



**A practical guide to supporting R U OK?**

**RU OK?**<sup>TM</sup>  
A conversation could change a life.

This toolkit provides guidance to help inspire your team, workplace, school, club or community group to connect and have regular, meaningful conversations. You can use this toolkit any time of the year (not just in the lead up to R U OK?Day in September). In fact, the more you use it across the year, the more you'll help us create a more connected world.

You can also check out more tools and resources here: [ruok.org.au](https://ruok.org.au)

# How many people will you inspire?

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# Our story

In 1995, much-loved Barry Larkin was far from ok. His suicide left family and friends in deep grief and with endless questions.

In 2009, his son Gavin Larkin OAM chose to champion just one question to honour his father and to try and protect other families from the pain his endured.

## "Are you OK?"

While collaborating with Janina Nearn on a documentary to raise awareness, the team quickly realised the documentary alone wouldn't be enough.

To genuinely change behaviour Australia-wide, a national campaign was needed. And from this realisation, and with Gavin and Janina's expertise and passion, R U OK? was born.

Gavin remained a passionate champion of the fact a conversation could change a life, even as cancer ended his in 2011.

His legacy is a national Conversation Movement that is equipping Australians with the skills and confidence to support those struggling with life.

# R U OK? is working to ensure everyone feels connected and is protected from suicide.

- About 8 people take their lives every day in Australia<sup>1</sup>
- Sadly, for every death it's estimated 30 people will attempt suicide<sup>2</sup>
- 89% of people report knowing someone who has made an attempt<sup>3</sup>

**References:** 1. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2017). Causes of Death, Australia, 2016. Catalogue No. 3303.0. Belconnen, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia. 2. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2008). National survey of mental health and wellbeing: summary of results, 2007, cat. no. 4326.0, Canberra, ACT. 3. Sanford, R. (2016) 'The Ripple Effect: Understanding the Exposure and Impact of Suicide in Australia'. Sydney: Suicide Prevention Australia. ISBN: 978-1-921597-70-1.

We all experience life's ups and downs such as:

- Relationship breakdown
- Grief
- Financial difficulty
- Losing a job

These moments can really challenge us and sadly, many people feel they don't have anyone to confide in. But there is something that can help.

## You.

R U OK?'s impact is helping you make a difference to the people in your world who are struggling with life.

## How do we do this?

We encourage everyone to invest more time in the people around them, because when our relationships are strong we're more likely to see those signs that someone's struggling. And when you see those signs, notice changes, or just feel that something's not quite right with a friend, colleague, loved one, team mate or neighbour – we want you to trust that gut instinct, reach out to them and ask R U OK?

We're working to equip people with the skills and confidence to navigate a conversation when someone says, "No, I'm not OK." You can learn the 4 Steps to navigating a conversation overleaf.

Learn more about our work in this video: [youtu.be/r3qE6vkbGJ4](https://youtu.be/r3qE6vkbGJ4)

# Have a conversation that could change a life with these simple steps:



## 1. Ask R U OK?



## 2. Listen



## 3. Encourage action



## 4. Check in

# 1 Ask R U OK?

- Be relaxed.
- Help them open up by asking questions like “How you going?”, “What’s been happening?” or “How are you travelling?”
- Mention specific things that have made you concerned for them, like “I’ve noticed that you seem really tired recently” or “You seem less chatty than usual. How are you going?”

# 2 Listen

- 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.
- Have an open mind and take what they say seriously.
- Ask “How are you feeling about that?” or “How long have you felt that way?”
- Show that you’ve listened. You could say, “It sounds like you’re juggling a few things at the moment and you’re feeling really stretched.”
- If they get angry or upset, stay calm and don’t take it personally. Let them know you’re asking because you care and acknowledge that times seem tough for them.



