

THE MATESHIP MANUAL

How you can support someone in the
hospitality industry who's doing it tough



RUOK?TM

A conversation could change a life.



“In hospitality we see the effects of high pressure working environments and a just-deal-with-it attitude, the prevailing thinking is that you pretty much just get on with it. That can often lead to people suffering in silence.”

– Chef



The work environment for people in the hospitality industry – from a one-person coffee cart to a hotel chain – often holds some unique financial, social and emotional stressors. It could be the fast paced nature of the job, the isolation of shift work or struggling to manage financially due to casual rosters.

In an industry like this, added external pressures can have a significant financial and emotional impact. This has become more acute with the added disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Depending on what people are already dealing with at work and home, the emotional impact of existing and added pressure can be difficult for people to manage both in the short and longer term.

If someone you know is doing it tough, whether it's someone at work, in the industry or in your personal life - they won't always tell you.

That means it's up to us to trust our gut instinct and ask someone who may be struggling "Are you OK?".

It is always better to ask R U OK? than not ask.

You don't have to have the solutions to their problems. Simply by asking and listening, you can help those you care about feel more supported and connected.

You can be the one to make that difference if you follow the steps in this guide.



It's time to ask R U OK? if you notice a change, no matter how small

Remember warning signs will be different for everyone.

WHAT ARE THEY SAYING?

Do they seem:

- Confused or irrational
- Angry or irritable
- Unable to switch off
- Concerned they're a burden
- Lonely or lacking self-esteem
- Concerned they're trapped or in pain
- Excessively worried or fearful
- Emotionally numb or disinterested



WHAT ARE THEY

DOING

Do they seem to be:

- Experiencing mood swings
- Withdrawing
- Losing interest in what they used to love
- Unable to concentrate
- Behaving recklessly
- Drinking excessive alcohol or taking illicit drugs or too much medication
- Taking less care with appearance and personal hygiene
- Gaining or losing a lot of weight
- Eating too much or not at all
- Experiencing heart palpitations or restlessness
- Jittery or afraid

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THEIR

LIFE

Have they experienced:

- Relationship issues
- Major health issues
- Work pressure or constant stress
- Financial difficulty
- Loss of someone or something they care about
- Loss of job, furloughed or reduced shifts



ALEC - 4 steps of an R U OK? conversation



1. ASK R U OK?

It can be confronting to start the conversation with someone you're worried about. Chances are, if you've seen signs they're struggling, they're likely to say they're not OK. And that's OK because you have what it takes to support them.

It's really important that before you ask someone if they're OK you make sure you're OK, that you're in the right head space and have time for the conversation.

When you're ready there are four simple steps you can follow... the first being to ask R U OK?

- Ask them to join you on a break, or sit down when you're both off shift, so they're away from the immediate work environment
- Pick your moment. If they can't talk when you approach them, organise another time to try again. In the middle of the lunch rush may not be the right time
- If they've lost their job or had their work hours reduced, consider asking to catch up for a chat somewhere that isn't work related
- Do some research on a couple of support services and find their contact details so you can have them handy if you need them (some examples on page 15).

When you have a conversation, it can be helpful to let the person know what changes you've noticed. Make an observation: "You aren't as chatty as you usually are, you OK?"

"Glad we're done with that service, it was pretty full on there for a while. I noticed you snapped at the pass a few times, is there anything else going on with you? Are you OK?"

You can also acknowledge that it's a difficult time for many people, with a conversation opener such as, "So how are you doing with everything that's going on right now?"



”

"I've had to take whatever shifts I can get my hands on and that means I'm not spending any time with family and friends. I can't talk to my partner, they don't really understand how we work. The only time I can get something off my chest is to have a chat with someone else at work."

– Hotel shift worker



2. LISTEN

Sometimes listening is all you need to do. Giving someone a chance to vent and acknowledge that things are tough right now, can make all the difference. 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.

Be prepared to listen without trying to solve their problems. Have an open mind.

Don't rush or interrupt. Let them speak in their own time.

Let them know you're asking because you're concerned and that no matter what's happening around you both, you have the time to listen.

Reassure them that you've listened by repeating back (in your own words) what they've told you and check that you have understood clearly.

