When everything changed earlier this year, Bonnie found herself feeling incredibly overwhelmed and riddled with uncertainty. In light of R U OK? Day recently, we asked Bonnie to share her mental health journey during COVID-19.

**Seeking mental health support**

Before the lockdown, I talked to one of the International Student Advisors at the university about time management. I felt I spent too much time reading news about the coronavirus and I wanted to get some advice on it.

The situation was manageable before Sydney entered lockdown. [After that] I felt more stressed and realised that I could not concentrate well to study for one of my mid-term exams.

I decided to contact the Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS). After hearing my concerns, the psychologist I met provided two options – to see a psychologist in my suburb or attend an online cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) program called *This Way Up*. I chose the latter one as it is more flexible. Meanwhile, I still see the advisor once a week to chat online.

**Improvements and achievements**

I finished a whole program on *This Way Up* and talked to my advisor until the end of the first term. I gained a lot of tools from *This Way Up* to help me reduce my stress. Many of them are things I have learned in my psychology courses, but they feel very different when I actually practise them.

**Advice for fellow international students**

It’s OK to not feel OK, especially this year. Spend more time every day on your physical health, as well as your mental health. Do basic stuff – exercise several times a week, eat healthy food, have enough sleep, and practise mindfulness.

**R U OK? Day**

R U OK? Day is a really good initiative to encourage the community to think about mental health and check in with each other.

[If your friends are going through a tough time], start a genuine conversation with them. By simply asking “R U OK?”, one can feel being cared about and the conversation can be a valuable light in your friend’s life – you never know.

Read more of Bonnie's experience at the link below.

Find out more