

Are You OK? A Conversation Starter

As we begin 2017, the academic year starts to pick up very quickly. During this time, it is important to check in on friends and their emotional well-being and to reflect on what it means to be a good brother/sister when it comes to mental health. The enclosed poster is designed to remind you to do just that.

At your next chapter meeting, take the time to brainstorm behaviors that might be concerning to you and your members and how you can express that concern. You may use the following questions and tips as a guide:

Concerning behaviors: What might we see that would concern us?

Allow chapter members to share their thoughts before providing the following as examples:

- Using negative emoticons or concerning hashtags on social media
- Expressing feeling alone, hopeless, isolated or a burden to others
- Showing irritability and hostility that is out of character
- Showing impulsive behaviors
- Staying up all night/insomnia
- Withdrawing from activities they previously enjoyed

Showing concern: How can we express that concern?

Allow chapter members to share their thoughts before providing the following as examples:

- “Ask are you OK?” Regardless of a “yes” or “no,” continue the conversation with...
 - I noticed you’ve *(been missing class a lot, seemed really stressed lately, not been getting along with your friends, not seemed like yourself, etc.)*. How can I help?
 - It concerned me when you said *(no one would care if I left the chapter, I can’t handle this anymore, I’ve just felt so down recently, etc.)*. I’m here to listen and help you figure out what to do next.

Things to keep in mind when talking with your brother/sister:

- Have a conversation, not a confrontation.
- Talk with your friend face-to-face.
- Share specific concerns rather than generalizations.
- Take care of your own mental health while helping someone else.
- Don’t expect to be an expert. Know your options for mental health resources.

If our members prioritize mental health and emotional well-being to start the year, our chapters will be happier and healthier throughout 2017.

Sourced from:
Ross Szabo’s Behind Happy Faces Project
The JED Foundation