

Check In With You

A practical self-check-in for noticing what is happening inside, understanding what you need and responding before pressure turns into overwhelm.

What does it mean to check in with you?

Many of us become highly skilled at checking what everyone else needs while losing track of our own internal state. We notice deadlines, messages, family responsibilities, work demands and other people's emotions, yet our own hunger, tiredness, anxiety, sensory overload or need for space may remain in the background until it becomes impossible to ignore.

Checking in with yourself is a small act of attention. It asks you to include your own experience in the information you use to make decisions. It is not about becoming self-absorbed, analysing every feeling or fixing yourself. It is about noticing accurately enough to choose what might help.

Pause - breathe - notice

- **Pause:** interrupt autopilot for a moment. Put down the next task if you can and notice that you are here.
- **Breathe:** allow your breathing to settle naturally. A slightly longer, comfortable exhale can help some people slow the pace.
- **Body:** scan for tension, pain, hunger, thirst, temperature, restlessness, heaviness or sensory overload.
- **Emotion:** choose the closest word rather than the perfect word. Anxious? Irritated? Lonely? Flat? Sad? Excited? Pressured?
- **Mind:** notice whether thoughts are racing, looping, blank, critical, distracted or stuck.
- **Need:** ask what would make the next hour 5-10% more manageable.

Person-centred self-awareness

Carl Rogers placed great importance on congruence - being able to recognise and relate honestly to our lived experience. When we constantly override what we feel in order to meet expectations, a gap can develop between how we appear and how we actually are.

"The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change." - Carl R. Rogers, On Becoming a Person (1961).

Acceptance here does not mean liking every feeling or staying stuck. It means beginning with what is actually present instead of what you think should be present.

What might your body be trying to tell you?

- Tight jaw, shoulders or chest may signal stress, concentration, pain or prolonged tension.
- A sudden drop in tolerance for sound, touch or conversation can be an early sign of overload.
- Restlessness may mean activation, boredom, anxiety, an unmet movement need or too much sitting.
- Heavy limbs, foggy thinking or irritability can accompany exhaustion, hunger or sustained demand.
- Headaches, digestive discomfort or feeling shaky deserve attention rather than automatically being pushed through.

A check-in is information, not a diagnosis

Physical and emotional sensations can have many causes. If symptoms are new, severe, persistent or worrying, medical assessment may be appropriate. Self-awareness should help you seek the right support, not encourage you to explain everything as stress.

Check In With Your Capacity

Capacity changes

Your capacity is not a fixed character trait. Sleep, illness, pain, hormones, sensory load, grief, conflict, workload, executive-function demands, caring responsibilities and unexpected events can all change how much you can carry on a particular day. A task that was easy yesterday may genuinely cost more today.

Try a 0-10 capacity scale

0-2: I am depleted or in crisis. Reduce demands and prioritise safety, basic needs and support.

3-4: I am running low. Simplify, postpone and protect recovery time.

5-6: I have some capacity but need to pace myself.

7-8: I have reasonable capacity and can engage with more demanding tasks.

9-10: I feel resourced and energised - but I still do not have to spend all of that capacity.

Check in with your needs

- **Physical:** food, water, medication, sleep, movement, warmth, pain relief or medical care.
- **Sensory:** less noise, lower light, different clothing, headphones, movement, pressure, fresh air or a predictable environment.
- **Emotional:** expression, reassurance, privacy, comfort, validation, distraction or time to process.
- **Relational:** company, help, a conversation, body doubling, affection, clearer communication or a boundary.
- **Practical:** information, a plan, fewer tasks, extra time, delegation, money advice, transport or an adjustment.
- **Meaning:** creativity, nature, learning, spirituality, contribution, humour, play or connection with something that matters to you.

Neurodivergent check-ins

Autistic and ADHD people may experience interoceptive differences, meaning internal signals such as hunger, thirst, pain, temperature or emotional activation may be difficult to notice until they become intense. Executive-function demands can also make it hard to translate 'I need something' into an action.

