

# Building an **RU OK? Culture**



Hey Sport,  
**RU OK?**<sup>™</sup>

**A practical guide for your sporting community**

[ruok.org.au/sport](https://ruok.org.au/sport)

A photograph of two men running on a wooden boardwalk. The man in the foreground is wearing a blue t-shirt, black shorts, and a black cap. The man behind him is wearing an orange t-shirt, grey shorts, and a black cap. They are running towards the right, with a sunset sky and a railing in the background.

**Hey Sport,  
R U OK?™**

The logo for the QBE Foundation, featuring a blue stylized 'Q' icon followed by the text 'QBE' in a large, bold, black sans-serif font, and 'Foundation' in a smaller, black sans-serif font below it.

**QBE**  
Foundation

**Hey Sport, R U OK?**  
is backed by the QBE  
Foundation – a major  
partner of R U OK?



# Sport brings communities together

**It gives people the opportunity to form strong social connections and fosters a sense of belonging.**

**Hey Sport, R U OK?** empowers all members of the sporting community to look out for one another, whether you are a participant, official, teammate, administrator or volunteer. Regardless of the role you play, it is important you know how to genuinely connect and when to meaningfully reach out to those in your sporting community who might be struggling with life.

You could change, or even save a life by knowing how to spot the signs someone might need support and by trusting your gut instinct that it's time to ask "are you OK?".

Whether you're a member of a sporting club, play socially or participate in community events, you have a role to play in building an R U OK? Culture within your sporting community.

**Important Note:** Please ensure you refer to and, at all times, comply with the member protection policy of your sport.

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# Hey Sport, this is your **R U OK? Culture**

An R U OK? Culture is built on mutual respect, trust, authenticity and a willingness to support those in your sporting community. Everyone has a role to play in building genuine connections and creating a supportive and safe environment. Building culture isn't down to one person, it's a team effort.

These ten principles are your guide to the values and behaviours that build an R U OK? Culture in your sporting community.



1 Coaches, officials and athletes demonstrate improvements in life skills and self-esteem

2 Athletes like and feel supported by their coach and peers

3 Coaches, officials and athletes exhibit kindness towards others

4 Sport is a positive and enjoyable experience for all involved

5 Coaches, officials and athletes promote a team environment based on mutual respect and positive relationships

6 Coaches, officials and administrators create a physically and emotionally safe environment

7 Coaches encourage athletes to work with and support members of their sporting community

8 Coaches, officials and athletes are confident they can spot the signs someone in their sporting community might be struggling with life

9 Coaches, officials and athletes feel confident and willing to have a meaningful R U OK? conversation

10 Coaches, officials and athletes feel a sense of connection and belonging within their sport community





# Spot the signs it might be time for an R U OK? Conversation

It won't always be obvious when someone is off their game, but these signs might signal they need a little extra support.

## WHAT ARE THEY

### SAYING?

Do they sound:

- Confused or irrational
- Angry or irritable
- Concerned they are a burden
- Concerned about the future
- Lonely or disengaged
- Excessively worried

## WHAT ARE THEY

### DOING?

Are they:

- Lacking motivation
- Not training or competing as they usually would
- Being disruptive in a team environment
- Experiencing mood swings
- Dismissive or defensive
- Withdrawing or becoming less social
- Losing interest in what they used to enjoy
- Behaving differently online
- Making less effort in their appearance or personal hygiene
- Unable to concentrate
- Experiencing ongoing fatigue
- Lacking in confidence

## WHAT'S GOING ON IN THEIR

### LIFE?

Are they experiencing:

- Relationship challenges
- Trauma
- Pressure at work or school
- Major health issues or an injury
- Financial difficulties
- Change in life circumstances

# Gearing up to have an R U OK? Conversation

If you think someone might be struggling with life then it's time to trust your gut instinct and ask 'are you OK?' The steps below will help you prepare for the conversation.



## Ask yourself

- Are you in a good headspace?
- Are you willing to genuinely listen?
- Can you give as much time as needed?
- Are you the best person to have the conversation? If not, is there someone else in their support network you can encourage to reach out to them?



## Be prepared

- Remember you won't have all the answers (and that's OK)
- Listening is one of the most important things you can do
- If someone is talking about personal struggles it can be difficult and they might become emotional, defensive, embarrassed or upset
- Have you researched what appropriate support is available for the person you're talking to?