Here are some things you could say:

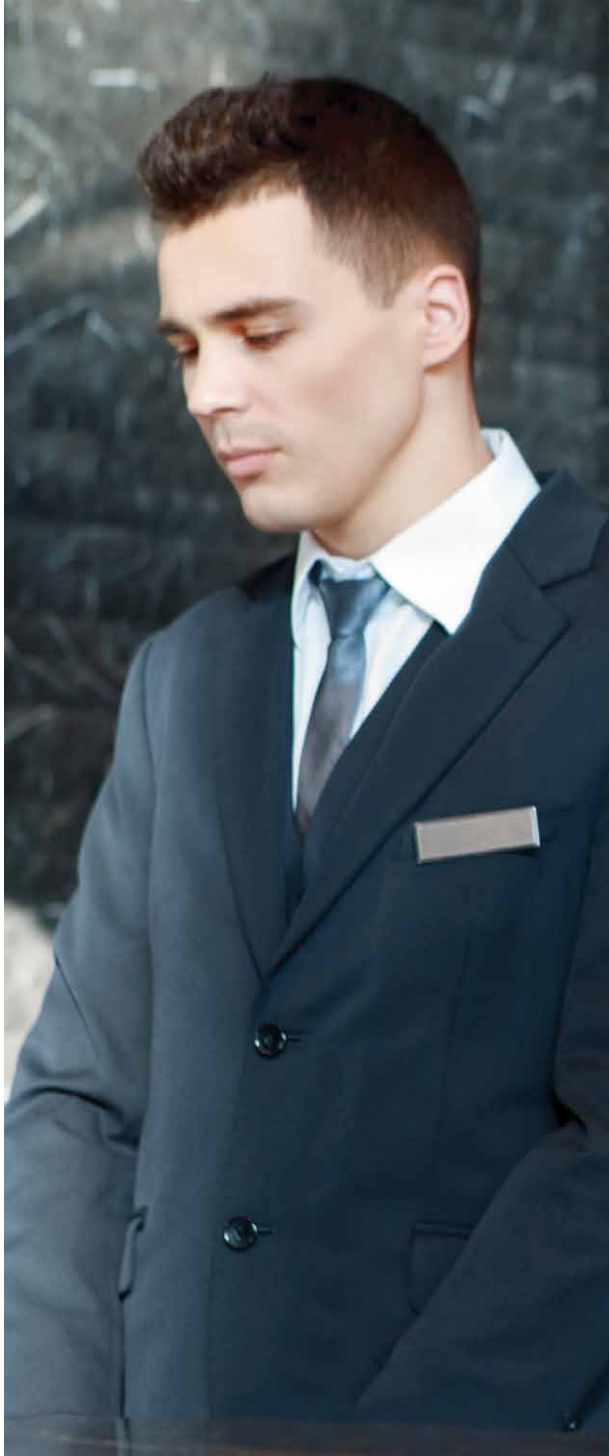
- "I'm worried about you."
- "Sometimes talking about it can really help."
- "I don't have all the answers but I'm here for you."
- "Do you want to get something to eat before or after service so we can chat some more?"

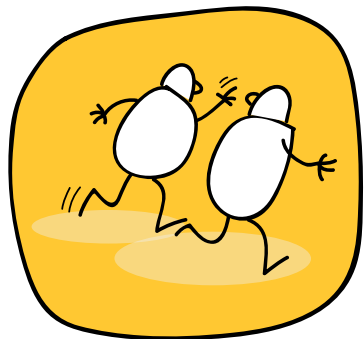


If they need time to think, sit patiently with the silence. Be ready for knock backs, you might have to try again several times before they open up. If someone doesn't want to share the details with you, there might be someone else you can involve who they'd be more comfortable with. It can also be helpful to reassure them that what they're feeling is normal.

- "It's OK to feel like this, you've been through a lot."
- "It's normal to be up and down every now and then."
- "If you don't want to talk now, I'm here for you any time, maybe we can chat tomorrow."

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?", or "How does that make you feel?"





3. ENCOURAGE ACTION

It's important to recognise when problems are too big for you to solve. Helping them find professional support is important and can be a relief for someone when they have a lot on their mind.



