

building community in dialogue

the art of the check-in

What it is

an invitation at the beginning of the dialogue for participants to connect to self and other via reflection and sharing

Why we do it

- meet on a plane of shared humanity
- relax nerves and break the ice
- set a tone of sharing & exchange right away

How to do it

The ideal check-in prompt is . . .

- low-stakes (not too vulnerable)
- personal (not knowledge-based; something anyone can answer)
- not based in status or identity.
- lifting (serotonin-boosting) or grounding (mindfulness-enhancing)

Logistics for facilitating:

- Should take no longer than 5-10 minutes
- Share the prompt & give instructions
- Each person introduces themselves by the name they'd like to be called + pronouns (if they wish), then responds to prompt. Opting out is allowed!
- Model with your own introduction + response!

LIFTING CHECK-INS

Lower-Stakes (for new or established groups)

- What's something you are loving right now?
- What's your favorite time of the year in your hometown/in [location of dialogue]?
- As a child, what was a beloved comfort object or favorite toy you had, or an amazing gift you once got?
- What's some good news you've gotten lately?
- What's something you're looking forward to?
- What's the best part about [current season] for you?

Higher-Stakes (for established groups)

- What's a nonromantic source of love for you?
- What is something that brings you comfort?
- What's your trick to feeling at home/like yourself in a new place or situation?
- What is a time that you stood up for yourself, someone else, or something you believed in?
- What's something small or simple you can make or do really well and take pride in?
- What is something positive that someone said to you once about yourself that made a big difference?

GROUNDING CHECK-INS

- What's the color of your energy today? (Don't justify or explain – just share the shade)
- What are up to 3 words to describe your current state? (“alert,” “exhausted,” “apprehensive,” “open,” etc)
- How is the weather impacting your mood today?
- On a scale of 1-5, rate your current levels of each of the following: 1) energy, 2) motivation, 3) peace of mind, 4) readiness to engage with others, 5) comfort in your body.
- Breathe deep and focus on your environment. To yourself, name 5 things you see, 4 things you feel, 3 things you hear, 2 things you smell, and 1 thing you taste. Share 1 sensory perception with the group.