## Pick your moment

- Have you chosen somewhere relatively private and informal where they'll feel comfortable?
- You don't want to rush the conversation so make sure you both have enough time
- If they can't talk when you approach them, try to confirm another time to have a conversation
- Consider whether the person might prefer to be to be side-by-side with you e.g. walking together, rather than face-to-face

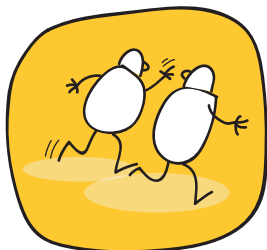


# The simple steps of an R U OK? conversation



## 1. Ask R U OK?

- Be relaxed
- Help them open up by asking questions like "How are you travelling?" or "What's been happening?" or "I've noticed you haven't been yourself at training lately, is there something you want to chat about?"
- Make an observation. Mention specific things that have made you concerned about them, like "I've noticed that you seem really tired recently."
- If they don't want to talk, let them know that you care and that you're available whenever they need a listening ear - you could say, "Is there someone else you'd be comfortable talking to?"



## 3. Encourage action

If someone answers, 'No, I'm not OK'

- Ask: "Where do you think we can go from here?"
- Ask: "What would be a good first step we can take?"
- Ask: "What do you need from me? How can I help?"
- You could ask, "Do you think it would be useful if we look into finding some professional or other support?"
- Good options for action might include talking to family, a trusted friend, a doctor or a crisis support service



## 2. Listen with an open mind

- Emphasise that you're here to listen not judge
- Take what they say seriously
- Don't interrupt or rush the conversation
- If they need time to think, try and sit patiently with the silence
- Encourage them to explain
- If they are angry or upset, stay calm and don't take it personally
- Let them know you're asking because you're concerned



## 4. Check in

- Remember to check in and see how the person is doing in a few days time
- Ask how they're coping with the situation or if they need support to manage it
- If they haven't done anything, keep encouraging them and remind them you're always here if they need a chat
- Understand that it might take a long time for someone to be ready to seek professional help
- Try to reinforce the benefits of talking to a doctor or other support services





# What if they say 'I'm fine' but you're still concerned?

- Tell them you care about them and you're concerned about the changes in their behaviour.
- Ask again, you could say "it's just you don't seem like yourself lately".
- Check in with them again soon.
- Reach out to someone else who is close to that person to see if they've noticed changes. Perhaps encourage them to also check in.
- It's important to remember that it can take time for someone to open up to you. You might need to ask "are you OK?" a few times before they feel comfortable talking about what's going on in their world.





# STAY CONNECTED

Whether you're competing or preparing, physically distanced or training in person, it's important you continue to foster social connection and engagement. The more connected you are, the more likely you are to notice when someone might be struggling. Here are some ideas of how to stay connected.

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 **BUDDY  
UP**

Establish a buddy system to promote regular check ins. It doesn't have to be complicated - something as simple as sending a text message asking how their week has been, or allocating 10 minutes each week to a phone call can make a difference in someone's day. A buddy might also be the one to notice behaviour changes that could indicate someone needs support, like turning up late to training or avoiding team or group activities.

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 **TRAIN  
& TREAT**

Encourage connection by planning social activities after training sessions. It's a good idea to put these in the calendar in advance so people can make time. However always be mindful of people's existing responsibilities and make sure anything you plan is not an added stress but a welcomed activity.

Ideas include:

- ☐ Canter and coffee
- ☐ Stretch and smoothies
- ☐ Park session and picnic
- ☐ Train and trivia

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**#takeawaytogether**

Stay connected, support each other and help your local

Lock in a date and get the conversation flowing.



Support your local business through #takeawaytogether – order takeaway or delivery from your favourite local, share a meal with your teammates or those in your sporting community and serve up a side of conversation. This is a simple way for people to support each other and local businesses. It can also be a good opportunity to ask teammates or training buddies how they're really going.

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**SPOTLIGHT**

Profile a different member of your sporting community in your newsletter or socials.

You might like to ask them:

- Who is your sporting hero?
- What other sports do you like to play / watch?
- Why they love sport?
- What's their favourite thing to do outside of sport?
- What do you think is a good way to start a conversation?



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## CONVERSATION BINGO

Tick off your completed conversation starters on your Conversation Bingo. Write down the name of who you asked.

Tell us when you've filled in 4 boxes across or down by saying, "Conversation Bingo."

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A conversation could change a life.

What other sports are you involved with?

Name:

Where is your favourite place in the world?

Name:

If you could have any superpower what would it be?

Name:

What makes you laugh out loud?

Name:

How are you going today?

Name:

How do you stay connected to others?

Name:

What was the last movie or show you watched?

Name:

What was your favourite thing to do when you were a child?

Name:

What do you do to look after your mental health?

Name:

What makes a good teammate?

Name:

If you could be the best at any sport, what would it be?

Name:

What's your favourite thing to eat?

Name:

What's the most interesting thing you've read lately?

Name:

Who is your sporting hero?

Name:

What made you smile today?

Name:

Who is someone you can talk to about anything?

Name:

## ACTIVITY SHEET

An easy and fun activity to bring your team together and learn more about each other. Anyone can get involved - participants, officials, coaches and volunteers! A great activity for the start of a season, as part of a training session or to promote team bonding and engagement.

