

ASKING R U OK?

On Thursday 13th September, Australia will again partake in R U OK? Day – an annual reminder to reach out to friends, family and colleagues and ask about their mental wellbeing. Asking, “Are you okay?” may seem simple but listening and caring could just save a life, so remember to check in; not just today- but **every day**.



STARTING THE R U OK? CONVERSATION

- 1. BREAK THE ICE.** Be relaxed, friendly and concerned in your approach. Use language that you and the person would feel comfortable with. Include changes you have observed such as appearance, mood, behaviour or language. Try something like, “You seem less chatty lately. How are you going?” If they say they are not ok, you can help by listening and informing of available resources to better manage their stress. If they say they are ok, don't force a conversation. You can let them know you are here if they need to talk, and have shown that you care enough to ask.
- 2. LISTEN WITHOUT JUDGEMENT.** Sometimes we think we can solve other people's problems, but it is important to avoid interrupting or pushing our advice. Remember to remain calm, and don't take it personally if they become angry or upset.
- 3. ENCOURAGE ACTION.** Ask them, “What would be a good first step you can take?” Helping the individual understand what types of professional support and resources are available to them, can be the greatest help of all.
- 4. FOLLOW UP.** Check in with the person in a few days. Remain positive, even if the individual has not taken any action – they might just need more time.

HOW DO I KNOW IF SOMEONE NEEDS SUPPORT?

The typical signs you may see are changes in:

- Physical appearance (more tired, fidgety or nervous than usual, looking more ill or run down)
- Mood (more irritable, appearing anxious, overwhelmed, flat, or short-tempered)
- Behaviour (withdrawn, isolated, decline in performance or distracted)
- Thoughts expressed (catastrophising, negative thoughts, confused, or irrational thoughts)

If a person shows any of these signs, it is a good time to ask, “Are you okay?”

PREPARING FOR THE R U OK? CONVERSATION

Ask yourself:

- Am I in the right headspace to approach this person?
- Have I got enough time to listen without rushing them?
- Have I chosen somewhere private and free from distractions to have the conversation?
- Do I know of available options if they need further support (Human Resources, EAP phone number, GP)?

Once you feel completely prepared, it is time to initiate the conversation.

NEED AN EXPERT?

At Assure Programs, we offer 24/7 psychological counselling services to employees as part of their EAP.

To book a face-to-face or phone appointment with one of our experienced psychologists call Australia: 1800 808 374
NZ: 0800 464 387
or visit <https://assureprograms.com.au/eap-appointment-requests/>

If you are in an emergency or at immediate risk of harm to yourself or others, please contact emergency services on 000.