

# R U OK?™ at school



**K-6 fact sheet**



## Signs that a friend may not be OK

R U OK? seeks to create a world where we're all connected. We're never too young to look out for one another and meaningfully connect.

Many factors can contribute to someone feeling low. It isn't always easy to know whether someone is OK, particularly if they haven't talked about it or children have yet to recognise the importance of changes in behaviour. However, there are signs children can become familiar with which could indicate that a friend may not be OK.

### What causes struggles?

A range of circumstances can lead to a child feeling low, including:

- Big life changes like moving house or school
- Experiencing grief or loss
- Being around people going through tough times
- Arguing with someone
- Problems with school work
- Being bored
- Having a medical condition or chronic illness
- Not sleeping well
- Not exercising enough
- Hormonal changes
- Special needs

### When to bring it up

It's a good idea to check in with a friend and ask, 'Are you OK?' if:

- They've been showing signs of being upset or angry for some time
- Their mood is having an impact on others
- They're not enjoying school or life in general
- You're worried about their safety
- They start to miss school, or don't want to play with others or take part in their favourite activities

### Other resources

Use our lesson plans and activity templates to embed R U OK? in your school year round.

R U OK? has developed this resource to help teachers embed peer support in classroom and playground settings.

By recognising and celebrating positive peer behaviour, we can encourage children to learn from an early age

that being supportive, asking, 'Are you OK?' and being comfortable with the answer, "No, I'm not OK" can help that person feel supported and more connected.

### What signs can children look out for?

Going through difficult times can have a big impact on a child's life, including their:

- Relationships with other people
- Physical health
- Emotional health

So, it's a great idea to be aware of certain behaviours and signs that can indicate a friend might be struggling. The first thing to look out for is changes in behaviour. When people feel low, they often:

- Withdraw from their friends or their family
- Lash out at people and get angry or upset easily, including towards the people they care about
- Cry or become emotional
- Lose interest in activities and things they usually love
- Have changed sleeping patterns. They might be sleeping all the time, not sleeping much at all, or sleeping at strange hours (such as in the middle of the day)
- Have a changed appetite. They could be eating more than usual, or less.

### How can children help?

Children cannot be expected to fix someone's problems, nor know the best way to help and support.

However, they can be encouraged to listen to what their friend is saying, let them know they care and tell a teacher, school counsellor or trusted adult if they are worried about their friend.

By promoting an environment of positive peer support and accessing support channels via an adult, children can learn that asking, 'Are you OK?', is a key life skill.