Why create a Conversation Corner?

R U OK? wants more young people in schools to have meaningful conversations with each other by asking the question “are you ok?” and listening without judgement.

Why’s it important?

We want to foster and support a culture of connectedness, resilience and empathy.

How?

By creating Conversation Corners in schools using R U OK? Benches (either supplied by R U OK? or using an existing bench/place in the school).

To make sure that the Conversation Corner is a place that promotes meaningful conversations, it will rely on a three-tier process:

1. Up-skill on wellbeing and mental health
2. Create the Conversation Corner
3. Raise awareness

Who needs to be involved?

The whole school needs to be involved.
How do I get the whole school involved?

It would be useful to have a wellbeing or health coordinator manage the process across staff, student groups and parents. They can be a point of contact for staff, as well as write content for parents and carers about the purpose of the Conversation Corner and how they can get involved.

The three-tier process for staff, students and parents/carers is outlined on the following pages, but here’s a quick overview:

1. **Up-skill on wellbeing and mental health**
   a. Information about wellbeing and mental health
   b. Where to get help if someone isn’t ok
   c. How to have a conversation

2. **Create the Conversation Corner**
   a. Where will it be?
   b. Do you have an R U OK? Bench?
   c. Will you build your own R U OK? Bench?

3. **Raise awareness**
   a. Promote the importance of having conversations
   b. Remind people where to get help if not ok
   c. Fundraise/raise awareness for R U OK? Day in September
What’s the process for school staff?

1  Up-skill on wellbeing and mental health

- Staff commit to finding out about R U OK? (ruok.org.au) and supporting the creation of the Conversation Corner in their school
- Staff read through the R U OK? Work kits (ruok.org.au/work) and share the information
- Staff up-skill in wellbeing and mental health by:
  - Referring to/using fact sheets from R U OK? at School Tool Boxes: (ruok.org.au/school)
    - Signs that could mean a friend isn’t ok (see Lesson 1 worksheets)
    - Finding help for someone who needs it (see Lesson 3 worksheets)
    - Inspiring students to stay connected (see Lesson 4 worksheets)
  - Accessing partner organisations which provide professional development:
    - ReachOut.com (au.reachout.com)
    - Mind Matters (mindmatters.edu.au)
    - Black Dog Institute (blackdoginstitute.org.au)

2  Create the Conversation Corner

Students are encouraged to lead the design and set up of the Conversation Corners with assistance from school staff. The questions below will help teachers to generate discussion between students about their local school context and consider how best to create a Conversation Corner.

A. Help students think about:
   - Who should make a decision about the best place for the Conversation Corner?
   - Where’s the best place for the Conversation Corner?
   - What’s the purpose of the R U OK? Bench?

B. Support your students by:
   - Providing advice about when and how to survey all students and staff about where to place the Conversation Bench (e.g. Use online tools, such as survey monkey, or offline, using paper). This could take place in Year Level Meetings, School Assemblies, or in a Health and PE lesson (when the R U OK? lesson activities are being taught)
   - Providing a room and supervision for students to coordinate their Conversation Corner
   - Helping students to liaise with the General Assistant about the placement and assembling of the R U OK? Bench
   - Helping students understand how best to inform all staff and parents about the Conversation Corner (at a staff meeting, through an email communication, a note in their pigeon hole, etc)
What’s the process for school staff?

Raise awareness

A. Promote R U OK? to staff
   - Promote R U OK? Day at your school to staff
   - Head to ruok.org.au for ideas on:
     - Fundraising
     - Merchandise
     - Stories
     - Event tools and ideas

B. Remind students of places to go if they or friend isn’t ok
   - Teacher, counsellor or principal
   - Youth support services:
     - ReachOut.com (au.reachout.com)
     - headspace (eheadspace.org.au)
     - Youth beyondblue (youthbeyondblue.com)
     - Kids Helpline (kidshelp.com.au)
   - Place posters in your classroom from youth mental health organisations and R U OK?
     - ReachOut.com (au.reachout.com)
     - headspace (eheadspace.org.au)
     - Youth beyondblue (youthbeyondblue.com)
     - Kids Helpline (kidshelp.com.au)
     - Local Youth Services run by your local Council
       *Most Youth Based services will send you a promotional pack

C. Remind teachers of places to go if they or another staff member isn’t ok
   - Counsellor or principal
   - Support services:
     - Lifeline (lifeline.org.au)
     - Beyondblue (beyondblue.org.au)
     - Black Dog Institute (blackdoginstitute.org.au)
     - Local services
**What’s the process for students?**

1. **Up-skill on wellbeing and mental health**
   - Participate in activities in Health Lessons and/or Pastoral Care Sessions based on programming in the downloadable R U OK? at School Tool Boxes (ruok.org.au/school)
   - Encourage students to assist teachers in programming and running these activities.
   - Topic areas are:
     - Signs that could mean a friend isn’t ok (lesson 1)
     - Asking the question (lesson 2)
     - Where can you seek help when a classmate needs it? (lesson 3)
     - Creating conversations (lesson 4)
   - Encourage further personal learning by inviting students to investigate ways to have a conversation using the R U OK? website and following R U OK? on social media (such as Facebook and YouTube)

2. **Create the Conversation Corner**

Students are encouraged to lead the design and set up of the Conversation Corners with assistance from school staff. The questions below will help students think about their local school context and consider how best to create a Conversation Corner.

