

# How to ask R U OK?

Friday November 27

## Who will you ask?

<p><b>Break the ice</b></p>	<p>Start a general conversation somewhere private. Build trust through good eye contact, open body language and relaxed disposition. Ask open ended questions to raise concerns based on their behaviour.</p>	<p>“What’s been happening?” “I’ve been concerned recently that....(e.g. you are becoming isolated from work mates...seem to be quite stressed and behind in your work. “It is so unlike you and I’ve wondering are you ok? Is there anything that is contributing?</p>
<p><b>Listen without judgement</b></p>	<p>Guide the conversation with caring questions. The more they talk the better – a problem shared is a problem halved. Don’t rush to solve problems for them - it is better to have a full understanding of the issues.</p>	<p>Listen to the person without judging them as lazy or weak, they are trying to cope as best they can. Don’t give advice like “cheer up” or “pull yourself together” or “you’ll be right mate”.</p>
<p><b>Denial?</b></p>	<p>If they deny the problem, do not criticise them. Acknowledge they are not ready to talk. Say you are still concerned about changes in their behaviour. Ask if you can enquire again next week if no improvement.</p>	<p>Avoid a confrontation with the person unless it is necessary to prevent them hurting themselves or others. It’s ok to ask them if they are thinking about suicide.</p>

## Put yourself in their shoes

The reason most people don’t ask **RUOK?** to someone they care about, is that they don’t know what to say, or are afraid of “opening a can of worms”.

If you were the one struggling and had lost hope, would you want someone you cared about to ask **RUOK?** What would you like them to say?

## What if you think the person is thinking of suicide?

Not all people who are depressed or anxious are thinking about suicide, but sometimes people with a mental health issue feel so overwhelmed and helpless that they feel suicide is the only way out. People thinking about suicide will already have the idea, so bringing it up by asking them ‘are you thinking about suicide or self harm’ will show that you care for them, something they probably need.

There are some warning signs in people’s behaviour when they are thinking of suicide such as saying things like:

“I want to die”, “I can’t go on living anymore”, “I am such a burden to my family / society / the world”, “I would be better off dead”.

It’s important to take a person seriously if they disclose suicidal thoughts, and to make them feel supported and not alone. Avoid dramatising the situation or criticising them, and use the Support Guide below to assist them with seeking help as quickly as possible.

The “Golden Rule” is an ethical code that is shared across most major religions and cultures that states “do unto others as you would have others do unto you.” Many Australians have embraced this idea during tough times; think of the Victorian bushfires, when millions of Australians reached out to help each other. **RUOK?** is another day where we challenge Australians to treat one another as you’d like to be treated.

Don’t be afraid to express your concern (this is different to being judgemental). By bringing it up, and giving them the chance to talk about it, you may actually be helping them to get the help they need in order to prevent a suicide attempt. You especially need to know if they have formulated a plan. If they confirm a plan it is critical that they get to professional help immediately. Don’t leave them alone. For more specific advice call Lifeline on **13 11 14** or **Suicide Call Back Service** on **1300 659 467**. There is no greater regret than a person who has lost someone to suicide, that they didn’t ask these direct questions.

Finding a GP close by to your workplace that has a speciality in mental health issues is really important during crisis situations. Use the support guide below to get in touch with beyondblue to find a local GP that specialises in mental health issues.

# R U OK? Arvo support guide

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## Guiding principles

- Your aim should be to get the person who is struggling to agree to get the help required.
- You usually will have the most success if you propose the “path of least resistance” – consider this priority order of the options listed:
  - Seeing their regular GP or a GP close to work if it is a crisis situation
  - Calling the company’s Employee Service Provider (if available) and agreeing to meet a counsellor
  - Calling a helpline for more information and support
  - Completing the [www.BlackDogInstitute.org.au](http://www.BlackDogInstitute.org.au) anonymous depression self test
- The greater their distress the more encouraging you should be – offer to make an appointment for them, if needed, and offer to go with them.

<b>Professionals</b>	Local doctor (GP), or find a GP near work that specialises in mental health.	
	EAP service to speak to a counsellor.	Details may be listed on Intranet or contact HR if unsure.
	beyondblue have a list of GPs with an interest in mental health issues – search by postcode.	<a href="http://www.beyondblue.org.au">www.beyondblue.org.au</a> 1300 224636
	Find a Psychologist through the Australian Psychological Society – search by postcode.	<a href="http://www.psychology.org.au">www.psychology.org.au</a> 1800 333 497
<b>Help lines</b>	<b>Lifeline</b> – 24/7 telephone counselling service	13 11 14
	<b>Beyondblue Info Line</b>	1300 22 4636
	<b>Mensline</b> – 24/7 Support for men dealing with relationship and family issues	1300 789 978
	<b>Kids Help Line</b> – 24/7 Telephone and online counselling for your people between 5 & 18	1800 55 1800
	<b>Domestic Violence Helpline</b> – 24/7 telephone service for people affected by domestic violence	1800 656 463
	<b>Suicide Call Back Service</b> – For suicidal, carers, and bereaved. 7 days: 10am – 8:30pm	1300 659 467
	<b>Mental Health Information Service (NSW only)</b>	1300 794 991
	<b>SANE Australia Helpline</b> Weekdays 9-5 – mental health advice	1800 688 382
	<b>Gay &amp; Lesbian Counselling Line</b>	1800 184 527
	<b>Veterans Line</b>	1800 043 503
	<b>Telephone Interpreter Service</b> If English is not your first language please call the Telephone Interpreter Service	131 450