



How to look out for your mates

It can be hard to start a conversation with your mates about their health, especially mental health. But it's more important than ever that we check in with each other, given the increase in mood-related difficulties. Talking is good for us and speaking about mental health can prevent problems from getting worse.

Here are
6 helpful tips
to check your mates
are REALLY
okay:

1

Make an observation

If you've noticed that your mate's mood has changed or they're acting differently – this can mean they're having difficulties and in need of someone to talk to.

You don't need to know what the problem is, but it can help to make an observation. For people who find it hard to open up about their feelings, here are some different ways you could get the conversation started:

"How are you?
You seem more tired than usual."
"Hey. How are you doing?
You don't seem your usual
self and I've been a bit worried
about you."



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2**Share your experience**

One major barrier to seeking help, especially for men, is the fear of being singled out or seen as different. This means your mates will be less likely to seek the support they need to return to wellness. Sharing your own experience helps get rid of unhelpful myths about being tough. It shares the message that we all have mental health and helps your mate feel safe and understood. Here are some examples:

"Hey. How are things with you?
I know it can be hard to talk about
how you're feeling, but it can help.
When I was feeling anxious/having
panic attacks, chatting about it with
someone really helped me."

"Hi. How are things with you? I know
you've been having a tough time
recently. When I was feeling down last
year, I found it really hard to focus at
work, but it really helped me to talk
about it."

3**Acknowledge any difficulties
you know about**

Although you might not know what someone is going through exactly, you may have some awareness of their situation or problem. It can help to be direct in this case as it shows respect, care and concern. This can be easier than leaving your mate to bring things up and you can leave the invitation to talk open. For example:

"Hi. I know you've
been having some
difficulties with your
relationship recently.
How are things?"



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4
Ask twice


If your mate responds with 'I'm fine' or 'I'm okay' it can help to ask again. This shows that you have genuine concern and interest, and it's more likely you'll have a meaningful conversation. You could say:

"Are you really okay?
I'm worried about you."

5
Walk and talk


Sometimes doing an activity such as going for a walk can ease awkwardness. Engaging in an activity your mate enjoys can be a good way to get the conversation going in a neutral environment. What about saying:

"I've been hoping to
catch up with you for
a while. Fancy going
for a walk and getting
some fresh air?"

6
Signpost them to support


You don't have to know all about a problem or how to offer solutions. Sometimes simply talking can be a great form of support. If you're worried about someone (especially if you notice an increase in risk-taking behaviour, substance use, or signs of loss of interest in life or hopelessness), signpost them to professional support such as their GP or a mental health professional.



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