1. **Who should make a decision about the best place for the Conversation Corner?**
   a. How to find out:
      - Survey all staff and students to find out where they think would work best
      - Organise a student design competition around where to place the bench

2. **Who should coordinate the project?**
   - Assign the Conversation Corner project to the school SRC or Student Council Team to implement
   - Ask for student volunteers to run the Conversation Corner Project
   - Use the Project Planning Sheets available in the R U OK? at School Tool Boxes (Years 9-12 Lesson 4) to assist in planning your Conversation Corner project

3. **Where’s the best place for the Conversation Corner?**
   a. Does the school already have somewhere where students like to chat/are more likely to chat?
   b. Will it be undercover (e.g. under a tree or awning) to protect students from the sun/rain etc?
   c. Have you informed the General Assistant?
   d. Do you need equipment, such as paint? Does it need to be bolted down, placed with other benches or cemented to the ground?
   e. Suggested places include:
      - Under a tree, outside the library, or a popular area for sitting
      - Near the teacher supervision area
4. What’s the purpose of the bench?

A. Is it to raise awareness of the importance of having conversations?

This option will be good for schools which:
- Want to promote R U OK? and give students a daily reminder to start a conversation
- Don’t have a quiet space
- Would prefer not to have a dedicated place for meaningful conversations (you might be worried that students might get picked on)

OR

B. Is it a place to have a conversation?

This option will be good for schools which:
- Want to have a dedicated place for meaningful conversations
- Have a quiet space
- Can encourage everyone to take time to start conversations in the Conversation Corner

5. Creating an alternative R U OK? Bench

- Paint an existing bench yellow
- Buy a different bench and use it in a similar way
- Paint an area of concrete/bitumen yellow to indicate that it is the Conversation Corner
- Use yellow chalk and create a new Conversation Corner every day (depending on the rain!)
- Choose an area in the school garden to plant yellow flowers all year round and call it the Conversation Garden
What’s the process for students?

3. Raise awareness

1. How will you let the whole school community know about the Conversation Corner?
   - Talk about it at the school assembly
   - Run a poster design competition for promoting the use of the Conversation Corner (with or without the bench)
   - Write articles for the school newsletter
   - Use the school’s official social media pages (Twitter/Facebook)
   - Advise the local media about your Conversation Corner and how the school is encouraging meaningful conversations
   - Decorate the sides of the bench using permanent makers and make the bench stand out
   - Tell your parents/carers about the Conversation Corner and why you support it

2. How will you encourage students to have a conversation every day?
   - Head to R U OK? (ruok.org.au) for ideas on how to have a conversation

3. How will you use the conversation corner for R U OK? Day in September of each year?
   - Head to R U OK? (ruok.org.au) for ideas on:
     - Fundraising
     - Merchandise
     - Stories
     - Event tools and ideas

4. How will you inform students about places to go to for help if they aren’t ok?
   - For further help, advise students to let a teacher, counsellor, or principal know if they need urgent assistance
   - Promote these online support sites
     - ReachOut.com (au.reachout.com)
     - headspace (eheadspace.org.au)
     - Youth beyondblue (youthbeyondblue.com)
     - Kids Helpline (kidshelp.com.au)
   - Place posters around the school from youth mental health organisations and R U OK?
     - ReachOut.com (au.reachout.com)
     - headspace (eheadspace.org.au)
     - Local Youth Services run by your local Council
   - *Most youth-based services will send you a promotional pack
   - *Think about putting posters up in windows close to the Conversation Corner
What’s the process for parents and carers?

1  Up-skill on wellbeing and mental health

- Staff explain the purpose of the Conversation Corner in the school newsletter and on social media channels to parents and carers
- Encourage parents to set up Conversation Corners at home
- Include information on how to have conversations by promoting the R U OK? conversation tips (ruok.org.au/how-to-ask)
- Promote places that children can go to for help:
  - At school: Speak to the school counsellor, a trusted teacher, Head of Wellbeing or Year Adviser
  - At home: Parents, siblings, extended family, friends, local community organisations
- Online:
  - ReachOut.com (au.reachout.com)
  - headspace (eheadspace.org.au)
  - Youth beyondblue (youthbeyondblue.com)

2  Create the Conversation Corner

Students are encouraged to design and set up of the Conversation Corners with assistance from school staff. The staff can share the information below as it aims to help parents support their children to think about their local school context and consider how best to create a Conversation Corner.

At school your children will be thinking about:

- Who should make a decision about the best place for the Conversation Corner?
- Where’s the best place for the Conversation Corner?
- Using the R U OK? Bench

Supporting the Conversation Corner project at home by:

- Discussing the importance of conversations with your children
- Using an existing bench/chair or purchase a bench/chair to have under a tree in the garden or on a balcony and call it the convo bench/chair
- Making time to ask children “are you ok?” regularly
What’s the process for parents and carers?

3 Raise awareness

1. Understand the importance of conversations and head to ruok.org.au

2. Encourage your child to seek help if they or a friend isn’t ok
   - Encourage them to talk to a parent, carer, sibling, extended family, friends
   - Tell a teacher, counsellor, or principal if they need urgent assistance
   - Use online support:
     - ReachOut.com (au.reachout.com)
     - headspace (eheadspace.org.au)
     - Youth beyondblue (youthbeyondblue.com)
     - Kids Helpline (kidshelp.com.au)

3. Leave pamphlets in easy-to-see locations in your home for your children to read about youth mental health organisations and R U OK?
   - ReachOut.com (au.reachout.com)
   - headspace (eheadspace.org.au)
   - Youth beyondblue (youthbeyondblue.com)
   - Kids Helpline (kidshelp.com.au)
   - Local youth services run by your local Council
   *Most Youth Based services will send you a promotional pack*