



A GAMERS — GUIDE — TO ASKING RU OK?™

ruok.org.au

RU OK?™

A conversation could change a life.

R U OK? is an Australian suicide prevention charity with a focus on encouraging people to connect and start meaningful conversations. R U OK?Day is our national day of action, held on the second Thursday in September, when we remind everyone to have these meaningful conversations any day they notice that someone in their community might be doing it tough.

How conversations can make a difference

When relationships with our friends, community and loved ones are strong, we're well placed to notice the signs that someone might be struggling. By trusting these signs, trusting our gut instinct and asking them, "Are you OK?" we can help them open up and find pathways to support long before they're in crisis.

While the signs can sometimes be subtle, there can be clues that someone's not doing so well. When somebody stops reply to messages, when they stop gaming, when you don't see them online as often or, might just have a gut feeling that something's not quite right.

Don't ignore these signs. Find the time to ask, "Are you OK?"

You have the power to positively influence those who engage with your stream and game with you, by encouraging everyone to connect and have meaningful conversations. This practical guide for streamers and gamers will help you share the R U OK? message and know how to have a conversation, in person or online, with someone who might be struggling.

What's in the guide?

- The signs it might be time to start a conversation 4
- Simple, practical tools to help you have a conversation 6
- Managing emotional reactions during a conversation 16
- Useful contacts for someone who's not OK 18





If you've noticed a change, no matter how small, trust your gut instinct and ask R U OK?

The signs it might be time to start an R U OK? conversation

It won't always be obvious when someone's not doing so well but these are changes you can look out for that might signal they need a bit of extra support.

WHAT ARE THEY

SAYING?

Do they sound:

- Confused or irrational
- Moody
- Unable to switch off
- Concerned about the future
- Concerned they're a burden
- Lonely or lacking self-esteem
- Concerned they're trapped or in pain.

WHAT ARE THEY

DOING

Are they:

- Streaming or gaming more or less often
- Experiencing mood swings
- Becoming withdrawn
- Changing their online behaviour
- Losing interest in what they used to love
- Unable to concentrate
- Less interested in their appearance and personal hygiene
- Behaving recklessly
- Changing their sleep patterns

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THEIR

LIFE

Have they experienced:

- Relationship issues
- Major health issues
- Work pressure or constant stress
- Financial difficulty
- Loss of someone or something they care about

Learn more about the signs at ruok.org.au/signs

Simple steps to an R U OK? conversation

Getting ready to ask



Be ready



Be prepared



Pick your moment

Having the conversation



1. Ask R U OK?



3. Encourage Action



2. Listen



4. Check In

Getting ready to ask



Be ready

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



Pick your moment

- Have you chosen somewhere relatively private and informal? If you're having the conversation online try to have it on private channels
- What time will be good for them to chat? Ideally try and put aside 30 minutes so the conversation isn't rushed
- You might find that while playing a game or doing an activity you enjoy together are good times to chat
- If they can't talk when you approach them, suggest another time to have a conversation
- It might be more comfortable for the person to not be face-to-face so consider chatting with the video off.



Be prepared

- Remember that you won't have all the answers (and that's OK)
- Listening is one of the most important things you can do
- It can be difficult for someone to talk about personal struggles and they might be emotional, embarrassed or upset.

Starting a conversation



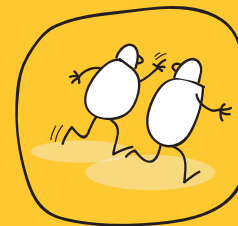
1. Ask R U OK?

- 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 about them, like "I've noticed that you seem really tired recently" or "I've noticed you haven't been online as often as usual. How are you doing?"



2. Listen with an open mind

- 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.



3. 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 you right now?"
- Ask: "Has anything or anyone helped in the past?"
- Suggest they do something that they know helps them relax or brings them joy (e.g. go for a walk, see a movie, have a bath, swim etc.)
- Once they've opened up, encourage them to access support or to do something that might lighten the load
- Good options for action might include talking to family, a trusted friend, their doctor or another qualified health professional.



4. Check in

- Remember to check in a few days later to see how the person is doing
- Ask if they've found a ways to manage the situation
- If they haven't done anything, keep encouraging them and remind them you're always there 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.

Managing emotional reactions during a conversation

From time to time, we can be faced with strong reactions from people, particularly if we're supporting someone who is struggling. Here are some things you can do to make it less awkward and ease the pressure in these situations:

- Be prepared
- Recognise their reaction may be in response to a range of circumstances - many of which you might not know about
- Allow the person to express their emotions fully (i.e. let off steam) and show them you're interested by actively listening to all they say
- Deal with the emotions first, you can discuss the issues more rationally once emotions have been addressed. Being a good listener is one of the best things you can do for someone when they are distressed
- Manage your own emotions by staying calm and not taking things personally
- Validate their response but keep the focus on the issue at hand



What if someone opens up to me on a stream?

