

PARISH LIFE IN ISO

A conversation with my husband the other day got me thinking about the far-reaching mental health implications of our life in ISO. He was telling me how he felt kind of off, a bit down, nothing terrible but still, not himself. And he didn't understand why he felt this way since his work hasn't been affected, he's leaving the house every day and he's not a health worker dealing directly with the pandemic. He is by no means a model of stoicism, but it is unusual for him to discuss these types of feelings, with me or with anyone. It just goes to show that no one is travelling through this period of isolation and restriction unscathed.

I had noticed he wasn't quite right, but in the midst of my own anxiety, being busy with kids and an enforced domestic life, his irritability, to be quite honest, was just another irritation to me.

It may sound strange, but I was delighted with this conversation because it opened a dialogue. We talked about our family trying to eat better and exercise more and about trying to keep our thoughts and our words positive. All the things that we know will help and that sometimes, when we get mired in the day to day, we forget to do.

Since that first conversation, when he asks me how I am sometimes I can truthfully say I'm ok and sometimes I tell him that my anxiety was bad today. And so, we've started to talk to each other about how we're feeling. And it helps.



Photo by Finn on Unsplash

This month we celebrated R U OK? Day to evoke discussion around mental health and encourage us to check in with our loved ones.

People are lonely. Frustrated. Anxious. Many are experiencing increased relationship strain. Parents are losing their mind with kids at home 24/7 and kids themselves are struggling with all the many ways Covid restrictions have impacted their life.

We need to be looking out for one another. There are thousands of people around us who are struggling right now, and unfortunately many of them may never open up about their internalised feelings or seek support. But if we can check in with our loved ones, our friends, and our neighbours to ask R U OK? we can take the first step in ensuring they get the support they need.

Taking the first step

It can be really difficult to ask someone if they are okay. It can be even more difficult to ask someone when you're not feeling okay yourself. So, some things to consider before asking someone if they are okay are to:

Check in with yourself.

If you're struggling with mental health issues or stress, seek help by talking to someone you trust or a professional. That way you can find the help you need AND discover how you can support others without detriment to your own wellbeing.

Prepare to ask.

If someone says they're not okay, will you know what to say? What if they aren't ready to talk? And what if they need professional help? Find these answers on the [R U OK? website](#).

Pick a good time to chat.

If you're going to ask someone R U OK? make sure that both you and the person have enough time to chat properly. You'll also need to pick a moment to bring the question up. You may find that there is never a 'right' time, or you might choose a moment and then feel too anxious to ask, but remember it's more important to ask than to worry about the minor things.

To learn how to ask someone R U OK? Check out these great tips on [R U OK?'s website](#).

For more in-depth tips and discussions, check out our articles below:

[When you ask R U OK? - what do you do if someone says 'no'?](#)

[Loved and Worthwhile - using the ALGEE method to ask about suicidal thoughts](#)

Adapted from original writings of Liz Gellel, Communications Coordinator, Catholic Care.

We'd love to hear what you've been up to in ISO. Email jac.radcliffe@cam.org.au to contribute to Parish Life in ISO