# 3 Encourage action

- Help them think about one or two things that can be done to better manage the situation. You could suggest they take some time out for themselves or do something that’s fun or relaxing.
- Ask “What can I do to help you get through this?” or “How would you like me to support you?”
- If you’ve found a particular strategy or health service useful, share it with them. You can say something like: “When I was going through a difficult time, I tried this... You might find it useful too.”
- If necessary, encourage them to see a doctor or other professional. This is particularly important if they’ve been feeling really down for more than two weeks. You could say, “It might be useful to link in with someone who can support you. I’m happy to help you find the right person to talk to.” Or you could ask, “Do you think it would be useful if we looked into finding some professional support?”
- Be positive about the role of professionals in getting through tough times, but understand that it may take a bit of time to find the right one. You can find all sorts of help here: [ruok.org.au/findhelp](https://ruok.org.au/findhelp)

# 4 Check in

- Pop a reminder in your diary to call them in a couple of weeks. If they’re really struggling, check in with them sooner.
- Say something like, “I’ve been thinking of you and wanted to know how you’ve been going since we last chatted.”
- Ask if they’ve found a better way to manage the situation. If they haven’t done anything, don’t judge them. They might just need someone to listen to them for the moment.
- Understand that sometimes it can take a long time for someone to be ready to see a professional. We can’t rush this or force someone to seek support. Instead, remain optimistic about the benefits of getting help and try not to judge them.
- Stay in touch and be there for them. Genuine care and concern can make a real difference.



# Explaining R U OK?

## R U OK? is a cause that everyone can get behind

When explaining and promoting the purpose and the importance of asking “Are you OK?”, we’d suggest the following key messages:

### To staff, students, team mates etc.

- We can all make a difference to anyone who’s struggling by having regular, meaningful conversations about life up’s and down’s
- If you feel like something’s up with someone you know, trust that gut instinct and take the time to ask them how they’re going
- You don’t have to be an expert to have a caring, meaningful conversation
- Follow R U OK?’s four steps: Ask R U OK?, Listen with an open mind, Encourage action and Check in
- You don’t have to fix their problem or take away their pain, you just need to help them feel supported and show you really care
- Every day is R U OK? - every day is the day to start a conversation that could change a life
- For more conversation tips, visit our ‘How to Ask’ page: [ruok.org.au/how-to-ask](https://ruok.org.au/how-to-ask)

## To managers, bosses, teachers etc.

- We all have the opportunity to play an active role in suicide prevention
- We all have a responsibility to help our people feel safe and supported
- As part of our commitment to each other’s wellbeing, we’re supporting the national suicide prevention charity R U OK?
- As part of our commitment to each other’s wellbeing we’re championing the R U OK? message in our organisation
- Research shows that a strong sense of community and belonging are protective factors against suicide
- Get involved by sharing conversations tips and hosting R U OK? events with people you know
- Every day is R U OK? - every day is the day to start a conversation that could change a life
- For more conversation tips and event ideas, visit [ruok.org.au](https://ruok.org.au)

## To other workplaces, schools, teams

- As part of our commitment to each other’s wellbeing, we’re championing the R U OK? message
- We’re looking out for each other by encouraging regular, meaningful conversations
- We want to give people more confidence to turn to each other to talk about life’s ups and downs
- We want to be part of the Conversation Movement and help create a world where we’re all connected and are protected from suicide
- Every day is R U OK? - every day is the day to start a conversation that could change a life
- Will you help us create a more connected world?
- For more information about R U OK?, visit [ruok.org.au](https://ruok.org.au)



# What other resources can I use?

## R U OK? at Work

Life's struggles don't clock off when we clock on at work. Looking after colleagues who might be doing it tough profits everyone. These tools will inspire workmates to chat about life's ups and downs.

Visit: [ruok.org.au/work](https://ruok.org.au/work)

## R U OK? in Education

For students, learning how to support their peers and talk about how they feel is an important life lesson, so where better to start than in the classroom? These resources for primary, secondary and tertiary institutions will help students start a conversation.

Visit: [ruok.org.au/education](https://ruok.org.au/education)

## R U OK? in your Community

Feeling supported, involved and connected in the community can make a difference to those struggling with life. These resources will get your community connecting and asking "Are you OK?"

