



R U OK? Tips & Strategies

Diversity doesn't just mean difference of appearance; it also extends to different experiences and reactions to situations. With COVID-19, we can experience things differently, and that is ok. Some people are saving more money than they ever have before (partly because there is nowhere to go and nothing to do!) and others have had their hours cut and their pay reduced. Some people are fine with the increased physical distancing requirements, and others simply are not. Our big message today is "it's ok not to be ok". If you need support, then please find a way to pick up a phone, send an email or recruit a friend to help you connect.

What also comes forward this week, having just had R U OK? Day and World Suicide Prevention Day, is that having an awareness of what is happening around us is vital for human connection. That means that the awareness needs to extend to ourselves (first and foremost) but also to the people who are in our lives. Being in social distancing restrictions for our Melbourne audience - this feels difficult. But it is achievable. It is about stepping out of our comfort zone, texting/ringing someone when they pop into our heads and socially distantly talking with those in our community. Awareness happens when we focus on what is happening in the present, and with a bit of practice, it happens naturally. Awareness of other people's lives means asking more questions (than you give answers), listening actively (rather than tuning out), saying things like "tell me more..." and finding common ground with those in our life.

If you see a change in someone, ask them how they have been coping. If you notice that they are different or more reserved or snappy or withdrawn, ask them if they are finding the transition hard.

When dealing with someone that you care about that you think is struggling, **do**:



- Ask how they are going
- Enquire as to what do they dislike the most about working from home?
- Listen clearly to the answers that they give you
- Bring up a topic that you know interests them and relate your questions to that
- Invite them to come back and talk again, if they wish
- Ask if there is somehow a way for them to let them know what you need
- Laugh when they laugh (and cry if that is more appropriate too)
- Other things that can help are meditation, eating well and exercise.



Do not:

- Ignore their struggles
- Tell them it is going to get better
- Tell them to cheer up
- Wait for them to come to you

Physical distancing requirements and social isolation is hard. Even the best of us feel that it can unsettle us. Remind yourself of the people that you liked to hang out with. Call them. Imagine yourself (in the not too distant future) hanging out with them in a café or at a sporting event. Focus on what you can do today, tomorrow and next week. Set yourself some realistic daily tasks like make your bed and call your loved one (family, friend or partner) and get out of the house for the allocated hour by walking/running and cycling. Yes, that might be the extent of the tasks for the day, but this will end!

But most of all remember what these increased physical distancing requirements is for and why we are doing this – so that we can get back to having latte's in the café, drinks on the river and going to see our favourite band. The suggestion today is put together a poster of everything that you are going to do once the social distancing ends. It will keep us on track. But in the meantime, pick up the dirty washing from the floor, wash it and get back to that conversation with your loved one.

Remember, as your EAP, we are here to support you whatever the nature of your concerns. For a confidential conversation with one of our experienced clinical professionals, please contact **AccessEAP** on **1800 818 728**.

