

Context:

10 OCT

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

Background

Stigma for mental illness is a prevalent issue in Australia, this is largely due to misunderstanding and prejudice. The stigma causes people to delay or prevent them from wanting/feeling able to seek help, and as such impacts adversely on their lives. Reality is a lot of people affected by mental illness can lead independent and contributing lives in the community, with the right treatment and support. With one in five Australians affected, they form part of our close circles of family, friends and colleagues, and interact with us in our communities every day.

With today being 'World Mental Health Day' this is a reminder that we've all got the ability to ask our family, friends and colleagues the question "are you ok?" It is also the chance to acknowledge that the conversation that may follow can be a supportive and positive one for those who are feeling in distress or even suicidal.

But how should we go about having that conversation? Below are four points to navigate the conversation when someone answers "No, I'm not ok."

1. Ask Are You OK?

It may seem like the obvious one, but it is a very important point. Consider asking the question in a way that the individual might respond to, there are plenty of ways to word it, are you ok? is just an example.

2. Listen without judgement

Be open to whatever comes next and acknowledge that they are having a difficult time. Whatever they have to say, take seriously and don't feel the need to rush the conversation - if they need a moment of silence to think, be patient and give them the chance.

3. Encourage action

If they've been feeling down for more than 2 weeks, encourage them to see a health professional. Otherwise you can ask things like "What have you done in the past to manage similar situations?" or "How would you like me to support you?" Just let them know that you are supportive of whatever they need.

4. Check in

It doesn't finish at the end of that conversation. Pop a reminder in your diary to call them in a couple of weeks. If they're really struggling, follow up with them sooner. Genuine care and concern can make a real difference.

Further Resources:

If you or someone you know is in crisis, please call one of the following 24/7 support lines;

- LIFELINE COUNSELLING SERVICE: 13 11 14
- SUICIDE CALL BACK SERVICE: 1300 659 467
- KIDS HELPLINE: 1800 551 800

If you or someone close to you is experiencing distress or is in immediate danger call 000.

You will find fact sheets and other useful information on the following websites:

<https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/>

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>