Visit: [ruok.org.au/community](https://ruok.org.au/community)

## R U OK?Day

R U OK?Day (the second Thursday in September) is our national day of action dedicated to reminding everyone that every day's the day to ask "Are you OK?" and support those struggling with life. The day is about inspiring people to start a conversation that could change a life every day of the year. Help get your school, workplace and community asking "Are you ok?" with these resources.

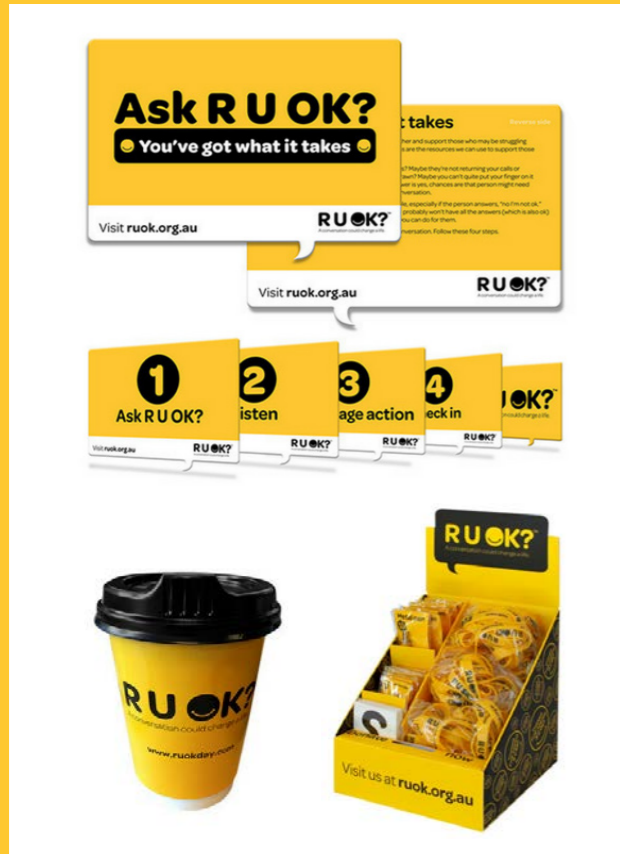
Visit: [ruok.org.au/join-r-u-ok-day](https://ruok.org.au/join-r-u-ok-day)

## Inspiring Stories

Hearing other people's stories can be one of the best ways to convince people that conversations really do make a difference. Check out [ruok.org.au/your-stories](https://ruok.org.au/your-stories) for inspiring videos, articles and insights.



# Event ideas



The aim of organising an R U OK? event is to bring people together to see the power of conversation, learn R U OK?'s four conversation steps, connect and get to know one another a little better. Some of the best conversations are ones which take place between people who trust and know one another. Here are some ideas to get you started (feel free to add your own twist):

- Host an R U OK? sausage sizzle, a breakfast, or a morning /afternoon tea and invite everyone along
- Host a team challenge event that brings people together and gets the conversation flowing
- Speed mating – similar to speed dating. Teams can practise asking questions of each other (including “Are you OK?”) that they pull out of a hat such as, “What’s your happiest childhood memory?”, “What is the best advice you ever received and who gave it to you?” or “What’s a trip that changed your life?”
- Task everyone with submitting old photos of themselves (e.g. as babies, school kids, doing their favourite thing), which are displayed on a wall where others must guess which photo depicts which person
- Get roving “R U OK? Reporters” to interview people to create mini videos. Questions could include: What’s the best conversation you ever had? Who’s the person you know you can turn to in a tough situation? What are the ingredients for a caring and supportive conversation? What place do you like to head to for a chat with a mate?
- Host a Wear-Yellow-Day
- Create “Conversation Corners” by flagging certain areas with yellow and black speech bubbles or helium balloons and set out tables and chairs in groups of two
- Host a lunchtime music concert and invite someone to share their thoughts on the conversations that can make a difference
- If you’re the boss, consider giving staff a few minutes off to call their loved ones or family interstate or overseas
- Share your photos with [hello@ruok.org.au](mailto:hello@ruok.org.au)

**Add a splash of yellow and reinforce the power of a conversation at your event. Check out R U OK?'s merchandise here: [store.ruok.org.au](https://store.ruok.org.au)**

**Register your event so we can support your efforts and share more resources with you: [ruok.org.au/events](https://ruok.org.au/events)**

# 4 things every R U OK?<sup>TM</sup> event needs

Your R U OK? event is not just any event. It's also an opportunity to convince more people that they can make a real difference by having regular, meaningful conversations with those around them.

