

LOOKING OUT FOR YOUR MOB

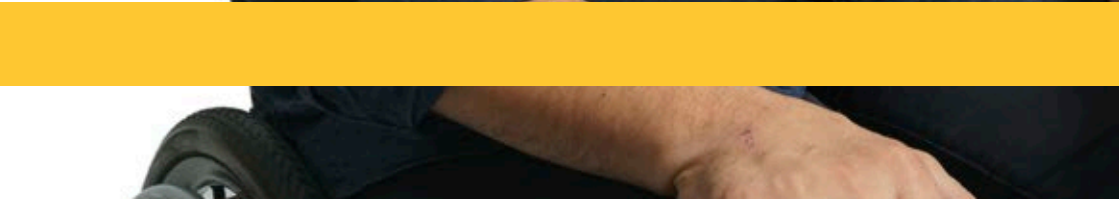
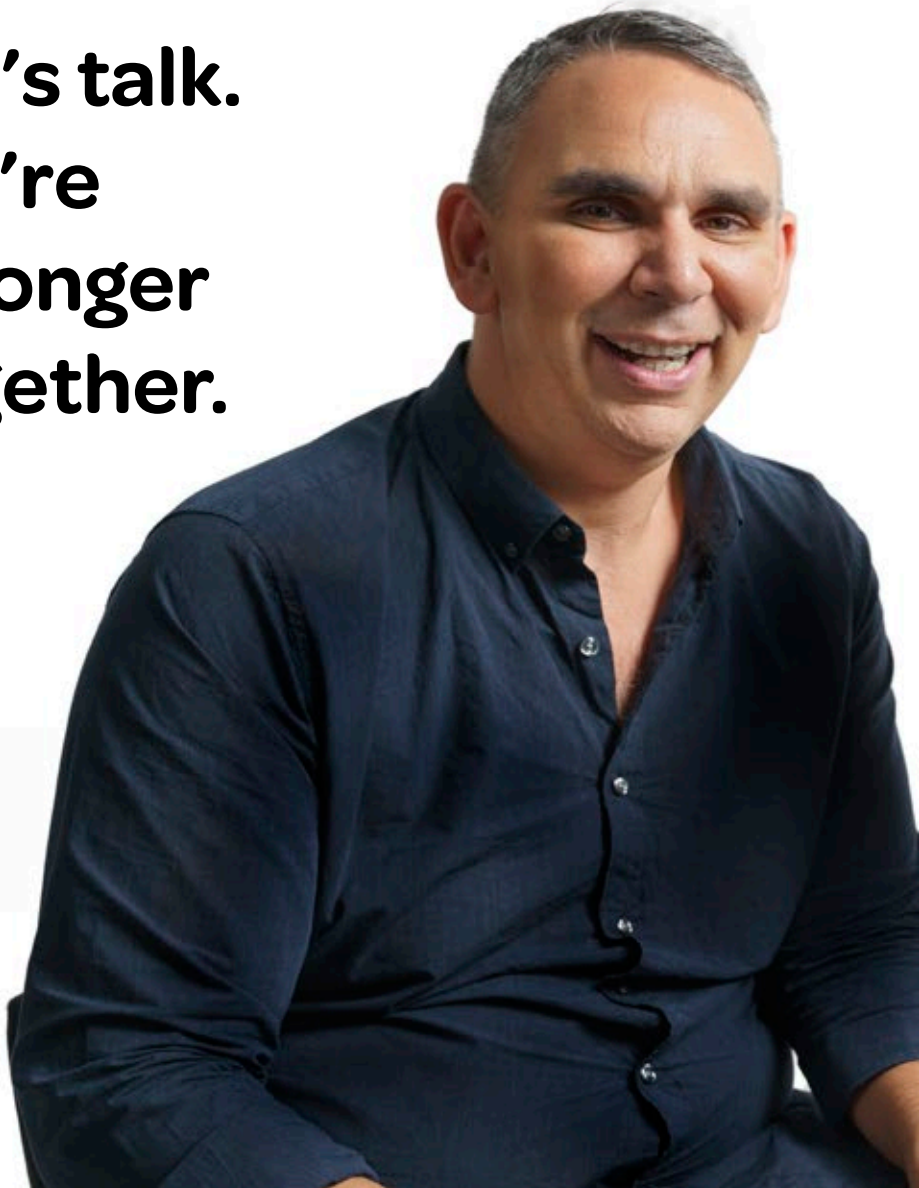
How to help someone who's doing it tough



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A conversation could change a life.

**Let's talk.
We're
stronger
together.**





**“It’s good to know
people care.”**



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A special connection

As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, we share a special connection to this country and to each other, through culture, community and shared experience.

Regardless of where we live, or who our mob is, we can all go through tough times, times when we don't feel great about our lives or ourselves. That's why it's important to always be looking out for each other.

If someone you know – a family member, someone from your community, a friend, neighbour or workmate – is doing it tough, they won't always tell you.

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

By asking and listening, we can help those we care about feel more supported and connected, which can help stop them from feeling worse over time.

