

HOW TO ASK A FRIEND OR WORK COLLEAGUE... *if they're okay?*

Life's struggles don't clock off when we clock on at work. Looking after colleagues who might be doing it tough benefits everyone.

A place where asking the question "are you okay?" can really help in the workplace. As employers or staff, we can all create a culture where people feel confident asking and answering this most important question.

Often when we think something might be wrong with someone, we would like to help or ask if they are okay, but don't know how to?

Here is a guide to having that conversation:

Getting ready to ask

- Am I ready?
- Am I genuinely ready to listen?
- Can I give them the time needed?
- Am I prepared when I ask if someone's okay, and the answer is: "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?
- Have I chosen a private setting?
- Is it a good time for them to chat?

Having the conversation

Questions to ask

Keep in mind it's up to your friend to tell you what's going on – not for you to make suggestions. You don't want to push the conversation otherwise they may feel less inclined to share with you. Some of the questions you can ask:

- "Hey, how have you been lately?"
- "What's been happening?"
- "You haven't seemed yourself lately – is there something you want to talk about?"
- "How are you doing? Anything you want to chat about?"

Responses to give

It's really important you respond in such a way that is non-judgemental and supportive.

- Listen to what they have to say, don't interrupt or rush the conversation.
- Ask them why they could be feeling that way and make it very clear that you're there for them.

Encourage Action

- Ask: "What have you done in the past to manage similar situations?"
- Ask: "How would you like me to support you?"
- Ask: "What's something you can do for yourself right now that's enjoyable or relaxing?"
- You could say: "When I was going through a difficult time, it worked for me to... You might find it useful too."
- If they've been feeling really down for more than 2 weeks, encourage them to see a health professional.
- Be positive about the role of professionals in getting through tough times.

"Listen to what they have to say and don't interrupt or rush."

If they don't want to talk

- Don't criticise them.
- Tell them you're still concerned about changes in their behaviour and you care about them.
- Avoid a confrontation.
- You could say: "Please call me if you ever want to chat" or "Is there someone else you'd rather talk to?"

Stay in touch

Stay in regular contact with your friend, whether it's sending them a text message or calling them regularly, it's important that they know you haven't forgotten about them. You could say: "I've been thinking of you and wanted to know how you've been going since we last chatted."

R U Okay?
Ask the question to a friend today.
ruokay.org.au

Good support is less about saying the exact right thing and more about putting in the effort to try to understand what another person is going through, and then listening and helping when appropriate.

**he@lth
work**