



HOW TO ASK YOUR MOB IN YOUR WAY, R U OK?

You can help someone who's doing it tough

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ruok.org.au/strongertogether

R U OK?TM

A conversation could change a life.



I ask my mob, in
my way, R U OK?
because we
are stronger
together



"It's good
to know
people
care."



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A special connection

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples share a special connection to this country and to each other, through culture, community and shared experience.

Regardless of where we live, or who our mob is, we can all go through tough times, times when we don't feel great about our lives or ourselves. That's why it's important to always be looking out for each other.

If someone you know – a family member, someone from your community, a friend, neighbour, team mate or workmate – is doing it tough, they won't always tell you.

Sometimes it's up to us to trust our gut instinct and ask someone who may be struggling with life "are you OK?".

By asking and listening, we can help those we care about feel more supported and connected, which can help them better manage life's ups and downs.

It's something we can all do by following a few simple steps.

Social and emotional wellbeing

As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people our connection to land, sea, culture, spirituality, family and community are important and can impact our wellbeing. We also continue to feel the effects of past policies and practices. Staying connected to each other, our community, to country, spirituality, ancestry and kinship networks, can support our own and other's healing and social and emotional wellbeing.

Stay connected, we're stronger together.



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Support is available

If you're feeling no good or need some extra support, yarning about how you're feeling with someone you trust can help.

You and your loved ones can also find support through your local Aboriginal Medical Service or one of these crisis and support services:

National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO)

Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and Aboriginal Medical Services in each state and territory
naccho.org.au

WellMob

wellmob.org.au

Brother to Brother

24-hour Crisis Line for
Aboriginal Men
1800 435 799

Beyond Blue (24/7)

1300 224 636
beyondblue.org.au

headspace

(for 12-25 yrs)

1800 650 890
eheadspace.org.au

Kids Helpline (24/7)

(For 5-25 yrs)

1800 55 1800
kidshelp.com.au

Lifeline (24/7)

13 11 14
lifeline.org.au

Mensline (24/7)

1300 78 99 78
mensline.org.au

Suicide Call Back Service (24/7)

1300 659 467
suicidecallbackservice.org.au



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STEP 1:

Ask R U OK? in your way

STEP 2

Listen with an open mind

STEP 3

Encourage action

STEP 4

Check in

Spotting the problem

Sometimes the cause of what's making someone feel bad can be obvious, maybe they've just lost their job, are having some problems with their physical health, or maybe they're going through sorry business. When someone passes away, it can have a big effect on the way others feel.

Other times the causes are more personal, like worrying about having enough money for things, or the breakdown of a relationship. While the signs can sometimes be hard to spot, there can be clues that someone's not doing so well.

For example when somebody stops answering and returning calls or they stop coming to footy training, or other places where you would usually see them. Maybe they seem stressed, they might be angry or easily upset or stop talking as much. Maybe their eating, drinking and exercise habits have changed. You might also notice changes in someone's weight or how healthy they look or just have a gut feeling that something's not quite right.

Don't ignore it. Find time to ask if they're OK.



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But it's none of my business

Most of us value our own and respect the privacy of others – especially if we don't know them well. You tell yourself 'it's none of my business', and that they won't want to talk about it anyway. But the truth is, when we become too afraid or embarrassed to support someone who is struggling with life their feelings of being alone can get much worse, much faster, sometimes with tragic consequences.

Even when you do make the first move, there's no guarantee you'll get them to open up – but at least they'll know that someone cares.



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"As blackfullas we have our own way of being and doing. When we ask, "are you OK?" we've got to do it our way to connect, to yarn."

Yarning with someone you're worried about

Before yarning with someone make sure you're in the right headspace. If you've got a lot on your mind or are finding things tough at the moment you may want to reach out to someone else they know and suggest they check in with the person you're worried about.

Ask R U OK? in your way.

If you're in the right headspace to have a meaningful conversation, find a good moment to talk to them. If they don't live with you, find a reason to go and see them. Borrow something, return something, give them something, just drop in to see how they're going or ask them to come over and give you a hand with something.

- If they can't talk when you approach them, arrange another time to come back.
- Be relaxed and have a friendly approach.
- Let them know you've noticed a change.

Ask "are you OK?" in your way. You might say:

- "I haven't seen you around lately, is everything going OK?"
- "We missed you at work this week, how are things going?"
- "So how are you travelling these days? You good?"



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Listening to their story

Be prepared to listen – don't try and solve their problems.

- Have an open mind, don't judge them.
- Don't rush or interrupt. Let them speak in their own time.
- Let them know you're asking because you're worried about them.

You could say:

- "I'm worried about you."
- "Sometimes talking about it can really help."
- "Why don't you start from the beginning, I'll make us a cuppa."

Ask open questions.

Asking open questions can show them you're interested in understanding how they're really feeling or what's been going on in their life.

You could ask:

- "Have you been feeling this way for a while?"
- "Can you tell me a bit more about that?"
- "How does that make you feel?"

Dealing with denial

Sometimes a person will deny there's a problem, even though you might think otherwise. Ask them "Are you really OK? You just don't seem yourself" but don't push it too hard.

Maybe it's too personal and they are feeling embarrassed to open up to you. Maybe you've got it wrong and they're fine. If they don't want to talk, remind them you're always there if they need a chat.

The fact you have reached out to them might help them to stop and think about how they're feeling... "I thought I was doing such a good job keeping my troubles to myself but others are noticing. Maybe I should have a yarn to someone."



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Knowing when to talk

As well as generally checking in with someone to let them know you're there to listen, there will also be times when you can take the initiative to ask someone how they're going. For example, when there is sorry business in the community, when someone has just broken up with a partner, or when you know someone is having a disagreement with friends or family.

Sorry business can have a big effect on people in community, and not just for immediate family members and friends of the person who has passed away. If there has been some sorry business in your community, check in with your friends and family and see how they're going.

Remember, you don't need to wait for these types of things to happen before you ask someone how they're feeling, but during these times it's really important to reach out and offer your support. Just knowing you're there to support them can be a big help for someone who's dealing with a tough situation.

"You're never too old or too young or too sad or too strong or too manly or too womanly, to ask R U OK?"



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Encouraging action

You won't always have the answers, or be able to provide advice to the person. In fact, sometimes it's better not to give advice. Some problems are too big for friends and family to solve and they may need professional help.

What you can do is encourage them to take some action.

Ask them:

- "Where do you think we can go from here?"
- "What do you need from me? How can I help?"
- "What would be a good first step we can take?"
- "Have you thought about going to see the doctor?"
- "I've got some numbers that might help."

Checking in

Once you've had that first chat, ask if it would be OK for you to check in with them again soon.

You could say something like:

- "Do you mind if I drop by again soon?"

It's helpful to follow up in a few days to see how the person is doing. This shows them you genuinely care:

- "How'd you go speaking to the doc?"
- "Did you end up making an appointment?"
- "Did you try one of the numbers I gave you?"

If they've had a bad experience with a helpline or doctor, encourage them to keep trying.

- You might also suggest they speak with someone else in the community or an Elder.
- If they haven't found a better way to manage their situation you could ask: "Would it be useful if we tried to find some other options to help you get through this?"
- Understand that sometimes it takes time to admit you need help and to find the right support. Stick with them and know that your support means a lot.



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