If someone reaches out to you for help, write down their username, acknowledge they are struggling and suggest to them that you speak privately. By moving the conversation to a private space, you'll have time to process your responses and the other person might feel more comfortable and secure.

What if a conversation becomes too big for me?

If you think someone is at risk, encourage them to connect with emergency services or a helpline. You might say something like, "I'm concerned for your safety and if you're in Australia I urge you to call 000 or Lifeline on 13 11 14."

Concerned about an overseas viewer?

Due to the nature of streaming, you may come across a struggling viewer who is located in another country. If you do, try and find out which country they're in and encourage them to connect with crisis support services in their country. Most streaming platforms have safety pages that contain information on overseas crisis support and we encourage you to familiarise yourself with these before sharing the R U OK? message.





Sharing the R U OK? message

Sharing the message online is a great way to bring people together and encourage meaningful conversations. You could host an R U OK? Stream, create a social media post or share your story on a blog.

You could...

- Share a story of how someone has helped you
- Reflect on the importance of family and friends in navigating life's ups and downs
- Discuss how you think R U OK? is making a difference
- Show people the 4 steps to an R U OK? conversation: Ask, Listen, Encourage action and Check in (find out more about these steps at www.ruok.org.au/how-to-ask)



Things to think about before you start

- Are you feeling ok? We recommend that people only share their story and the R U OK? message if they're feeling OK. If you're sharing your personal story for the first time, talk it over with someone you trust before you go live. We don't want this experience to be a negative one for you.
- Any content you share will be publicly accessible. You need to make sure if you're talking about someone else or their experience that they're comfortable having that shared in the public domain.
- If your story relates to a suicide death or suicide attempt, please do not mention the method or location. It can be harmful to vulnerable people viewing or interacting with your content. You can learn how to talk safely about suicide at www.mindframe.org.au
- R U OK? aims to inspire, empower and engage. While tackling the serious issues that can impact upon us all, we want our supporters to also share a message of hope and emphasise the importance of support from family and friends when navigating life's ups and downs.



Messages you can share

General messages

- There's more to say after "Are you OK?"
- Ask, then listen, encourage action and check in.
- Learn what to say at ruok.org.au

Messages for adults

- A conversation could change a life.
- If you feel like something's not quite the same with someone you know – there's something going on in their life or you notice a change in what they're saying or doing - trust that gut instinct and take the time to ask them "Are you OK?"
- If someone says they're not OK, make time to listen, encourage action and check in.
- There's more to say after R U OK? Learn what to say at ruok.org.au

Messages for young people

- You're never too young to look out for one another and ask R U OK?
- When you ask the question, you're not expected to fix their problems but you can listen to what they're saying and tell a teacher, school counsellor or trusted adult if you're worried about someone.
- R U OK? has tips and resources that guide you on what to say when they're not OK.
- Learn what to say after R U OK? at ruok.org.au



Safety first

R U OK? is not a counselling service or support provider. Rather, we work to provide all Australians with the resources and confidence they need to navigate a conversation with someone who might be struggling and guidance on how to connect them to appropriate support if they need it.

- If you're hosting a stream or sharing the R U OK? message, we strongly encourage you to provide information about support and helplines that are available for anyone who might be struggling with life.
- If you're speaking about the R U OK? message, it's important to acknowledge that some people viewing your stream might not be OK and encourage them to access appropriate support.



You could say, "If today's stream brings up tough emotions for you it's OK to excuse yourself. If you need some extra support, I strongly encourage you to open up to someone you trust, connect with a health professional or access a service like Lifeline which is available 24/7 in Australia on 13 11 14. You can find other Australian services and support organisations on the R U OK? website at ruok.org.au/findhelp"

16

Useful contacts for someone who's not OK

Encourage them to call on a trusted health professional or these Australian crisis lines and support services:

Beyond Blue (24/7)

1300 224 636

beyondblue.org.au

Lifeline (24/7)

13 11 14

lifeline.org.au

Suicide Call Back Service (24/7)

1300 659 467

suicidecallbackservice.org.au

SANE Australia

1800 18 SANE (7263)

sane.org

Find more services and tools at ruok.org.au/findhelp



Other resources for gamers

Check in with CheckPoint

CheckPoint is a charity that provides mental health resources for gamers and the gaming community. Their mission is to raise awareness for mental health issues, reduce stigma, and improve wellbeing in the gaming community. Learn more at checkpointorg.com

RUOK?TM

A conversation could change a life.

ruok.org.au