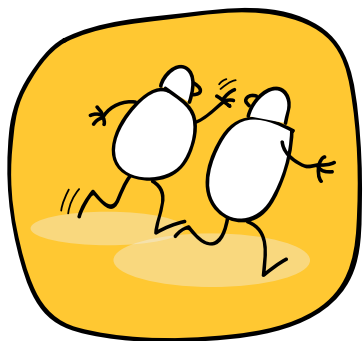
How do I know if someone needs professional support?

If there have been signs for more than two weeks or the signs are worrying you, encourage them to seek extra support from a trusted healthcare professional like their doctor or a local health service. Don't assume they will get better without help or that they will seek help on their own.

Here are some things you might say to them:

- "What do you need from me? How can I help?"
- "What would be a good first step we can take?"
- "Where do you think we can go from here?"
- "What's something you can do for yourself right now? Something that's enjoyable or relaxing."
- "When I was going through a difficult time, I tried this (...) You might find it useful too."
- "Do you need me to talk to our manager on your behalf or come with you to let them know how you're feeling?"
- "Have you thought about going to see the doctor?"
- "If you don't want to see your local doctor, is there someone else you would prefer to talk to?"
- "I've got some numbers that might help, we can call them together if you like?" (have the numbers for support services handy).





4. CHECK IN

It's really important to follow up in a few days to see how the person is doing. This shows them that you genuinely care and want to help.

- "I've been thinking of you and wanted to know how you've been going since our chat."

Ask if they've found a way to manage the situation. If they haven't done anything, don't judge them. For now, they might just need someone to lend a listening ear.

Here is what you could say:

- "How'd you go speaking to the manager?"
- "Did you end up making an appointment with that doctor we talked about?"
- "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.

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

Pop a reminder in your diary to drop in or call them in a couple of weeks. If they're really struggling, follow up with them sooner.

Stay in touch and be there for them. Genuine care and concern can make a real difference.



”

“Where I work is so toxic but with the economy the way it is, I can’t just up and leave. I was getting so angry and having a go at people at work. Talking about it with my mate helps. It won’t change my work situation right now, but it helped me get through the day without cracking it. He’s been pretty good at checking in once every couple of weeks.”

– Bartender

Worried about their immediate safety?

If you think someone is having thoughts of suicide, don't be afraid to ask them if they are – asking the question does not lead to suicide.

It's not an easy question to ask, so if you don't feel confident, calling a crisis helpline to seek some immediate advice can be a good first step. Otherwise, some guidance is provided below.

How do I ask?

- “People in situations like this may be thinking about suicide. Have you thought about killing yourself?”

If they say yes, the most important things for you to do are to:

- 1 Keep them safe – do not leave them alone
- 2 Get them some immediate professional help.

To keep them safe, remove any dangerous items from their physical location, particularly if they have mentioned a suicide plan.

If they share with you details of their plan, don't agree to keep these or their suicidal thoughts a secret.

Keep talking and listening to them. Be positive about the role professionals can play in helping them through tough times. You can say things like:

- “I think it's time to link in with someone who can support you. I can help you to find the right person to talk to.”
- “You're not alone. We can figure this out together”
- “Who's a person you trust? I would like to call them so we can both help.”

Getting them to professional help can start with any of these options:

- Calling a crisis support line together
- Accompanying them to an Emergency Department
- Accompanying them to a community or recovery centre
- Taking them somewhere that feels safe to them but does not mean they are alone.

If you believe their life is in immediate danger or you are finding the situation difficult to manage, call 000.

Support and information is available from these organisations

Note to reader: Your health and wellbeing is important so make sure you're OK and in a good headspace to support others.

Lifeline (24/7)

13 11 14

www.lifeline.org.au

Suicide Call Back Service (24/7)

1300 659 467

www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au

Beyond Blue (24/7)

1300 224 636

www.beyondblue.org.au

QLife

Anonymous and free LGBTI

peer support and referral

www.qlife.org.au

Mensline (24/7)

1300 78 99 78

www.mensline.org.au

Headspace

1800 650 890

www.eheadspace.org.au

(for 12-25 yrs)

Wellmob

Resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

www.wellmob.org.au

For more contacts:

www.ruok.org.au/findhelp



A conversation could change a life.

Remember these simple conversation steps



1. Ask R U OK?



2. Listen



3. Encourage action



4. Check in

For more information and tips
visit ruok.org.au