they are building until we are already in the late stages of being unwell. This is often why sometimes we believe that we do follow the red line path in the graph above because we have been unaware of the subtle changes that have been building over time.

We know that when change occurs slowly our consciousness of it is often affected. This is because although on an unconscious level our brain is registering change, it does not bother our consciousness unless we need to know. For example, we know that if in our environment a sudden large change in sound was registered we would be very consciously aware of it, however, if that sound level was subtly raised, very gradually over a long time frame we would not consciously register it. The frog analogy below highlights this further.

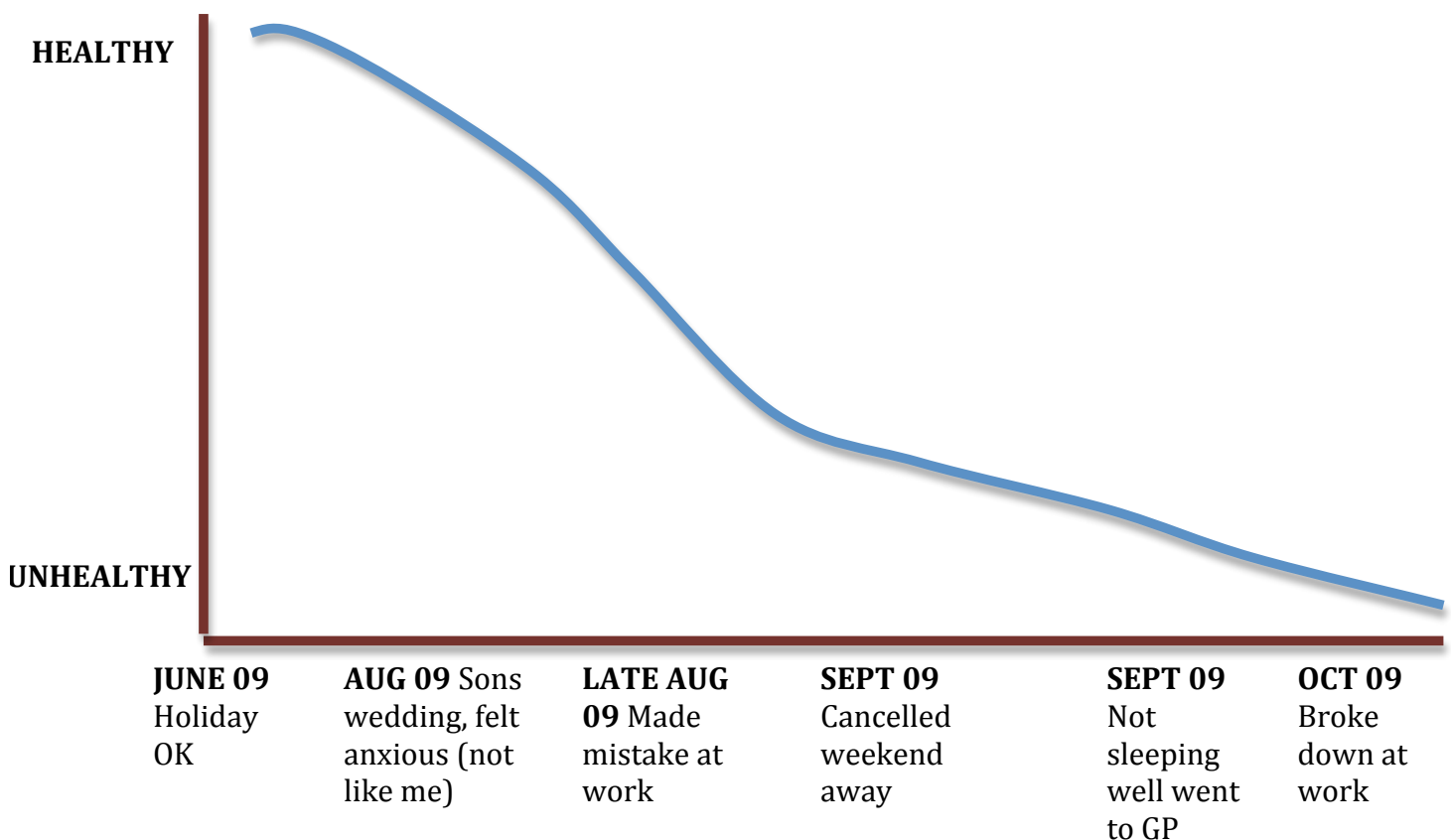
If you were to place a frog in a pan of cold water and very gently heat up the water, he would likely stay in the pot and meet an untimely end! (No we haven't tried it!!) However, if he jumped into a pan full of already boiling water he would quickly jump out!!



What this means is that our early and middle warning signs can build up subtly in the background until we find ourselves with more severe symptoms, which as well as being very unpleasant, will take us a longer time to recover from. If we can learn what our early and middle signs look like, then we can make ourselves more conscious of them, so that if we do start to develop symptoms, the unconscious awareness will alert our consciousness to them and we can take action to prevent us spiraling down. This involves three stages; the time line, the early warning signs and the action plan. We will work through each of these now in turn.

## The Time Line

This will involve plotting on a time line when you first became aware of your symptoms. This may have been when you went to your GP or an event you remember, for example becoming upset at work or not feeling able to get into work. This will most likely represent some of your later warning signs. Then think back over time to events (we are usually more likely to remember significant times). For example, you may be able to cast your mind back to how you were feeling on a recent holiday, then think about how you were feeling every 1<sup>st</sup> day of a month. So think back to significant times, holidays, birthdays, social situations, etc and ask yourself whether or not you were 100% well during those times (you can ask others around you that you trust too as they may notice things that you did not). This will hopefully lead you to a point in time where you were well and will highlight a time line of your episode of ill health. See the graph below.



This process helps you to become aware of the time line for your problems developing and can then help you to further pull out the specific early, middle and late warning signs for you.

To do this it is helpful to consider your warning signs for each of the five areas of the CB model (emotions, biology, behaviour, thoughts and environment). Consider each area in turn for how things looked for you at each of the stages. The table on the next page highlights this further

## WARNING SIGNS TABLE

	<b>EARLY WARNING SIGNS</b>	<b>MIDDLE WARNING SIGNS</b>	<b>LATE WARNING SIGNS</b>
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>			
<b>EMOTIONS</b>			
<b>BIOLOGY</b>			
<b>BEHAVIOUR</b>			
<b>THOUGHTS</b>			

**ACTION PLAN FORM**

<b>EARLY WARNING SIGNS</b>	<b>ACTION PLAN</b>
<b>MIDDLE WARNING SIGNS</b>	<b>ACTION PLAN</b>
<b>LATE WARNING SIGNS</b>	<b>ACTION PLAN</b>