

EMOTIONAL CHECK IN

Is the first step in creating emotional safety

- When we create space for children and people in our lives to simply say what they are feeling or experiencing, without the need to fix it or to change it, we immediately create an environment that is supportive and accepting. This in turn creates safety and trust within a relationship; which a person or child can depend on when they are facing challenges.
- An 'emotional check in' is one of the most practical ways to begin creating safe emotional spaces. An 'emotional check in' can support, in a gentle way, an opening into conversations about feelings and emotions with a child.

What is an emotional check in?

- An emotional check in is when we take time to notice what we are feeling
- When we check in on our interior emotional landscape, and name our emotions
- When we check in we can ask the following questions:
 1. What am I feeling
 2. What are my thoughts
 3. What do I notice about my behaviour

Why are they important?

- They help us to develop our internal listening skills
- Emotions are messages and they are trying to tell us something, we need to know what we are feeling to hear the message
- Often in our society we are taught that our emotions are not important and best to be avoided
- Doing an emotional check in regularly helps us to undo this pattern and develop the skills to pay attention and accept our emotions as they are.

What happens when you do an emotional check in regularly?

- We increase our emotional vocabulary
- We increase our capacity to accurately name our emotions. When we name our emotions we reduce their intensity
- It allows us to start developing the ability to be responsive rather than reactive in situations
- Emotional check ins allow for us to model authentic expression of our emotions to children and others
- Allows us to create a safe place where all emotions are welcome

How to do an emotional check in?

When we create space for children and people in our lives to simply say what they are feeling or experiencing, without the need to fix it or to change it, we immediately create an environment that is supportive and accepting. This in turn creates safety and trust within a relationship; which a person or child can depend on when they are facing challenges.

How can we create a space like this?

Often, if not always, the simple way is the most profound. An 'emotional check in' is one of the most practical ways these cards can be used. An 'emotional check in' can support, in a gentle way, an opening into conversations about feelings and emotions with a child.



Step one: Using the picture cards, spread them face-up. You can use all the picture cards or only some of them.

Step two: Next you and the child or children you are connecting with can choose one (or more) cards that show how you and they are feeling in that moment.

Step three: (optional) You and the child can then choose whether or not to share more about what you or they are feeling. Over time, both the adult and the child improve at identifying, sharing and expressing what they are feeling.



***Depending on your child's age, emotional vocab and understanding you may choose a selection of cards, starting with a few choices and then increasing. Or you may start with all of the cards and allow them to inquire and become curious about what all the options are. Be honest with what you are feeling, try not to shy away from what may seem like more challenging emotions. Remember that as you (the adult) are willing to express what you are feeling you are modelling and giving permission for the child to do the same.*