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BEYOND OK

As R U OK? Day approaches for another year, *Australian Story* revisits the family of Gavin Larkin, the man behind the successful national day of action to prevent suicide.

Gavin was a high-flying advertising executive when he set up the R U OK? movement as a legacy to his father who took his own life in 1996.

But just a few months after the launch of R U OK? Day in 2009, Gavin himself was anything but okay.

The then 41-year-old was diagnosed with Stage 4 Lymphoma and given a 50 percent chance of survival.

Just a few weeks later, his then 11-year-old son Gus was told that he had an inoperable brain tumour.

Despite his and his son's ill health, *Australian Story* filmed Gavin as he continued to lead the R U OK? movement from his hospital bed, inspiring everyone around him with his attitude and unparalleled fighting spirit.

"We could easily be completely justified in being, pissed off, frustrated, despondent, except it doesn't help you on the journey," Gavin told *Australian Story*, "and if the journey's all you've got, you wanna make it a good one."

Days after marking the third day of action in September 2011, Gavin died. His son Gus passed away two years later.

There's no doubt it's been extraordinarily difficult for his family but six years after Gavin's death, his wife Maryanne says she and her children, Josie and Van, have accepted their loss.

"I think outsiders look at it and think, "My god, if that happened to me, how would I get up every day?" I do have feelings like that some days that it is so hard, but we've been able to cope, and I would say cope pretty well actually," Maryanne says.

The ongoing success of R U OK? has also sustained the family through their grief.

"This is the house that lives and breathes R U OK?," daughter Josie says, "and it's incredible to see the community that R U OK? built around us."

"I think Dad would think that R U OK? Day now is just incredible."

The ninth R U OK? Day will be held on September 14.



Media Release

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