



R U OK? Day

Leader's notes

How many times do you ask the question, "How are you?"

How many times do you expect or receive a genuine answer?

R U OK? Day is a reminder for all Australians to engage in genuine connection with family, friends, colleagues and community members. It is an opportunity for us to have conversations that matter.

God has created us to live in community. We need each other. When we are experiencing challenges or illness, we need each other more than ever. Australian cultural norms often depict men as stoic, independent and strong. Research challenges this stereotype. On average, one in eight Australian men will experience depression and one in five will experience anxiety at some stage of their lives.¹

Admitting to mental health challenges or drawing support from others may be seen as a weakness — but it's actually a sign of honesty and maturity. As mental health concerns among Australian men continues to rise, accept this challenge to connect through genuine conversations.

This R U OK? Day, create spaces for safe, respectful, deep conversations.

- Be a non-judgemental and non-anxious presence
- See the hurt and pain that others carry
- Listen to what is said and notice what goes unsaid
- Speak words of grace, hope and encouragement
- Act and connect consistently in practical ways
- Love with the love of Jesus

If you are concerned about someone, always encourage them to seek help from a professional.

Most people will experience mental health concerns such as loneliness, stress, anxiety or depression at some point in their life. For some, these health issues are more acute or prolonged.

Signs of depression can vary widely. Common symptoms include²:

- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Lack of concentration
- Irritability
- Sadness
- Inability to make a decision
- Feeling worthless
- Hopelessness
- Tiredness
- Changes to appetite

Factors that may contribute to depression:

- Changes or pressures in school, study or work
- Relationship problems
- Financial stress
- Physical illness
- Social isolation
- Drug or alcohol use

Practical ideas to support good mental health (see Men's Health printable card and PowerPoint):

There are practical things you can do to help support your mental health:

- Eat well, get plenty of sleep, and exercise regularly
- Spend time with your friends and family
- Talk about how you feel with people you trust
- Do activities you enjoy
- Take time to relax, but don't use alcohol to relax
- Talk to your doctor
- Set yourself realistic goals

1. <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/who-does-it-affect/men>
2. Beyond Blue

Prayer in PowerPoint

Father God, thank you that you see our innermost thoughts and feelings.

Please heal our pain so that we can bring your healing to others.

Open our minds

So that we can accept without judgement.

We ask you to open our eyes

So that we can see the pain of those around us.

Open our ears

So that we can listen carefully.

Open our mouths

So that we can speak words of hope.

Open our hands

So that we can act with generosity.

Open our hearts

So that we can share your compassion and love with every person.

Resources

Print copies of the following cards and make available for everyone to take home:

1. Ask the question
2. Men's Health
3. R U OK? Trust the signs

What if they say, "No, I'm not"?

What if they say, "Yes, I'm fine," but your gut says they're not?

- Watch video R U OK? Day: Paul's Story (3 min 27 sec)
- 'When life doesn't work out as we hope' booklets (script below) available from missionresources@salvationarmy.org.au

Life doesn't always work out as we hope.

It might be money or work problems. It might be loss of health or housing. It might be family conflict or addictions.

Life can be hard and you might wonder how you are going to get through it. We can lose sleep with worry, fear and stress.

Who can walk with you through life? Do you have to do it alone?

Is there a God who cares?

History records the arrival of someone who said he'd come to show us God's love and care.

Jesus ate and drank with people who found life tough. Jesus was drawn to people who were struggling. People who felt alone. People who felt on the edge. People who felt rejected by God and the people around them. He went out of his way to show them that God cared and they were special — made in the image of God.

If you wonder what God is like, look at Jesus.

He went out of his way to make sure that we know we are loved. He sat down, talked and cared for all sorts of men, women and children. He welcomed people with generosity and kindness.

God came into the world as one of us to show us his love. He wants us to know that God is with us in our pain and struggles.

He wants us to know that we are not alone.

In fact, his love was so radical, he shocked the religious and political leaders. He surprised everyone with his message of love. Jesus knows the challenges of life. He suffered rejection by friends and family who let him down. He experienced abuse at the hands of the powerful. He was treated unfairly and unjustly put to death. On the cross, his life looked like a failure. He knows the pain and struggles of life. God is not distant and has not abandoned us.



God is at work in the world and shares our pain — and our joys. At Easter, Jesus was raised from the dead and created communities of hope to show his care and love for others. The Salvos are one of those communities. We are not perfect, but we want you to know that you are not alone. We see you as special and want to share in the struggles of life with you. We hope that we can share the love of Jesus with you in real and practical ways. We want to walk with you and show that God cares for you.

If you would like to have an informal chat about God and your life, please let us know.

Actions for your corps

- Start a men's support group
- Hold a discussion group for men
- Social activities for men
- Host an event for fathers to attend with their children

Actions for individuals (see Ask the Question printable cards and PowerPoint)

- Watch for signs that someone is struggling — notice changes in the way they think, act or look
- Make space for them to talk if they would like to do so:
 - Ask R U OK?
 - Take the time to listen
 - Offer to help them engage with a healthcare professional
- Make and share a healthy meal with them
- Invite them to join you on an activity (for example, bushwalk, golf, beach, watch a football game)
- Stay connected — even if your invitations are rejected, continue to stay connected
- Make yourself available and be consistent in your welcome and greetings
- Send an encouraging text message

Intergenerational segment

What you will need: a collection of facial images showing different emotions like anger, happiness, sadness, fear etc.

Activity

I wonder if you have ever felt angry, or sad, or lonely, or nervous, or excited or happy? We all feel lots of emotions. We often feel lots of different emotions in one day!

I'm going to hold up a picture and say an emotion. I want you to make a face that shows that emotion. For example, if I show you this picture [hold up angry face] and say, "angry," then you should make your best angry face. Give it a try now.

Have a number of turns, repeating some, calling a few in quick succession then slowing down again.

Phew! It can be tiring to have all of those emotions. Did you know that God created us to be able to feel and express our emotions? It's normal and healthy for us to feel angry, sad, lonely, happy, excited, nervous, calm and lots of other emotions. Can you think of some others?

God also created us to help each other.

"Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, NLT).

Sometimes our emotions can feel like they are too big for us to handle. We can ask God for his help, and we can ask other people too. Sometimes, we might be able to help someone else when they are feeling hurt, lonely, nervous or sad.

This/last Thursday is/was R U OK? Day. It is a reminder for us to ask other people how they are feeling, to listen carefully and to help by being their friend.



R U OK? Day

Scripture (see PowerPoint)

“The Lord will work out his plans for my life — for your faithful love, O Lord, endures forever. Don’t abandon me, for you made me.”

Psalm 138:8 (NLT)

“I am leaving you with a gift — peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So, don’t be troubled or afraid.”

John 14:27 (NLT)

“God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble.”

Psalm 46:1 (NLT)



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