



# Health & Wellbeing

September – R U OK? **RUOK?**

## ***R U OK? at work***

A place where asking the question “Are you ok?” can really work is in the workplace. As employers or staff, we can all create a culture where people feel confident asking and answering this simple yet important question.

## ***What are the signs someone might need some extra support?***

Over the last fortnight, have you noticed two or more of the below?

### Changes in their physical appearance:

- Look more tired than usual
- Seem “flat” or drained of energy
- Have had a pattern of illness or being constantly run down
- Are complaining of physical health issues such as headaches/migraines
- Are eating much more or much less than usual
- Are drinking more alcohol than usual
- Seem more fidgety and nervous than usual

### Changes in mood:

- Seem more irritable, snappy or fly off the handle when they normally wouldn't
- Appear more anxious and worried about everything i.e. work and personal life
- React more emotionally than the situation warrants
- Are quick to anger
- Appear to be overwhelmed by tasks that they had previously found manageable

### Changes in behaviour:

- Seem more withdrawn than usual
- Don't seem to enjoy hobbies/interests they once did
- Seem to have difficulty concentrating or seem constantly distracted
- Are taking on more work to avoid being in social situations with others
- Are not performing to their usual standard

### Changes in how thoughts are expressed:

- Struggles to see a positive side
- Seem to think the worst e.g. they might conclude that two people in a meeting are discussing their performance or future in the workplace
- Personalise situations e.g. “I knew I’d get the toughest roster – they’ve got it in for me”
- Saying things that sound more confused or irrational
- Complain they have difficulty switching off

If you have noticed two or more of these changes, they might need some extra support. It’s time for you to start a conversation.

### ***Getting ready to ask***

1. Be ready - Are you in a good headspace? Are you willing to genuinely listen? Can you give as much time as needed?
2. Be prepared - Remember that you won’t have all the answers (which is OK). Listening is one of the most important things you can do.
3. Pick your moment - Have you chosen somewhere relatively private and informal? What time will be good for them to chat? Ideally try and put aside at least an hour so you have ample time to have a meaningful chat. If they can’t talk when you approach them, ask them for a better time to come back.



### ***Starting a conversation***

#### Ask are you okay?

- Be relaxed
- Help them open up by asking questions like “How are you going?” or “What’s been happening?” or “I’ve noticed that you’re not quite yourself lately. How are you travelling?”
- Make an observation. 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?”

### Listen

- Take what they say seriously
- Don't interrupt or rush the conversation
- If they need time to think, try and sit patiently with the silence
- Encourage them to explain
- If they get angry or upset, stay calm and don't take it personally
- Let them know you're asking because you're concerned

### Encourage action

- Ask them: "Where do you think we can go from here?"
- Ask: "What would be a good first step we can take?"
- Ask: "What do you need from me? How can I help?"
- Good options for action might include talking to family, a trusted friend, their doctor or Employee Assistance Program

### Check in

- Remember to check in and see how the person is doing in a few days' time
- Ask if they've found a better way to manage the situation
- If they haven't done anything, keep encouraging them and remind them you're always here if they need a chat
- Understand that sometimes it can take a long time for someone to be ready to see a professional
- Try to reinforce the benefits of seeking professional help and trying different avenues
- You could ask, "Do you think it would be useful if we looked into finding some professional or other support?"

## ***Useful contacts for someone who's not OK***

Encourage them to call on these Australian crisis lines and professionals:

- Lifeline (24/7 ) 13 11 14 [lifeline.org.au](http://lifeline.org.au)
- Suicide Call Back Service (24/7) 1300 659 467 [suicidecallbackservice.org.au](http://suicidecallbackservice.org.au)
- beyondblue (24/7) 1300 224 636 [beyondblue.org.au](http://beyondblue.org.au)
- SANE Australia: 1800 18 SANE (7263) [sane.org](http://sane.org)

