

Peer Check-In Conversation Guide

How to ask "How are you really?" — and what to do next

You don't have to be a counselor. You have to **show up**.

The 5 steps: Notice → Ask → Listen → Connect → Follow up

1. Notice

Changes in mood, sleep, drinking, attendance, humor, or withdrawal — especially after a hard call. Trust your gut.

2. Ask (pick a line that sounds like you)

- "Hey — that was a rough one. How are you *actually* doing?"
- "I've noticed you've been quiet. I'm here if you want to talk."
- "You don't have to talk, but I'm not going anywhere. Coffee?"

Pick a private, unhurried place. No audience, no phone.

3. Listen

- Let silence happen. Don't rush to fix it.
- Say: *"That sounds heavy."* *"Thanks for telling me."* *"That makes sense."*
- Don't say: *"Man up."* *"It's part of the job."* *"Others have it worse."* *"I know exactly how you feel."*

4. If you're worried about suicide — ask directly

"Are you having thoughts of hurting yourself or ending your life?"

Asking doesn't plant the idea. It shows you care. - **If yes:** don't leave them alone. **Call or text 988** together (Veterans: 988, then 1). **If there's immediate danger, call 911.** Help make firearms, pills and other means safer — ask someone else to hold them. - Don't promise to keep it secret if their life is at risk.

5. Connect & follow up

- *"There are people who do this for a living — and some who've done our job. Want to call Safe Call Now together?"*
- Offer to sit with them while they call, or help find a counselor.
- **Follow up in 1–2 days:** a text is enough. *"Thinking of you. Coffee this week?"*
- Take care of yourself: talk to a peer or professional if it's heavy for you.

If YOU are the one who needs a check-in

Try: *"Hey — I'm not doing great. Can I talk to you for a few minutes?"* That's it. That's the whole script.

Quick card: Rose · Rough · Ready

Weekly 5-minute buddy check-in: - **Rose:** one good thing this week - **Rough:** one hard thing - **Ready:** one thing I need or will do next

Who to call

Safe Call Now (206) 459-3020 (24/7, first-responder peers) · **988** (call/text; Vets press 1) · **Text HOME to 741741** · **COPLINE 1-800-267-5463** (law enforcement) · **911** for emergencies

Peers are not a replacement for professional care.