Yellow Bench



What to say when you're worried

You don't need the perfect words to show you care.

Many people avoid checking in because they're worried they'll say the wrong thing. You might feel nervous about bringing up the topic. You might be afraid of making things worse, upsetting the person, or not knowing how to respond.

The good news is that you don't need special training or the perfect script. What matters most is showing care, listening without judgement, and letting the person know they're not alone.

Start with what you've noticed

It can help to focus on observations rather than assumptions. Instead of telling someone how they feel, describe what you've noticed.

You could say:
"I've noticed you seem a bit quieter than usual lately."
"You don't quite seem yourself at the moment."
"I've noticed you haven't been coming along to things as much recently."
"You seem to have a lot on your plate right now."
This can help start a conversation without putting someone on the defensive.

Let them know you care

Sometimes people need to hear that someone has noticed and cares enough to ask.

You could say:
"I just wanted to check in and see how you're going."
"You've been on my mind lately."
"I care about you and wanted to see how things are going."
"I wanted to reach out because I was thinking about you."
Simple and genuine is often best.

Ask open questions

Questions that invite conversation are often more helpful than questions that can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no".

Try asking:
"How have things been for you lately?"
"What's been happening for you recently?"
"How are you coping with everything at the moment?"
"What has that been like for you?"

Open questions create space for the other person to share as much or as little as they feel comfortable with.

If they open up

If someone starts sharing something difficult, try to focus on understanding rather than solving.

Helpful responses include:
"Thank you for sharing that with me."
"That sounds really difficult."
"I can see why that would be hard."
"That sounds like a lot to deal with."
"I'm glad you told me."

These responses acknowledge the person's experience without judgement.

If you're not sure what to say

It's okay to be honest. You don't need to have all the answers.

You could say:
"I'm not sure what to say, but I'm glad you're talking to me."
"I may not fully understand what you're going through, but I'm here to listen."
"Thank you for trusting me with this."
"You don't have to go through this alone."

Often, being present is more important than finding the perfect response.

What if they say they're fine?

Sometimes people aren't ready to talk. If someone says they're okay or doesn't want to talk, try not to push.

You could respond with:
"That's okay. I just wanted to check in."
"If anything changes, I'm here to listen."
"No pressure. I just wanted you to know I care."
"You don't have to talk now, but the offer is there."

Keeping the door open can make it easier for them to come back when they're ready.



An initiative by Richmind WA

What not to say

Even with the best intentions, some comments can unintentionally shut down a conversation.

Try to avoid saying:
- ❌ "Just stay positive."
- ❌ "You'll be fine."
- ❌ "Everyone goes through this."
- ❌ "Other people have it worse."
- ❌ "You need to get over it."
- ❌ "Just think differently."
- ❌ "At least..."

These responses may minimise how the person is feeling, even if that isn't your intention.

Sometimes less is more

When someone is struggling, there is often a strong urge to fill silences, offer advice or solve the problem.

Instead, try to:
- listen
- be patient
- acknowledge their feelings
- ask simple questions
- allow pauses

The conversation doesn't need to be perfect to be helpful.

Remember

You don't need the right answer | You don't need to fix the problem | You don't need to be an expert | Showing up, expressing care and listening with an open mind can make a meaningful difference

Try these conversation starters

With a friend
"Hey, you've seemed a bit different lately. How are things going?"
With a partner or family member
"I've noticed you've had a lot on your mind recently. How are you really doing?"
With a colleague
"You seem under a lot of pressure at the moment. How are things going?"

When you're unsure
"I might be wrong, but I wanted to check in because I've been a bit concerned about you."
Key message: You don't need perfect words to support someone. Genuine care, curiosity and a willingness to listen can go a long way.



An initiative by Richmind WA