## Why are conversations important?

Because a sense of connection and belonging boosts our wellbeing and ability to cope with life's ups and downs.

So when you're planning your R U OK? event, make sure you:



### 1. Inspire

Share any of our videos on YouTube ([youtube.com/ruokday](https://youtube.com/ruokday)) or encourage someone to share how they've been supported by a family member, friend or colleague when life was a bit tough.

It's important these testimonials are hopeful and positive, and give people a better insight into how connection and meaningful conversations can make a real difference. We want everyone at your event feeling more inspired to reach out to those around them.



### 2. Mobilise legit supporters

Invite genuine supporters to endorse and promote the event. Draw on their interest, passion and commitment to attract others to the event.



### 3. Show everyone how to ask

Make sure you provide information on the four steps to an R U OK? conversation:

**Ask R U OK?, Listen, Encourage action** and **Check in** (Resources available at [ruok.org.au](https://ruok.org.au))



### 4. Make time to connect

Try ensure that people at your event are given lots of opportunities (and lots of encouragement) to talk to one another. They probably won't talk about life's big issues but they might get to know each other a little better, which will help break the ice for future conversations.

**GOOD LUCK with your event!**

# Promoting your R U OK? event

This content is provided as a guide. Feel free to make your own changes.

## PRE-EVENT EMAIL

**Subject line:** Join the Conversation Movement

**Copy:** Dear <First name>

On <insert date>, <insert organisation name> will be hosting an event all about inspiring everyone to ask that simple but important question "Are you OK?" and start a conversation that could change a life.

That's because we believe in the work of R U OK?, an organisation working to inspire everyone to meaningfully connect with the people around them and support anyone struggling with life.

Conversations that are geared towards helping people feel supported and connected can make a difference. When we invest more time in our relationships, it can make it easier for people to speak up, access help if needed and access it early.

Join us for our R U OK? event!

Where:

Date:

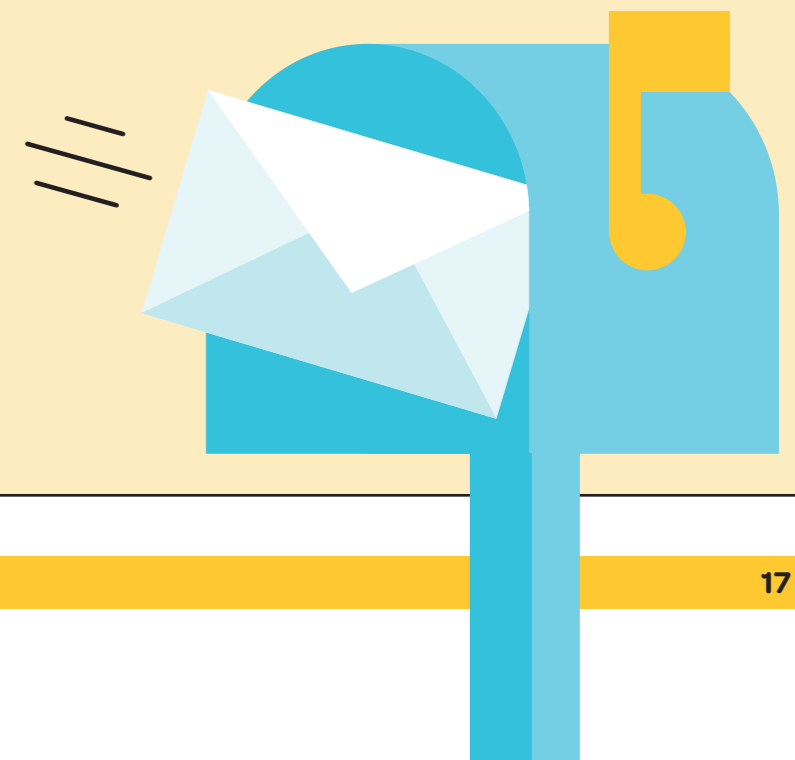
Time:

RSVP:

We hope to see you there!

