

# ASKING, “ARE YOU OK?”



Is someone you know or care about not behaving as they normally would? Maybe they are agitated or withdrawn...just not themselves. Trust your instinct and act on it. Start a conversation and comment on the changes you've noticed. By doing this, you could help that family member, friend or schoolmate open up. If they say they're not ok, you can follow the conversation steps below to show them they have your support and help them find strategies to better manage their struggle. If they are ok, that person will know you're someone who cares enough to ask about them. One conversation can change a life.

## Getting Ready to Ask

Before you can look out for others, you need to look out for yourself. And that's ok. If you're not in the right state of mind or you think you're not the right person to have the conversation, try to think of someone else in their support network who could talk to them. To help you decide whether you're ready to start a meaningful conversation, ask yourself this:



### AM I READY?

- Do I have the right mindset?
- Am I willing to genuinely listen?
- Can I give them the time they need?



### AM I PREPARED?

- Do I understand that if I ask someone how they're doing, the answer could be, "I'm not doing well"?
- Do I understand that I can't simply "fix" someone's problems?
- Do I accept the fact that they may not be ready to talk...or not want to talk to me?



### DO I KNOW THE BEST TIME?

- Have I chosen somewhere relatively private and comfortable to speak with them?
- Have I found a time that will be good for them to talk to me?
- Am I certain that I have time to speak with them?



1. Ask



2. Listen



3. Encourage action



4. Check in

# The Four Steps



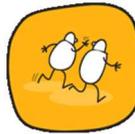
## 1. ASK, "R U OK?"

- Be relaxed, friendly and concerned in your approach.
- Help them open up by asking questions like, "How are you doing?" or "What's been happening?"
- Mention specific things that have made you concerned for them, such as, "You seem less talkative than usual."
- If they don't want to talk, don't criticize or force them.
- You could say: "Please call me if you ever want to talk" or "Is there someone else you'd rather talk to?"
- Tell them you're concerned about changes in their behavior and you care about them.
- Avoid a confrontation.



## 2. LISTEN WITHOUT JUDGEMENT

- Take what they say seriously and don't interrupt or rush the conversation.
- Don't judge their experiences or reactions but acknowledge that things seem to be tough for them.
- If they need time to think, sit patiently with the silence.
- Encourage them to explain: "How are you feeling about that?" or "How long have you felt this way?"
- Show that you've listened by repeating back what you've heard (in your own words) and ask if you have understood them properly.



## 3. ENCOURAGE ACTION

- Ask: "What have you done in the past to help in a similar situation?"
- Ask: "How would you like me to help you?"
- Ask: "What's something you can do right now that's enjoyable or relaxing?"
- You could say: "When I was going through a difficult time. I tried this... You might find it useful too."
- If they've been feeling down for more than two weeks, encourage them to see a health professional. Be positive about the role of professionals in getting through tough times.



## 4. CHECK IN

- Add a calendar reminder to call them in a couple of weeks. If they're really struggling, follow up sooner.
- You could say: "I've been thinking of you and wanted to know how you've been going since we last talked."
- Ask if they've found a way to manage the situation. If they haven't done anything, don't judge them. They might just need someone to listen for the moment.
- Stay in touch and be there for them. Genuine care and concern can make a real difference.

Note: The truth is, some conversations just become too big for family and friends. If you're worried about someone and feel urgent professional support is needed, contact your local doctor or a crisis support center. Like you, RU?OK is not equipped to offer crisis intervention or expert counselling and our website is no substitute for the professional care available from the following resources [www.ruok.help/resources.htm](http://www.ruok.help/resources.htm).

*This lesson is courtesy of RUOK Australia.*