

# START THE CONVERSATION: HOW TO ASK, "ARE YOU OK?"



American  
Foundation  
for Suicide  
Prevention

Tasha had always been the type to roll up her sleeves and get the job done. But lately, she seems a bit more withdrawn. She was still showing up on time and getting the work done, but something in her behavior indicates something is wrong. One afternoon, while packing up for the day, a crewmate casually said, "You don't seem like yourself. Are you ok?" Tasha admitted that she's been going through a tough stretch at home, and just talking about it took some weight off her shoulders.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

**Don't Be Afraid to Ask:** A sincere, non-judgmental question can go a long way: "I care about you, and I've noticed you haven't been yourself lately. You seem frustrated, and I'm wondering how you're doing." This shows that you've noticed and that you care. You don't need a script—just the courage to speak up and listen.

**Find the Right Moment:** A quiet place away from others is best for this type of conversation. Ask in a calm and respectful tone. Focus on listening, not fixing.

**Respect Their Response:** The person you're concerned about might not open up right away—and that's okay. Just knowing you care can make a big difference. Follow up later and let them know you're still there. If they do express the need for help, connect them with support—whether that's a supervisor, an EAP, a local mental health clinic or by calling or texting the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988, which is available in both English and Spanish.

## JOB SITE DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. If you notice a coworker acting differently—more withdrawn, irritable, or distracted, how might you approach them?
2. What are some ways you could ask someone how they're doing without making it awkward or uncomfortable?
3. What would you want a coworker to say to you if you were the one struggling?

## THE BOTTOM LINE

Starting the conversation can sometimes be the hardest part, but it can change everything. You don't have to fix someone's problems—just be a person who notices and cares. Being a colleague they feel safe talking to can make a big difference. When we normalize talking about mental health like any other safety issue, we reduce the stigma.

These talks help people feel closer and get through the tough times. One person asking, "Are you OK?" can truly help save a life.

*Don't forget to mention your company's mental health resources or local service options.*