

ALIGN WITH GOD MINISTRIES

CHECKING IN (with an individual or a group)

This handout is useful in building community and relational skills within a small group, family, marriage or one to one. It uses the first five of the 19 relational skills stated in the Life Model (www.lifemodelworks.org) and thus trains our brains in maturity skills and group relational skills that are often missing today with the increase of technology and greater isolation. If done in small groups of 3-5, the person on the right, for example, can “attune” to the person on the left so that the entire circle of people can check in and be attuned in less time. This skill is based on the foundation of knowing how to “Listen to God” or commune with God in silent prayer. If a group is not comfortable with this practice, Please learn *Two Way Journaling first and “Filter Checks”*. We encourage you to use the filter checks with what you “hear” from God before you share with others. Other resources available on www.joystartshere.com.

CHECKING IN: (With others and God)

A) State your Emotions: Using one of the feeling acronyms below (or your own), one person starts by saying, “*I’m checking in as.....*” then states 1-2 emotions that they feel. Keep it *much* more about the emotions, and only briefly about the situation or content that led up to it. Keep it to 2 minutes and time it, if needed, to ensure that you do not overwhelm your listeners (a key relational skill to learn). This can be done at the dinner table in families, in small home Bible study groups, among friends, or as a structure for discipling. It helps to get the relational connectors turned “on” in your brain so that you feel connected to people around you. If possible precede with quieting rest (deep breathing) and a round of “gratitude”. (The two minutes includes only the person sharing. Take an additional 3 minutes to respond with the suggestions below, with a total of 5 minutes check in time per person).

B) Listen and Attune: The listener attunes and actively listens (restates what you said in their own words), and may ask, “Did I get that right?” or asks if there is anything more or asks a question if needed to clarify. The listener can be anyone from a group, or the person to the right or left, however it is set up. It is important that the listener does not feel the need to fix or counsel the person at this point. They are only listening and attuning. This helps activate the relational centers of the brain in both the one checking in and the one attuning.

After you feel heard, the listener asks you “what do you need?”

C) Person checking in Responds with one of the following: 1) I don’t need anything, thank you for listening 2) I’d like to know what Jesus has for me, would you listen to Jesus with me? 3) I need advice or direction, or 4) Please pray for me. Obviously these are not the only responses, but an example of the most common (other examples are: the person checking in may want to pray a prayer of gratitude out loud, pray for someone, listen to or sing a song, receive a blessing, or ask someone to follow up with them, etc).

D) Meeting the Need: If #3 or #4 are chosen in (C), then the person listening (or the entire group) take a few minutes to pause and listen to Jesus for the person checking in, then they respond according to what the person asked for - advice or prayer. (Please don’t give advice unless asked). Also see “*Safety Checks*” for how to help a group feel safe.

ALIGN WITH GOD MINISTRIES

If #2 is chosen, write down your impressions of what Jesus may put on your heart for the person as you quiet yourself, pray silently and listen to God after asking, "What do you have for _____right now?". Allow the person checking in to share their own impressions first as to what Jesus put on their hearts during the listening time. After this, ask them if they would like you to share anything you received while listening. Share it humbly, since it's only your impressions. Give them the option to discard it if they so choose. (Avoid saying, "I heard God say.....because we are all fallible. If it resonates with the other person, and you check it against the filter checks, there are parts of it that God most likely put on your heart to say to them, but you want to leave it up to them to reject or accept it) .

Tip: Do not share what you "hear" for others if it does not bring peace to you. Otherwise, you are passing your anxiety and doubt onto them, rather than peace and resolution (See Passing the Peace Handout). If this happens it's likely that you need some more time in listening to Jesus about the issue or ask him clarifying questions) In this case you can say, "I pass for now". You may want to follow up later with the person if things become clearer.

Example of a Check In:

"I'm checking in as sad today and tender toward so many people losing their jobs right now at my company with so many layoffs.

"So you're feeling sad and you're hurting for the people that you know at work that are getting laid off. (person nods). Is there anything else?

"I guess I'm feeling guilty that I'm staying and they aren't."

"So in addition to being sad, you're feeling guilty and torn as to why you are staying and they are getting laid off."

"Yes, that's right"

"Ok, what do you need?"

"I think I need to say a prayer for each person I know that no longer has a job- that will help me to feel better to put it all into God's hands. Will you pray with me?"

"Absolutely!" Do you want me to pray too when you are finished?

"Yes". (At that point the entire group prays "with" the person in spirit, but only the two checking in actually pray out loud. This helps to keep the check in time to 5 minutes each with responses.)

Notes:

(Then you go to the next person, if this is done in a small group). Some people wonder if it has to be kept to only 2 minutes (5 minutes including responses back to them and prayer). Obviously if someone just lost a loved one or if there is an exceptional tragedy going on in their lives, there are always exceptions.

ALIGN WITH GOD MINISTRIES

However with most people we found this to be very helpful to teach people who tend to dominate a group to not “go over” their time, and the people that are more quiet to have equal time. Also, it teaches people to not elaborate about a story with too much detail, which tends to overwhelm the listener. When they are reminded to keep it to two minutes and keep it mostly about feelings, people learn a very needed social skill of not overwhelming other people with their emotions, thoughts or details. If a person goes over time, establish what you will do at the beginning of the group (the timer can hold up their phone, set an alarm to go off, etc). Be sure to assign a person to do the timing for each person that checks in within each group before you start. This can be rotated just as the listener is rotated.

Examples of Feelings:

Hint: “I feel that I should be getting paid more on my job” is not a feeling, it’s a thought. “I feel mad and sad because I’m not getting a raise”, is a more feeling oriented way to state this. This kind of sharing also helps you to know and explore your own heart, and communicate to others in a way that helps them to empathize with you and have compassion for you. You may want a time of silence before sharing as this takes time to learn. Simply look at the list below and ask yourself “which emotion is closest to what I am feeling right now? Take a few minutes to quiet. Listen to your heart. In a few moments you will most likely know. If not, you can check in as “confused” or “scattered”, being open about how it’s hard for you to get in touch with what you feel. Be encouraged. Keep this up and before you know it you will become very fluent in this “language” of the heart. Here is a pneumonic that will help you to remember:

SASHET

- S-Sad (hurt)
- A-Angry (threatened, frustrated)
- S-Scared
- H-Happy
- E-Excited
- T-Tender, Caring

JOY RING: (emotions you are born with)

Sad, Mad, Bad (Shame),
Disgust, Despair (Hopeless)
Scared

2018-Taken from Lk10.com (Sashet and check in) and Joystartshere.com (Joy Ring)