Best wishes,

<insert name>



# FOLLOW UP EMAIL

**Subject line:** Will you join us for our R U OK? event?

**Copy:** Dear <First name>

Is <insert date> in your diary?

It should be!

Because we 'd like you to join us for some great conversations and and good times whilst supporting R U OK?

Get behind this national charity dedicated to inspiring all of us to have regular, meaningful conversations to support anyone struggling with life.

Here are all the details:

Where:

Date:

Time:

RSVP:

We hope to see you there!

Best wishes,

<insert name>



# EMAIL FOR DAY OF YOUR EVENT

**Subject line:** Today's the day to start a conversation

**Copy:** Dear <First name>

Can't wait to see you at <insert location> at <insert time>.

We challenge you to chat to someone you don't know very well.

Make today the day you get to know a workmate/school friend/teammate a bit better. Why? Because we want to be part of a community that looks out for one another and knows when someone might need a bit of extra support.

See you soon!

Best wishes,

<insert name>



# EMAIL FOR AFTER THE EVENT

**Subject line:** Thanks for getting behind R U OK?

**Copy:** Dear <First name>

A massive thank you for being part of our R U OK? event.

We hope you had some good chats and were inspired to ask “Are you OK?” more often of mates who need some extra support.

If you ever need tips on how to talk to someone who may be struggling, head to:  
[www.ruok.org.au/how-to-ask](http://www.ruok.org.au/how-to-ask)

You can also access national helplines and other supports here:  
[www.ruok.org.au/findhelp](http://www.ruok.org.au/findhelp)

Thank you again for the support.

And remember: A conversation could change a life.

Best wishes,

<insert name>





# Talking about suicide safely

## Helpful ways to talk about suicide as a social issue

You may want to talk about the social impact of suicide to help people understand why meaningful conversations, strong relationships, and a sense of belonging can protect the people we know and love.

**To help you talk about this sensitive issue constructively, there are a few simple rules to follow:**

- We don't talk about method and location of suicide because we don't want to promote ways for people to hurt themselves.
- We never sensationalise the issue or focus on suicide deaths of famous people with the view to promoting our cause.
- We never use stigmatising language when discussing suicide.
- We like to provide options for seeking help, and positively promote the role of health professionals and other services in supporting people struggling with life. It's helpful to include phone numbers and links of local services wherever possible.
- We're also very conscious that suicide and the loss of loved ones is a pain that many people carry with them every day. We're sensitive to the feelings of bereaved people and those with lived experience.

As well as following these rules, we're also careful about the language we use. Use the table below to understand what language is best when talking about suicide with others or as part of an R U OK? event or communication.

| Issue   | Unhelpful language                              | Helpful language  |
|---|---|---|
| Language that presents suicide as a desirable outcome   | 'successful suicide',<br>'unsuccessful suicide' | 'took their own life',<br>'ended their own life',<br>'died by suicide'      |
| Phrases that associate suicide with crime or sin (because this has an impact) on the bereaved and those who have attempted suicide) | 'commit suicide',<br>'committed suicide'        | 'died by suicide',<br>'took their own life'                                 |
| Language that glamourises a suicide attempt   | 'failed suicide', 'suicide bid'                 | 'made an attempt on his life',<br>'suicide attempt',<br>'non-fatal attempt' |
| Phrases that sensationalise suicide   | 'suicide epidemic'                              | 'Higher rates',<br>'increasing rates',<br>'concerning rates'                |
| Gratuitous use of the term 'suicide' out of context   | 'suicide mission',<br>'political suicide',      | Refrain from using the word 'suicide' out of context                        |

# Media release template

Let local media know you're running an event to raise awareness of R U OK? and help people reach out to anyone who may be struggling. They may be keen to help spread the word by running a story and picture about your event. Get in touch with them at least two weeks before your event to let them know what you're doing and why.



