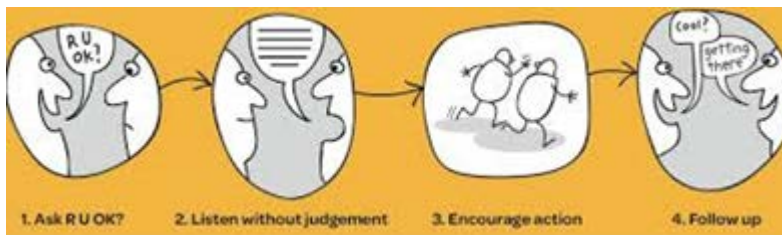


school-based youth health nurse



RUOK?



All around Australia, RUOK? Day encourages us to check in with our family and friends to see how they're doing. A lot of the time it can be really hard to know how someone is feeling and the only way to learn is to ask them. Having this conversation is really important and will help to reduce suicide rates as more and more people going through tough times feel safe to talk about what they're experiencing. It can be a tricky conversation to have, so find a way that suits you and roll with it.



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

- Are you in a good headspace?
- Are you willing to genuinely listen?
- Can you give as much time as needed?

BE PREPARED

- Do you understand that a difficult conversation might happen and you won't have the answers?
- Do you understand that talking about personal struggles can be difficult and they might get embarrassed, even angry?

PICK YOUR MOMENT

- Have you chosen somewhere relatively private and comfy?
- What time will be good for them to chat?
- If they can't talk when you approach them, ask them for a better time to come back

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?"

DEALING WITH DENIAL

- If they deny the problem, don't criticise them. Acknowledge they're not ready to talk.
- Avoid a confrontation.
- Examples of how you could respond to their denial include "It's ok that you don't want to talk about it but please call me when you're ready to chat" or "Is there someone else you'd rather talk to?"
- Tell them you're still concerned about changes in their behaviour and you care about them.
- Ask if you can enquire again next week if there's no improvement.

DOES SOMEONE NEED EXPERT HELP?

- If someone says they're thinking about suicide, it's important you take it seriously.
- Tell them that you care about them and you want to help. Don't become agitated, angry or upset.
- Explain that thoughts of suicide are common and don't have to be acted upon.
- Ask if they've begun to take steps to end their life. If they have, it's very important that you don't leave them alone and do not use guilt or threats.
- Even if someone says they haven't made a plan to take their own life, you still need to take it seriously.

For confidential advice and support call a crisis support line – such as Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.

Other places to find help are here <https://www.ruok.org.au/find-help>

If you think that someone's life is in immediate danger call 000 (Australia only) and stay with them until help arrives

<https://www.ruok.org.au/how-to-ask>

Youth Beyond Blue <http://www.youthbeyondblue.com> have just released a free, neat little app called Check-in, which gives tips and ideas about how to have those conversations with friends and loved ones when you think they are not doing so well. We can sometimes worry that we will say the wrong thing, but reaching out to others and letting them know you care will be the stronger message they get.



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