

**Title: Psychologist Rachel Clements' tips for helping a workmate open up**

Is your gut telling you a workmate is behaving differently? Or that they don't seem themselves of late?

It might be time to start a conversation about how they're travelling. By taking the time to ask, "are you ok?" you may help a workmate open up and find the support they need to keep their wellbeing on track.

To help you get the conversation started we asked Rachel Clements, the National Director of Psychological Services at the Centre for Corporate Health, to share some tips for starting a conversation, getting past the bravado and providing ongoing support to a workmate you may be worried about.

**Q. How can a conversation transform a workmate's journey?**

**A.** "A conversation with a rail colleague when they're going through a tough time can make a tremendous difference to that person. Sometimes, when someone's not travelling so well they can feel quite alone, they often feel disconnected and they often feel a lack of support.

By reaching out and having a conversation with that person, it can make them feel as if they've got some support, someone's concerned about them and most importantly that they're not alone."

**Q. What should I do to prepare for a conversation with a workmate I'm worried about?**

**A.** "Starting a conversation with someone who may be struggling is important because it can make a profound difference to their wellbeing. It can also help them find the support they need much sooner.

Some tips that may help you prepare for that conversation include:

1. Thinking about *where* you could have the conversation. Pick a quiet place, free from interruptions and where you won't be overheard.
2. Thinking about *how* you want to start the conversation. You could reference the changes you've noticed that have made you concerned for them. You could start with something like, "I've noticed you seem a bit tired lately. Is everything alright?"
3. Thinking of *who* you can encourage them to connect with if they need some extra support like a trusted family member, GP or the Employee Assistance Program."

**Q. How should I respond if someone says, “I’m not ok”?**

**A.** “Starting a conversation with a colleague can be hard, but it signifies that you care and that they’re not alone. Remember you don’t have to have all the answers and know exactly what to say. If someone says, “I’m not ok,” you just need to respond in a supportive way.

The most important thing is to listen without interruption or judgement. Encourage the person to explain exactly what it is that they are feeling and what their concerns are. Help them to think about one or two things that can be done to help the situation and then encourage them to commit to doing one of these things.

If necessary, encourage them to see a doctor or connect with the Employee Assistance Program. This is especially important if they have been dealing with tough emotions for more than two weeks.

And don’t make the conversation a one off– circle back to the person, following up to see how they are getting on.”

Find more tips and advice for starting a conversation with a colleague you’re worried about at [ruok.org.au](http://ruok.org.au)

Do you work in the rail industry? Get involved in [Rail R U OK?Day](#) on Thursday 20 April - a campaign developed by R U OK? in collaboration with [TrackSAFE](#). Find out how [here](#).