### HOW TO PLAY

You can play this game with up to 30 people. If your group is larger, consider dividing participants into smaller teams of equal size.

- 1 Give each participant a 'Conversation Bingo' card and pen
- 2 Allocate 30 mins for the participants to mingle, introduce themselves, and use the conversation starters on the card to have conversations with others
- 3 Write the name of who they asked in the corresponding conversation starter box
- 4 The first person to fill in four boxes across or down yells "Conversation Bingo!" and the game is over

You can be creative and make conversation starters of your own to suit the group that you are playing with. You might even like to add a theme to the conversation starters or mix it up to make it part of your ongoing training sessions or team get togethers!

You may also like to ask participants to share how they feel after getting to know one another better. You can emphasise that when we get to know each other we build trust and have meaningful conversations that help others open up about life's ups and downs, big and small. Remind everyone that it's important they keep the conversation going and make asking 'are you OK?' a part of their everyday.

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# CONNECT TO CHAT

Want to stay connected to your team and sporting community? Connect to Chat is an in person or virtual get together. This activity is great for both large and small groups when you want to build stronger relationships between people. Think about how you can adapt this for your sporting community.

## START CHATTING

- 1** Nominate your preferred venue, chat or video conferencing platform (you might like to use a platform with functionality that allows you to break attendees into smaller groups or pairs)
- 2** Decide on a time, invite your attendees and encourage people to join (either in person or virtually)
- 3** Kick things off by taking time to introduce people to each other and away you go!

You can provide suggestions of things to discuss or let the group decide the topics for conversation. Either way, they're spending time getting to know each other, and that helps to build a stronger connection.

### Topics for conversation could include:

- What's the most interesting thing you saw/heard this week?
- How do you meaningfully connect with others?
- What's the most interesting conversation you've ever had?
- Why do you think it's important we lend support to the people in our world?
- Can you share an example of when someone has made a genuine connection with you and what that meant to you?

Consider making Connect to Chat a weekly, fortnightly or monthly activity to stay connected with those in your team and sporting community.

If you set up a message thread or email group for Connect to Chat, you can stay connected outside of the designated Connect to Chat times. This could be a fun forum to share things such as photos from your training sessions, healthy recipes, words of encouragement, coaching tips or highlights from the week.



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# HOST AN R U OK? ROUND

An R U OK? round can bring a sense of camaraderie and rapport and help people get to know one another a bit better. Some of the best conversations are the ones which take place between people who trust and know each other.

An R U OK? round is also an opportunity to learn how to trust the signs, ask 'are you OK?' and start a conversation that could change, or even save a life.

## Register your R U OK? round

Register your R U OK? round with us to access resources to help you plan and stage your event.

**Register your event at [ruok.org.au/events](https://ruok.org.au/events)**

### Ideas to get you started

Here are some ideas to get you started but feel free to add your own twist!

- Organise a special edition team kit or get athletes to wear yellow socks or armbands
- Encourage supporters to wear something yellow
- Display R U OK? posters and signage
- Print our conversation cards and share them with spectators
- Have a conversation led warm up/cool down at a training session
- Organise for ground announcers to talk about R U OK? and the power of a conversation
- Organise giveaways (items including wristbands or conversation cards can be purchased at [store.ruok.org.au](https://store.ruok.org.au))
- Have roving 'R U OK? reporters' interview people and create content that demonstrates the difference regular meaningful conversations can make. Questions could include: "What's the best conversation you've ever had?" "Who's the person you know you can turn to in a tough situation?" "What are the ingredients for a caring and supportive conversation?" "Where do you like to go for a chat with a mate?"

# Useful contacts for someone who's not OK

**If your life is in danger or you're concerned for your own or someone else's safety please call 000.**

If you're finding life tough or need some extra support, it can help to talk about how you're feeling with someone you trust.

You and your loved ones can find support by contacting your local doctor or one of these crisis lines.

## **Lifeline (24/7)**

13 11 14

[lifeline.org.au](http://lifeline.org.au)

## **Beyond Blue (24/7)**

1300 224 636

[beyondblue.org.au](http://beyondblue.org.au)

## **Suicide Call Back Service (24/7)**

1300 659 467

[suicidecallbackservice.org.au](http://suicidecallbackservice.org.au)

## **Mensline (24/7)**

1300 789 978

[mensline.org.au](http://mensline.org.au)

## **Kids Helpline (24/7)**

1800 551 800

[kidshelpline.com.au](http://kidshelpline.com.au)

## **More contacts:**

[ruok.org.au/findhelp](http://ruok.org.au/findhelp)

## **Contact us**

@ hello@ruok.org.au

f /ruokday

t @ruokday

i @ruokday







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[ruok.org.au/sport](https://ruok.org.au/sport)



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