

How are you, really?

Having a conversation with someone you know



When to ask “how are you, really?”

Signs you might need to check in with someone:

- You notice they aren't quite themselves
- You notice a change in their mood, behaviour, appetite or wellbeing

Make sure you choose the right time and place to ask, and respect their privacy if they don't want to share.

Conversation starters

Getting started can be the hardest part!

- Ask how things have been going and tell them that you're here to listen
- Be sure to keep your questions open ended - ask questions that need more than a yes or no answer
- Share what you have seen “I have noticed that...”
- Ask a follow up question if they say they're fine ('are you really?').

If they're not ready to talk

- Remind them you care
- Let them know you're there if they want to talk in the future
- Encourage them to speak to someone they trust
- Ask again later - they might be more willing to talk next time you ask.

If they share something that is causing worry or stress

Your role as a listener is really important when someone begins to open up.

- Avoid distractions like checking your phone
- Try not to interrupt
- Listen without judgement
- Show empathy

Remember that you don't have to have the answers or give advice, just show that you care and help them to reach out for professional support if they need.

For additional (non crisis) support

Encourage them to see their GP (you can even offer to go with them or make the appointment)

Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636

Boronia Head to Health 1800 595 212

Encourage them to use other wellbeing strategies (see ideas on back)

Make plans to check in again.

Take Action

If they need URGENT support

Always call 000 in an emergency

Lifeline 13 11 14

Suicide Line Victoria 1300 651 251

Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467

Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800

Further tips and suggestions

Why you should ask ‘how are you, really?’

Everyone goes through ups and downs, and may need extra support at times. A simple question: ‘how are you, really?’ lets a person know that they are cared about.

It’s not about giving advice or having the answers. It’s about connecting, listening and encouraging others to take steps to improve their health and wellbeing.

It’s always a good idea to check in with those around you, but some signs that it could be important to ask “how are you, really” are:

- Changes in mood, such as irritability, impatience, seeming down
- Seeming stressed, anxious
- Avoiding social or group situations
- Appearing tired more often than usual or
- Changes in eating habits.

Conversation tips

Choose a time and place where you both have time to talk, and won’t be interrupted or distracted.

Share what you have seen and why you’re reaching out:

- “I have noticed that you seem a bit down lately”
- “I have noticed that you’ve been quieter than usual at work”

Be a good listener

- Let them lead the conversation
- Nod your head to show you’re listening
- Offer them empathy

Make a plan

- Show them that you are optimistic that things will change
- Decide what needs to happen next
- Consider if there are practical ways you can help – make a doctor’s appointment, cook them a meal or help with housework

Wellbeing strategies

Encourage them to take charge of their own wellbeing, as well as accessing any professional support they might need:

- Staying active
- Focusing on getting enough sleep
- Eating a balanced and nutritious diet
- Spending time with friends or family
- Making time to do things they enjoy

Being a good supporter

‘How are you really?’ doesn’t stop at one conversation. Check in again to see how they are and if they have reached out for further support.

If can be difficult to support someone who is going through a challenging time. Make sure you look after your own wellbeing, so that you can be there for others.

If you’re worried about someone’s safety it’s important to tell someone else (even if they ask you not to).

Call Boronia Head to Health on 1800 595 212.

Always call 000 in an emergency.