



How to ask R U OK?

Staying connected and having meaningful conversations is something we can all do. You don't need to be an expert - just a good friend and a great listener. So, if you notice someone who might be struggling - start a conversation.

1. Ask R U OK?

You can start by asking someone if they are OK and tell them you are here to listen. Here are some questions you can ask:

- ▶ Are you OK?
- ▶ Is everything OK?
- ▶ Are you feeling OK?
- ▶ How are things?
- ▶ How are you travelling these days?
- ▶ What's been happening?

2. Listen with an open mind

Be prepared to listen patiently and encourage them to explain what's bothering them. Take what someone is saying seriously and listen with an open mind.

You can say:

- ▶ I'm worried about you.
- ▶ I'm concerned about you.
- ▶ Why don't you start from the beginning?
- ▶ How are you feeling about this/that?

If you'd like to show that you are listening and understanding what the person is saying, you can say:

- ▶ It sounds like you're going through a stressful time.
- ▶ It sounds like you're stretched.
- ▶ It looks like you're juggling a couple of things at the moment.

3. Encourage action

Try and encourage the person to take action. You can say:

- ▶ Where do you think we can go from here?
- ▶ How can I help you?
- ▶ How can I support you?
- ▶ What can I do to help you get through this?
- ▶ What's a good first step we can take?

You can also share your own experience by saying:

- ▶ This really helps me...
- ▶ When I was going through a difficult time, I tried this... You might find it useful.

If you think the person could do with some professional help, you can say:

- ▶ Would you like to get some professional help?
- ▶ Have you thought about seeing the doctor?
- ▶ It might be useful to talk to someone who can support you.

4. Check in

Make a time to check in with them after a couple of days or weeks. You can say:

- ▶ How've you been since we last spoke?
- ▶ How are things now?
- ▶ I've been thinking of you and wanted to know how you've been going since we last chatted.

If they have sought professional help, you can say:

- ▶ How did you go speaking to the doctor?
- ▶ How are you feeling now after getting some help?

If they have not found the right person to speak to, encourage them by saying:

- ▶ Would it be useful if we tried to find some other options to help you get through this?

Stay in touch with the person and be there for them by checking on them regularly. Showing care and concern towards someone can make a difference in someone's life.

Remember to look after yourself too. It's important that you are feeling good yourself so you can support others.

For more information, go to www.ruok.org.au

Lifeline is a national charity providing all Australians experiencing a personal crisis with access to 24 hour crisis support and suicide prevention services. The contact number is 13 11 14.

How to practice mindfulness

Mindfulness is a mental and physical technique you can use to focus your awareness on the present moment. Mindfulness is a tool that can help you to:



- ▶ Reduce worry, anxiety and distress
- ▶ Enjoy more energy
- ▶ Create a sense of calm
- ▶ Learn how to relax and regulate emotions
- ▶ Enhance awareness and creativity
- ▶ Improve concentration and increase productivity
- ▶ Develop a sense of empathy and connectedness
- ▶ Enjoy better health and sleep

Here are some different ways you can build mindfulness:

1. Focus on your breathing. Slowing down your breathing puts you in a calm emotional state and is something that can be done virtually anywhere. Simply focusing on each inhalation and exhalation can relax you. To take it a step further, try this easy exercise. Breathe in deeply through your nose to the count of three, hold for three, and release through your mouth to the count of three. Repeat. You can also try this with your eyes closed.

2. Take a relaxing lunch break. Although it can be tempting to power through the day without getting up from your desk, it's actually more beneficial to step away and relax for a bit. Get outside and go for a walk, or find a quiet place to sit with your thoughts for 15 minutes. Taking a deliberate break and detaching from work is a mindful way to improve your concentration, facilitate greater awareness, and reduce that afternoon slump.

3. Write a gratitude note. At the end of your day, put a pen to paper and write down at least one positive event that happened during your day and think about why it made you happy. Something simple like "I got one step closer to finishing my project" will train your brain to focus on the positive. Gratitude has also been shown to increase mental strength, so you'll be ready to tackle tomorrow with even more resilience.

The next time you find yourself having trouble focusing, try incorporating one of these exercises to bring your mind back to the present. Remember, the more you practice, the more you will reap the benefits.

Peanut butter bliss balls

Makes: 12 balls

Ingredients

- ▶ 1 cup rolled oats
- ▶ 1/4 cup shredded coconut
- ▶ 1/2 cup natural peanut butter
- ▶ 2 tbsp maple syrup
- ▶ 1/4 tsp sea salt
- ▶ 1 tsp cinnamon
- ▶ 1 tsp cacao
- ▶ 1 1/2 tbsp coconut oil



Method

In a high-powered blender or food processor, add all of the ingredients and blend until the ingredients are combined and the mixture sticks together. If the mixture is too wet, add more oats. If the mixture is too dry, add a splash of warm water or some more peanut butter. Roll mixture into balls of your desired size. Place balls into an airtight container and refrigerate for up to 7 days.

Apricot and coconut bliss balls

Makes: 20 balls

Ingredients

- ▶ 1 cup dried apricots
- ▶ 1 cup desiccated coconut
- ▶ 1 cup almond meal
- ▶ 1 tbsp coconut oil, melted
- ▶ 1 tsp vanilla bean paste
- ▶ 2 tbsp honey



Method

Place the apricots, coconut, almond meal, coconut oil, vanilla bean paste and honey into the large bowl of a food processor and blitz until the mixture comes together. If needed, add a splash of water until the mixture is wet enough to shape into balls. Take heaped teaspoons of the mixture and shape into balls and roll in coconut until coated. These balls will keep refrigerated in an airtight container for 7 days, or pop them in an airtight container and keep in the freezer for up to 3 months.

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