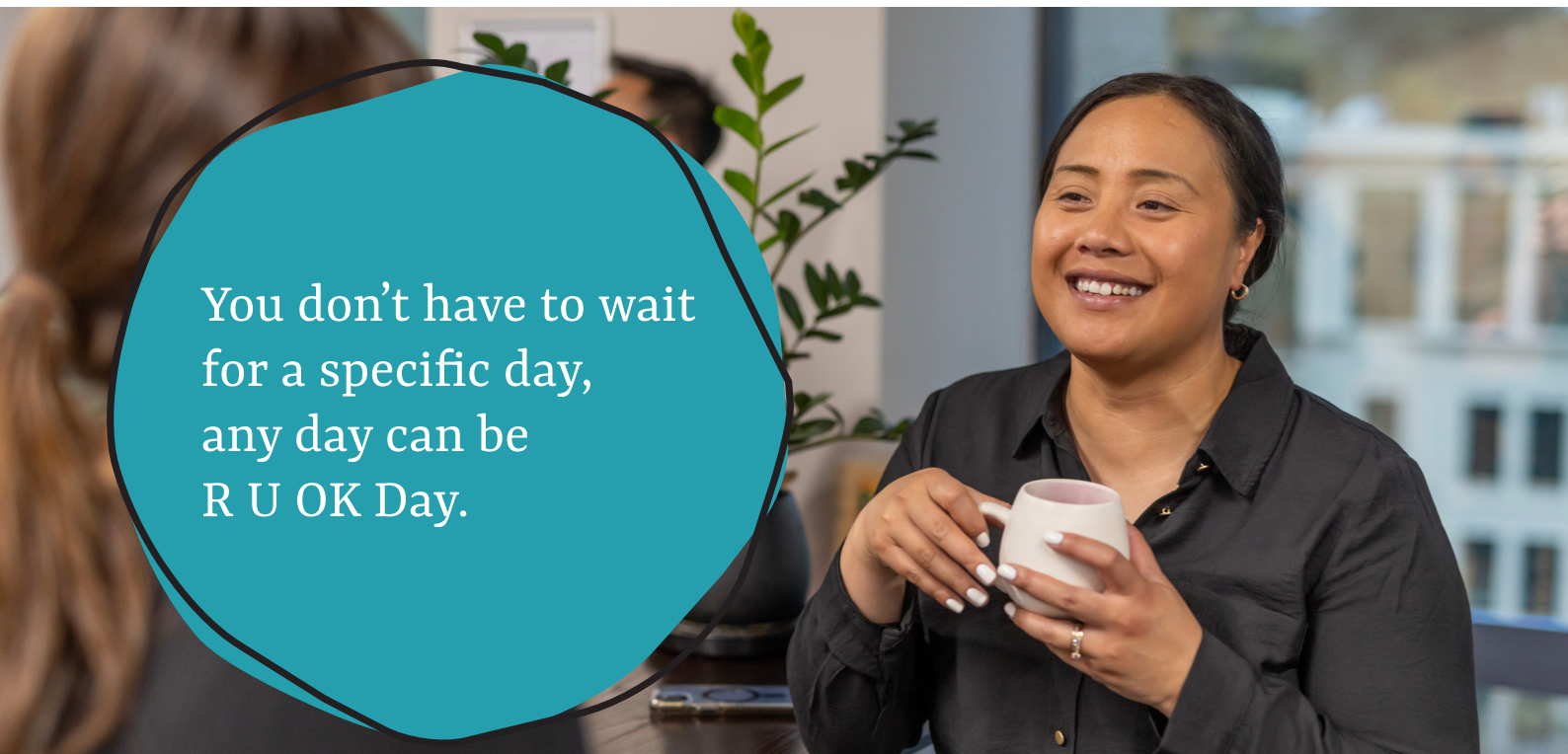




Making meaningful conversations and supporting those around you.

A photograph of a smiling woman with dark hair, wearing a dark blue button-down shirt, holding a white mug. She is looking slightly to her right. In the background, there is a blurred indoor setting with a plant and a window.

You don't have to wait for a specific day, any day can be R U OK Day.

Most of us are aware of R U OK? Day and what it represents, but it's worth remembering why checking in on others matters. Showing empathy and listening without judgement can make a real difference to someone's wellbeing. While you don't need to be an expert to support someone, understanding how to start conversations and respond appropriately can help. To share practical guidance, we asked Assure experts Kristen Orazi, Clinical Manager, and Nessie Srouji, an experienced counsellor

It's about connection, not just one day

The goal isn't to have all the right words. It's to let someone know you've noticed them and create an opportunity to connect. Asking "Are you OK?" can be the first step in showing support and opening a meaningful conversation.

It's not about having all the answers

Being supportive of someone is helping them feel comfortable about sharing and listening to them with empathy. Just by doing this, you're already helping them, so don't feel any pressure to solve problems or find solutions. As Kristen notes, "Be the observer, not the fixer".

How can we tell if someone needs support?

Everyone is different, but there are some common tells we can look out for:

- non-verbal cues — how they hold themselves, body language, eye contact
- changes in sleeping or eating habits
- reduced energy levels
- diminished self-care
- avoiding social situations
- becoming irritable, having trouble focusing

What if someone seems resistant to engage, but we still want to help?

Kristen suggests we trust our gut feelings, and if we suspect someone needs support, find a non-confrontational way to break the ice. You don't have to immediately ask 'Are you OK?' – you can share a walk, or a coffee break, and gently steer the conversation when appropriate.

Share what you've noticed

If you have concerns, it can be helpful to be direct, in a supportive and caring way. For example, 'I've noticed you've not been engaging as much as usual, is everything ok?'

Be mindful of the language you use

When you're engaging with someone who has opened up to you, be conscious of the words and phrases you choose.

- avoid comparisons; 'Well at least you're not...' 'Others have it worse'
- be mindful of potentially unhelpful platitudes; 'Just think positively'
- don't minimise their feelings; 'Everyone gets a little depressed'
- remember everyone's circumstances are unique, don't generalise

Avoid 'trauma dumping'

It might seem helpful to share personal anecdotes, but often excessive sharing, especially of traumatic events, can derail the conversation and switch the emphasis to you.

Know your boundaries

Listening to someone and 'walking in their shoes' as an act of empathy can have an impact on your mental health.

"When we do that, we trigger the same part of our central nervous system that releases the same stress hormones as the person going through it".

Nessie suggests acknowledging how hard it is for them as a way of shifting the focus back to compassion and empathy.

Don't promise to keep a secret

If your intuition is telling you the information is too massive to hold alone, encourage them to seek further support, like Lifeline, Health Direct, Wellbeing Gateway, or an EAP.

Normalise checking in

The more we all do it, the easier it becomes.

Something on your mind?

If you require counselling, coaching or support, our clinicians are here to help. Call, chat or request an appointment online.

Looking for more resources?



Register for [Wellbeing Gateway](#). Your mental health and wellbeing companion.