



Asking R U OK?

R U OK? Day is a national suicide prevention initiative developed in 2009 that encourages us to act and ask 'Are you okay?' to anyone who might be struggling with life. Over 3,000 Australians die from suicide each year, while 65,000 will make a suicide attempt. More than ever, it is vital to know and spot signs of suicide risk, and engage in meaningful conversations to support those struggling.

What are Suicidal Thoughts?

Suicidal thoughts are thoughts a person has about wanting to end their life. These thoughts include consideration of suicide or planning. Suicidal thoughts can include thoughts such as:

- Thinking they are a burden on others and their death will benefit their loved ones
- Wanting relief from physical, psychological, and/or emotional pain
- Feeling that their death would not matter.

Signs Someone Might be Struggling

There is not one cause of suicide, but it always begins with a thought. Suicidal behaviour is incredibly complex; often suicidal thoughts arise due to a combination of interrelated factors. These may include stressful life events, mental illness, grief and loss, trauma exposure, physical illness, or genetics.

This highlights how important it is to ask 'Are you Okay?' if someone is going through an increased amount of stress and/or difficult life circumstances.

They may be experiencing relationship difficulties or financial stressors, a period of increased change at work or home, health issues, or a loss of someone or something (e.g., a loved one, pet, job etc.).

Other signs changes in their physical appearance, mood, behaviour, and thoughts. Ask yourself if they are displaying any of the following warning signs:

- Withdrawing from others
- Losing interest in things previously enjoyed
- Experiencing irritability, mood swings, or easily upset
- Engaging in risky behaviours
- Thinking the worst or struggling to see a positive side
- Expressing feelings of loneliness or being a burden on others.

Asking R U OK?

It is possible to help someone who might be experiencing suicidal thoughts and have a positive impact that may prevent suicide. By simply asking how people are and offering your support, you can help combat feelings of isolation for others and help guide them to appropriate help.

R U OK? Day promotes four conversation steps to give you the skills and confidence to navigate a conversation with someone you are worried about.



Before starting, ensure you are in a good headspace to engage in the conversation, and that you have time available. It's also important to remember that when you ask how someone is going, the answer may be that they are not okay.

Step 1: Ask R U OK?

Approach in a relaxed, friendly, and concerned manner. Help them open up by asking questions, like 'How are you going?' Mention specific things that have made you concerned for them, such as 'You seem less chatty than usual.' If they don't want to talk, avoid forcing them to engage in a conversation. Confirm that you are concerned about the changes you have noticed and that you care about them.

Step 2: Listen

Listen without judgement and with an open mind. Don't judge their experiences or reactions, but acknowledge that things seem tough for them. If they need time to think, sit patiently in silence. Encourage them to explain how long they have been feeling this way.

Step 3: Encourage Action

Help them find strategies that will help them manage. Remember, you do not need to hold all the answers, but you can encourage them to seek the support they need. Consider asking:

- What have you done in the past to manage similar situations?
- How would you like me to support you?
- What is something you can do for yourself right now?

Be positive about the role of professionals in supporting us through tough times. If they've been feeling down for more than two weeks, encourage them to see a health professional.

Step 4: Check-in

Staying in touch and following up shows genuine care and concern, and can make a real difference. Add a reminder in your diary to call them in a few days, or a week or two. You could say, 'I've been thinking of you and wanted to know how you've been going.' Ask if they have found a better way to manage the situation. If they have not done anything, don't judge them.

Additional Resources

R U OK? have resources that you and your workplace can use in and around your workplace. Further details can be found on their [website](#). If you are concerned about another you can:

- Call or give them the number for your EAP
- Speak to your manager, your supervisor, or your HR if you are concerned about someone at work or need support at work
- Connect the person to a GP
- Encourage them to contact Lifeline on 13 11 14 or [through their website](#)
- If you believe someone is in immediate danger, contact 000 (AUS) or 111 (NZ).

Final Words

This R U OK? Day, reach out to someone you haven't spoken to in a while and check in with how they are. You never know the difference it can make.