Things to remember:

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If someone in the media asks you for information about R U OK? or suicide prevention, please contact [media@ruok.org.au](mailto:media@ruok.org.au)

☐

We encourage you to speak about your event and why you've decided to organise it, but it must be clear that you're not an official representative of R U OK?

Good luck!

EVENT PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE

Title: (LOCATION) asks R U OK? at (EVENT NAME)

(ORGANISATION) is hosting an event on (DATE OF EVENT) to encourage friends and loved ones to start a meaningful conversation with anyone they are worried about and to support R U OK?

(LOCATION) (TODAY'S DATE)

To remind Australians that every day is R U OK?Day, (ORGANISATION) is hosting an (awareness or fundraising) event to show (LOCATION'S) (AUDIENCE e.g. youth) how to start a life-changing conversation with someone who might be struggling.

(TITLE OF SPOKESPERSON first and EVENT SPOKESPERSON'S NAME) said, "Our friends, family members and workmates face life's up's and downs every day of the year."

"That's why we're hosting (EVENT NAME) to do what we can to get our community asking, 'Are you OK?' and to reach out to anyone they're worried about," (spokesperson) said.

National suicide prevention charity R U OK? is working to inspire everyone, no matter their location, to invest more time in the people around them and give them the skills, motivation and confidence to start a conversation with anyone who might be doing it tough.

A recent national omnibus survey commissioned by R U OK? revealed one in three people don't feel comfortable asking the question, "Are you OK?"

For those of us who don't feel comfortable, the leading reasons include:

☐

"I don't know what to say"

☐

"I wouldn't want to make it worse"

☐

"I'm worried they might get angry"

☐

"I'm not an expert"

☐

"It's none of my business"

CEO R U OK? Brendan Maher said, "We know that some conversations can be really tough. But in reality, you don't have to be an expert to ask the question. Asking shows someone you care about them and that can make a really positive difference in their life and be a stepping stone to accessing appropriate support long before they're in crisis. Community events are a great way to promote these 4 Steps to navigating that conversation:

Ask R U OK?, Listen, Encourage action and Check in," he said.

Conversation tips and crisis numbers can be found at [ruok.org.au](https://ruok.org.au)

About R U OK?:

R U OK? is a not-for-profit organisation that aims to inspire and empower everyone to meaningfully connect with people around them and support anyone struggling with life

R U OK?Day is a national day of action, held on the second Thursday in September. But every day is the day to start a conversation that could change a life.

Media Contact:

(INSERT NAME)

(INSERT TITLE)

(INSERT PHONE NUMBER)

(INSERT EMAIL)



# Blog, vlog and post to make a difference!

By publishing a blog, vlog or social media post that shows the power of connection and conversations, you'll be able to inspire countless others to connect, ask "Are you OK?" and make a difference.



You could:

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

You can also use the suggestions below. Add your own image with people dressed in yellow and help start more life-changing conversations! If you write your own posts, we'd love you to add our hashtag #RUOKDay to the message.

- We're taking time to ask #ruok. Regular & meaningful conversations can change lives @ruokday
- We believe that a conversation can make a difference to someone struggling with life @ruokday
- Concerned someone's struggling with life? Ask them #ruok & let them know help is available @ruokday
- You can start a conversation that could change a life. Ask R U OK?, listen, encourage action and check in. #RUOKDay
- Get in touch with a friend you haven't seen recently. Don't let life get in the way of friendships that count #ruokday
- Every day is #RUOKDay. Every day's the day to start a conversation that could change a life.



A conversation could change a life.

**[ruok.org.au](http://ruok.org.au)**