Yellow!

Mental health handbook for small business owners.

R U OK?
A conversation could change a life.

yellow

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The Yellow and R U OK? partnership.

About R U OK?

R U OK? is an Australian charity on a mission to inspire and empower everyone to meaningfully connect with people around them.

Raising awareness for suicide prevention is a tough challenge, but R U OK? believe that giving people the confidence to ask others about life's up and downs is the start of an important – potentially lifesaving – conversation.
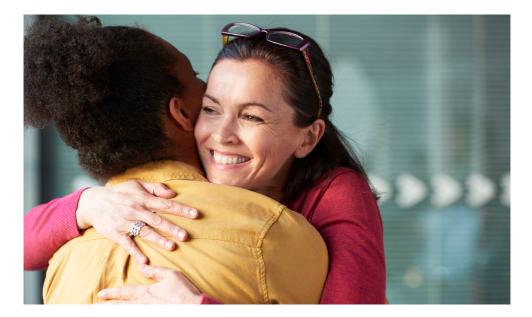
About our partnership.

Yellow is proud to join R U OK? as their Small Business Partner.

As champions of Australian small business owners, we believe that protecting the mental health of business owners and their staff is paramount.

We recognise that it can sometimes be difficult to start a conversation with someone you are worried about.

By partnering with R U OK? we'll be able to provide practical resources that empower small business owners to safeguard their own mental wellbeing as well as that of their staff.

A quick guide to asking R U OK?

Getting ready to ask

1. Be ready

- Are you in a good headspace?
- Are you willing to genuinely listen?
- Can you give as much time as needed?

2. Be prepared

- Remember that you won't have all the answers (which is OK)
- If someone is talking about personal struggles this can be difficult and they might get emotional, embarrassed or upset

3. Pick your moment

- Have you chosen somewhere relatively private and informal?
- What time will be good for them to chat? Ideally try and put aside at least an hour so you have ample time to have a meaningful chat
- If they can't talk when you approach them, ask them for a better time to have a chat

R U OK?

Starting a conversation

1. Ask R U OK?

- Be relaxed

- Help them open up by asking questions like "How you going?" or "What's been happening?" or "I've noticed that you're not quite yourself lately. How are you traveling?"

- Make an observation. Mention specific things that have made you concerned for them, like "I've noticed that you seem really tired recently" or "You seem less chatty than usual. How are you going?"

2. Listen

- 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 get angry or upset, stay calm and don't take it personally

- Let them know you're asking because you're concerned

3. Encourage action

- Ask them: "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?"

- Good options for action might include talking to family, a trusted friend, their doctor or appropriate professional

4. Check in

- Remember to check in and see how the person is doing in a few days' time

- Ask if they've found a better way to manage the situation

- If they haven't done anything, keep encouraging them and remind them you're always here if they need a chat

- Understand that sometimes it can take a long time for someone to be ready to see a professional

- Try to reinforce the benefits of seeking professional help and trying different avenues

- You could ask, "Do you think it would be useful if we looked into finding some professional or other support?"

How to build and promote a positive workplace culture.

Running a small or medium-sized business can be very demanding but highly rewarding. Given the time pressures you face, it's easy to overlook the role workplace culture can play in its ongoing success – especially when you don't all work out of one central office.

Thankfully, there's plenty of advice on building and promoting a positive workplace culture that will make your employees happier, more productive while also growing your bottom line.

1. Define your company's core values.

Employees generally want more from their jobs than just money. Defining and clearly explaining your company's core values

gives everyone a sense of purpose, laying the foundations for a positive organisational culture that will keep people going through the ups and downs.

Values shouldn't just be words written on the walls so don't worry if you don't have a traditional workplace or style. Your values should be lived out in employees' (and employer's everyday actions).

2. Offer your employees recognition and rewards.

Salary aside, there's other ways to keep staff motivated. Whether it's taking your team out for lunch or giving them the afternoon off after completing a big week of work, it can all boost employee wellbeing.

3. Foster their continuous learning and development.

Employees who feel valued will likely stick around for longer, contributing to a stronger workplace culture.

Whether it's hosting learning sessions or subsidizing short courses, skilled up employees who've received training and development opportunities will also do their jobs more effectively.

For example, if you run a beauty salon, setting aside an annual training budget to help develop cosmetology skills will help keep your staff motivated.

4. Look after their health and mental wellbeing.

We all face inevitable ups and downs in life, so being aware of this and having initiatives in place to help your staff deal with difficult times can make a huge difference to overall employee morale.

Allowing flexible work arrangements, providing discount gym memberships, or having people come and talk to your employees (in the office or any setting) are all simple ways to achieve balance.

For example, if you run a construction company, having someone from MATES in Construction, coming to talk to your tradesmen about mental wellbeing, can help raise awareness.

