

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY



Practical Guide for Griffith University Staff

Why use this?

We've developed this practical guide to help you ask, "Are you OK?" of any team member, workmate, family member, student or community member you're worried about and then respond appropriately and safely to anyone who says, "No, I'm not OK."

What is the guide?

Simple, practical tools to help you:

1. Know if someone needs support?
2. Plan simple steps to talk to someone who's not OK.
3. Manage emotional responses in a conversation.
4. Have useful contacts to link to if you or the person you are asking needs more support.



What are some signs someone might need extra support?

Have you noticed two or more of the below with someone at work – that's out of the ordinary to their usual baseline?

1. 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
 - Seem more fidgety and nervous than usual

2. 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 / agitated
 - Appear to be overwhelmed by tasks that they had previously found manageable

3. 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 - Seem more withdrawn than usual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
 - Say they are drinking more alcohol than usual

4. Changes in how thoughts are expressed?
 - Struggles to see a positive side e.g. “It's always terrible...”
 - 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 tasks – 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.

Simple steps to talk to someone who's not ok

RUOK?[™]

The 4 steps of an RU OK? conversation

I'm **here** to **hear**

- 1**  **Ask RU OK?** 

How are you travelling?
- 2**  **Listen** 

I'm here to listen if you want to talk more.
- 3**  **Encourage action** 

Have you spoken to your doctor about this?
- 4**  **Check in** 

Just wanted to check in and see how you're doing?

Learn more at ruok.org.au

Getting ready to ask



AM I READY?

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



AM I PREPARED?

- Do I understand that if I ask how someone's going, the answer could be: "No, I'm not"?
- Do I understand that I can't 'fix' someone's problems?
- Do I accept that they might not be ready to talk? Or they might not want to talk to me?



PICKED MY MOMENT?

- Have I chosen somewhere relatively private and comfy?
- Have I figured out a time that will be good for them to chat?
- Have I made sure I have enough time to chat properly?

Starting a conversation

We encourage you to use these 4 steps as a guide to having a meaningful R U OK? Conversation.



- Be relaxed
- Help them open up by asking questions like, “how you are 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 you seem really tired recently” or “you seem less chatty than usual. How are you going?”



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



Encourage action

- Ask: "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 a family member, a trusted friend, their doctor or Employee Assistance Program (Griffith's EAP provider is Converge International – connect directly via 1300 687 327)



- Remember to check in and see how the person is doing in a few days' time
- Ask if they found a constructive 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 helpful if we looked into finding some professional or other support?"



What to do if you think the person is considering suicide?

If you're worried that someone you know is doing it tough or having suicidal thoughts, it's important that you give that person an opportunity to talk about it. Find a quiet and private space to ask them how they're feeling and whether they've had any thoughts about suicide. Speak in a calm, confident and non-judgmental manner to help them feel supported and reassured.

If someone says they're thinking about suicide, it's important you take it seriously. Tell them that you care about them, and you want to help. Don't become agitated, angry, or upset. Explain that thoughts of suicide are common and don't have to be acted upon.

If you think that the person is in immediate danger, call 000.

Direct them to our EAP 1300 687 327 or alternatively during business hours Monday – Friday contact the Health & Wellbeing Team.

National Crisis Lines	1800 RUOKDAY (7865 329) – Connects you to 5 crisis information lines for free from any landline	1800 RUOKDAY (7865 329) www.ruokday.com
	Lifeline – 24/7 telephone counselling service	13 11 14 www.lifeline.org.au
Professionals	Your local doctor (GP)	
	Contact the Employee Assistance Program to speak to a counsellor	Details may be listed on Intranet but contact HR if unsure.
Helplines and Information	SANE Australia Helpline – Mental health information, weekdays 9am–5pm	www.sane.org 1800 187 263
	beyondblue Info Line – Information about depression, anxiety and related disorders	www.beyondblue.org.au 1300 224 636
	Black Dog Institute – Information about depression and bipolar disorder	www.blackdoginstitute.org.au (02) 9382 4523
	Mental Health in Multicultural Australia – Translated mental health information and contacts for state transcultural mental health services	www.mhima.org.au

How to manage emotional responses when having a conversation

From time to time, we can all be faced with strong reactions from our workmates, particularly if we're supporting someone who is struggling.

Here are some things you can do to minimise awkwardness and reduce the pressure in these situations.

- Make a plan going into the conversation
- Recognise their reaction may be in response to a range of circumstances – both personal and work related – many of which you might not know about
- Allow the person to express their emotions fully (i.e. let off steam) and show them that you're interested by actively listening to all they say
- Deal with the emotions first, you can then 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

How do I deal with anger?

- If someone is visibly hostile, you can respond with: “I can see that this has upset you. Why don’t you start at the beginning and tell me what I need to know...”?
- Allow them to identify all the factors they feel are contributing to their anger
- You might encourage them by adding “Right, I understand that ... is also a problem. What else is causing you concern?”
- Be patient and prepared to listen to them itemise all the points
- Use active listening to keep the conversation on track and to reassure them that you are interested in all they say
- If they feel they have been wronged or treated unfairly you are unlikely to persuade them otherwise in this conversation. It’s more constructive to listen to all they have to say and provide resources and formal channels for specific complaints to be heard

How do I deal with anxiety?

- Speak in short, concise sentences but still showing concern and care
- If you anticipate an anxious response, use your preparation time to construct your message in clear, brief sentences
- Make sure you appear calm. This is best displayed through deep, slow breathing, a lower tone of voice and evenly paced speech

How do I deal with sadness?

- Sad or tragic stories are often difficult to deal with because we empathise with the person and feel helpless as we cannot take away their sadness or pain
- Use lots of empathetic phrases, such as “It sounds like you’re juggling a few things at the moment” or “I understand this must be challenging for you right now”
- Ensure that the best internal support is available, such as the EAP (Specialist bereavement support via Converge 1300 687 327)
- Be comfortable with any silence in the conversation
- Know that silence gives them permission to add more and to tell you everything.
- If someone begins to cry, sit quietly and allow them to cry. Lowering your eyes can minimise their discomfort. You could add, “I’m going to sit here with you and when you’re ready we can keep talking”
- If you anticipate this response, make sure you have tissues handy



What if they don't want to talk to me?

- Try not to take it personally. It may take them time to process what you're saying and respond.
- Focus on the things they're comfortable talking about like, "I know you've had trouble sleeping and concentrating lately. Can we talk about that?"
- Suggest they talk to someone they trust, like a family member or friend. You could say, "You can always call me if you ever want to chat. But is there someone else you'd rather talk to?"
- Debrief about your experience with an EAP provider or someone you trust and get tips on how to approach again.



Employee Assistance Program (EAP)



Reach out to us any time, we're here for you

— Appointment scheduling process and service delivery options

24/7
ACCESS

Booking an Appointment

Call **1300 OUR EAP (1300 687 327)** (Aus)
0800 666 367 (NZ) | **+613 8620 5300** (Intl)

Visit www.convergeinternational.com.au
to access our Live Chat service or book.

Download our **Converge App** to connect
with us through the Appointment icon.

Once your appointment is booked it will be confirmed within 48hrs via a SMS reminder. You can change or cancel up to 24hrs before your appointment.

Urgent phone appointments within 20 minutes.



ruok.org.au