It's something we can all do by following a few simple steps.

Step 1:

Ask R U OK?

Step 2:

Listen with an open mind

Step 3:

Encourage action

Step 4:

Check in

Spotting the problem

Sometimes the cause of what's making someone feel bad can be obvious, maybe they've just lost their job, are having some problems with their physical health, or maybe they've recently experienced a death in the family. When someone passes away, it can have a big effect on the way people feel.

Other times the causes are more personal, like worrying about having enough money for things, or the breakdown of a relationship. While the signs can sometimes be hard to spot, there can be clues that someone's not doing so well.

When somebody stops answering and returning calls, for example. Maybe they stop coming to footy training, or other places where you would usually see them. Maybe they seem stressed, they might get angry or upset easily and start talking less. Maybe their eating, drinking and exercising habits change. You might also notice changes in people's weight or how healthy they look. You might just have a gut feeling that something's not quite right.

Don't ignore it. Find some time to ask if they're OK.

But it's none of my business

Most of us value our own privacy and respect other peoples' – especially if we don't know them well. You tell yourself "It's none of my business", and that it's unlikely they'll want to talk about it anyway. But the truth is, when we become too afraid or embarrassed to support someone who is struggling with life then feelings of being alone can get much worse for the person, much faster. And sometimes with tragic consequences.

Even when you do make the first move, there's no guarantee that you'll get them to open up – but at least they'll know that someone cares.





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Yarning with someone you're worried about

If they don't live with you, find a reason to go and see them. Borrow something, return something, give them something, just drop in to see how they're going. Ask if they can come over and give you a hand with something.

Pick your moment. If they can't talk when you approach them, ask for a better time to come back.

Have a relaxed and friendly approach.

Let them know you've noticed a change.

You could say:

"I haven't seen you around lately, is everything going OK?"

"We missed you at work this week, how are things going?"

"So how are you travelling these days?"

Listening to their story

Be prepared to listen – not try and 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 worried about them.

You could say:

"I'm worried about you"

"Sometimes talking about it can really help"

"Why don't you start from the beginning,
I'll make us a cuppa"

Dealing with denial

Sometimes a person will deny there's a problem, even though you might think otherwise. Ask them "Are you really OK? You just don't seem yourself" but don't push it too hard.

Maybe it's too personal and they are feeling too embarrassed to open up to you. Maybe you've got it wrong and they're fine. Just remind them that you're always there if they need a chat.

The fact that you have reached out to them might cause them to stop and think about how they're feeling...
"I thought I was doing such a good job keeping my troubles to myself but others are noticing. Maybe I should have a yarn to someone."

Knowing when to talk

As well as generally checking in with people to let them know you are there to talk, there will also be specific times when you can take the initiative to ask someone how they are going. For example, when there is sorry business in the community, when someone has just broken up with a partner, or when you know someone is having a disagreement with friends or family.

Sorry business can have a big effect on people in community, and not just for immediate family members and friends of the person who has passed away. If there has been some sorry business in your community, check in with your friends and family and see how they are going.

Remember, you don't need to wait for these types of things to happen before you talk to someone about how they are feeling, but during these times it's really important to reach out and offer your support. Just knowing you are there to support them can be a big help for someone dealing with a tough situation.

“You are never too old or too young or too sad or too strong or too manly or too womanly, to ask R U OK?”



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Encouraging action

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. Some problems are too big for friends and family to solve and they need professional help.

Try and encourage them to take some action.

Ask them:

"Where do you think we can go from here?"

"What do you need from me? How can I help?"

"What would be a good first step we can take?"

"Have you thought about going to see the doctor?"

"I've got some numbers that might help"

Checking in

Once you've had that first chat, ask if it would be OK for you to check in with them again soon.

You could say something like:

"Do you mind if I drop by again soon?"

It's helpful to follow up in a few days to see how the person is doing. This shows them that you genuinely care:

"How'd you go speaking to the doc?"

"Did you end up making an appointment?"

"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.

You might also suggest they speak with another community person or Elder.

Ask if they've found a better way to manage the situation. You could ask: "Would it be useful if we tried to find some other options to help you get through this?"

Understand that sometimes it takes time to admit you need help. Stick with them and know that your support means a lot.

Support is available from the following organisations

Call on these Australian crisis lines or professionals:

Australian Indigenous Health InfoNet
(08) 9370 6336
healthinfolnet.ecu.edu.au

beyondblue (24/7)
1300 224 636
beyondblue.org.au

Headspace (for 12-25 yrs)
1800 650 890
eheadspace.org.au

Kids Helpline (24/7)
(For 5-25 yrs)
1800 551 800
kidshelp.com.au

Lifeline (24/7)
13 11 14
lifeline.org.au

Mensline (24/7)
1300 78 99 78
mensline.org.au

PANDA (Perinatal Anxiety & Depression)
1300 726 306
panda.org.au

Suicide Call Back Service (24/7)
1300 659 467
suicidecallbackservice.org.au



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