

R U OK? DAY – 11 SEPTEMBER 2014

A conversation could change a workmate's life... or simply anyone who you may think, something's not quite right.

A place where asking the question "are you ok?" can really work is in the workplace. As employers or employees, we can all create a culture and environment where people feel confident asking and answering this most important question. These conversations can make a real difference to staff going through a tough time.

If your gut says something's not quite right with someone, chances are that they might need a bit of extra support from the people around them. They might be acting a bit differently, seem to have a lot on their plate, or simply aren't themselves. Don't ignore those signs but instead take some time to start a conversation.

Asking this question doesn't mean you have to have all the answers if the person you're worried about says "no". It's not about being an expert. It's about following some simple, caring steps. The below isn't a script – they're tips to help you ask from the heart.

Getting ready to start a conversation



Be ready

Make sure you're in the right headspace yourself

Be willing to genuinely listen and give as much time as needed

Be ready to share your own stories of struggle to help them feel ok about saying they're not ok.

Be prepared

Accept that a difficult conversation could follow and that you won't have all the answers.

Understand that talking about personal struggles can be embarrassing and difficult. They might react angrily or be dismissive because they're worried what others might think.

Think about how you'd like to start the conversation and what words you might use.

Pick your moment

Make sure you ask them somewhere relatively private and comfy.

Pick a time that's good for them.

If something happens and chat is cut short, make sure you make another time to catch up.

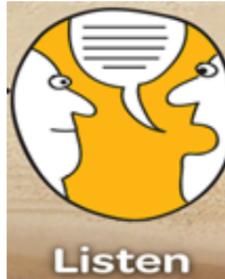
How to ask

Step One: Ask R U OK?



- Be relaxed.
- Help them open up by asking questions like "How you going?" or "What's been happening?" or "How have you been travelling?"
- Mention specific things that have made you concerned for them, like "I've noticed that you seem really tired recently" or "You seem less chatty than usual. How are you going?"

Step Two: Listen without judgement



- Take what they say seriously.
- Don't interrupt.
- Encourage them to explain.
- Ask "How does it make you feel?" or "How long have you felt that way?"
- If they get angry or upset, stay calm and don't take it personally. Let them know you're asking because you care and acknowledge that times seem tough for them.

Step Three: Encourage Action



- Show that you've listened by recapping
- Help them think about one or two things that can be done
- Urge them to commit to doing one thing that might help. You can find all sorts of help on the website www.ruok.org.au
- If necessary, encourage them to see a doctor or other professional. This is particularly important if they've been feeling really down for more than 2 weeks.

Step Four: Follow Up



- Put a note in your diary to call them in one week. If they're really struggling follow up sooner.
- Ask if they've managed to take that first step.
- If they made the effort to talk to a professional and didn't find it helpful, urge them to try a different professional because there's someone out there who can help them.