5. Build open and honest communication.

Being honest but tactful with staff and encouraging an open door policy is another key tip for fostering a solid workplace culture. Be sure to also keep an eye out for employees who might be suffering difficulties.

> **A simple "are you okay?", either over the phone or face to face, will show you care.**

6. Create an environment of collaboration and inclusivity.

Whether it's having a company WhatsApp group, or hosting regular team meetings, getting staff talking to each other (especially when they don't see each other every day) is not only great for morale but often a source of great work. Be sure to have company days throughout the year, where all staff can meet and chat.

7. Lead by example.

Last but not least, you have the real privilege as a business owner to lead your staff by example, which can often be the best way to bring the positive, productive workplace culture you dream of to life!

Ways employers can promote mental wellbeing amongst staff.

Improving workplace mental health is in everyone's interest, and everyone has a role to play.

But, how should you as an employer start to address mental health issues in your workplace? Especially if you only have a small workforce or no office at all.

1. Increase awareness of mental health conditions and remove stigma.

Provide access to online resources which help educate staff as to what mental health issues are and what they might look like the in the workplace.

Speak openly about mental health issues and encourage others to do the same.

2. Encourage staff with mental health conditions to seek treatment and support early.

If you one of your employees is displaying the signs of mental illness, open up a dialogue and encourage them to seek help.

Make changes to their role or working environment to enable them to fulfill their work duties.

3. Foster open communication.

Create relationships with staff where they feel comfortable talking to you about their mental health:

• Be present – showing face in the office or at worksites is important,

• Have an open-door policy – chat to staff and stay in touch with their life outside of work,

• Be reliable and trustworthy.

4. Implement an employee wellbeing strategy with wellbeing initiatives.

Ensure that staff have access to workplace policies and practices that support mental health.

This information can be included in employee's starter packs or discussed in monthly catch-up meetings.

5. Promote work-life balance.

Monitor & manage staff workloads. If you don't work alongside your staff every day, like with a plumbing company, then calling in after or before shifts is a great way to manage workloads and identify struggling staff, early.

Organise fun work events where staff can let their hair down. When you don't all work in the same place it can be easy to lose touch with workmates, this can be a great opportunity to reconnect.

6. Monitor, review and improve.

Every workplace is unique, strategies that work for one, may not be easily transferable to another. If something hasn't worked, don't just ignore it, change it – action is better than no action.

By making changes to your workplace environment – be it an office, construction site or no office at all, and offering support to employees, you can create a positive, productive and mentally healthy workplace, where people want to work.

Employee wellbeing initiatives for small business.

We live in a 24/7 economy where customers are more demanding than ever before and competition amongst businesses both large and small has rapidly increased.

Given these challenges, it's more important than ever to remember the importance of mental wellbeing in your workforce – even if you only have a small team that doesn't run out of an office.

No matter your budget, there are some simple ways to achieve happier, more productive employees whilst also growing the bottom line.

Low cost.

Mental health days. Life is full of ups and downs, which is why giving employees dedicated "mental health days" when they need time out is a great way to boost everyone's wellbeing.

As a small business owner, this won't cost you any additional money, but the upside is mentally healthier employees who will return to work refreshed and ready to do a good job. The key is to identify when a staff member may be struggling and offer them a day off before they get burnt out.

Volunteer with a community organisation. Helping others by Volunteering with a community organisation is a great way to get your employees working together, outside the office environment, while giving back to the community.

> **You can offer your own service for a good cause or volunteer for something completely different.**

Medium cost.

Emotional intelligence training. "EQ is the new IQ", with emotional intelligence training a great way to help your staff communicate with each other and customers more effectively.

It will bring all staff up to the same level, as they might have come from different work backgrounds.

Whether it's enrolling your employees in a face-to-face class or online sessions, boosting EQ in the workplace can help strengthen that all important sense of belonging to a team.

High cost.

Fitness programs. Healthy staff are also happy staff. Whether it's in the form of discounted massages, tai chi or a traditional team gym workout, getting staff moving together can alleviate stress and reduce sick days too!

If your staff are on their feet all day, like florists or gardeners, then a foot massage or even a relaxing team yoga class might be a good idea.

Phone assistance for employees.

Finally, invest in a confidential phone assistance line which staff can call to speak directly with a trained psychologist in times of high stress or anxiety.

This is useful for both traditional-style offices and companies with no offices at all.

Resources.

If you or someone you know is struggling
there are a number of Australian professionals
and crisis lines that can be contacted:

Lifeline
13 11 14
Lifeline.org.au

Suicide Call Back Service
1300 659 467
Suicidecallbackservice.org.au

beyondblue
1300 224 636
Beyondblue.org.au

SANE Australia
1800 18 SANE (7263)
Sane.org