Externalising the check-in can help: use alarms, visual scales, colour-coded cards, a body map, a written menu of needs, prepared sensory tools, regular meal prompts, body doubling or a trusted person asking concrete questions such as 'Have you eaten?' or 'Is the room too noisy?' rather than only 'Are you okay?'

Be kind, not performative

A wellbeing check-in can accidentally become another standard to fail. You do not need to journal beautifully, meditate for thirty minutes or produce a profound insight. Sometimes the most accurate check-in is: 'I am exhausted and I need to stop.' Sometimes it is: 'I am okay today.' Both count.

What can I change right now?

- Lower one demand.
- Move one non-urgent task.
- Eat or drink something suitable.
- Step outside or change sensory input.
- Ask someone for ten minutes of help.
- Stop explaining a boundary repeatedly.
- Choose one task instead of carrying the whole list in your head.
- Give yourself transition time before moving into the next role.

Your personal check-in menu

When I notice...	I can try...
I am tense or wired	_____
I am flat or shut down	_____
I am overloaded	_____
I am lonely	_____
I am exhausted	_____
I cannot think clearly	_____

Reflection, Boundaries & Connection

Check in before you say yes

A useful moment to check in is before agreeing to something. Ask: Do I have the time? Do I have the emotional capacity? What will this yes require me to say no to? Am I agreeing because I want to, because it matters, or because I am afraid of disappointing someone?

Boundaries can be part of self-awareness

Boundaries are not only statements made to other people. They are decisions about what you will participate in, how much access others have to your time and energy, and what you need in order to remain well enough to function. Checking in helps boundaries respond to your real capacity rather than an idealised version of it.

Simple phrases

- "I need to check my capacity before I answer."
- "I can't do that today."
- "I can offer this much, but not the whole thing."
- "I need some quiet before we continue."
- "I want to think about that rather than answer immediately."
- "I need help with this."

Check in with your relationships

Notice not only who you love, but how your nervous system responds around people. Where can you relax? Where do you mask heavily? Who respects a no? Who expects immediate access to you? Who leaves you feeling steadier, and who repeatedly leaves you depleted? This is not about labelling people as good or bad; it is useful relational information.

Check in with what is going well

Self-check-ins should not become a permanent search for problems. Notice pleasure, relief, connection, competence and moments of enoughness too. Ask: What felt easier today? What made me smile? Where did I cope better than I expected? What do I want more of?

Daily five-minute reflection

- What is my body telling me?
- What emotion has been most present today?
- What has taken the most energy?
- What has given me energy or steadiness?
- Have I eaten, hydrated, rested and moved in ways that support me?
- Is there a conversation or boundary I am avoiding?
- What can wait?
- What would kindness towards myself look like this evening?

Weekly pattern spotting

Look back over several check-ins rather than judging a single day. Repeated patterns can show where support is needed: every Monday may be overloaded, certain meetings may drain you, unstructured evenings may increase anxiety, or social plans may need more recovery time around them. Patterns turn vague distress into information you can work with.

When checking in reveals something bigger

Sometimes regular check-ins show that low mood, anxiety, exhaustion, trauma symptoms, alcohol use, eating difficulties, pain or other concerns are persistent rather than temporary. That is useful information. A GP, qualified mental-health professional, specialist service or other appropriate practitioner can help assess what is happening and what support may be suitable.

Your 'this week' plan

One thing I will protect: _____

One demand I can reduce: _____

One person I can be more honest with: _____

One basic need I keep missing: _____

One thing I want more of: _____

My reminder to myself: _____

A Message From Maggie, Reading & Support

A message from Maggie

Checking in with yourself sounds simple, but for many people it is something they have spent years learning not to do. You may have become used to pushing through, keeping everyone else comfortable, ignoring pain, masking what you feel or telling yourself that your needs can wait.

I want this resource to be a reminder that you are allowed to be part of the equation. Your body, emotions, capacity and needs are information. They do not automatically dictate every decision, but they deserve to be heard when you make one.

You do not need to wait for a meltdown, shutdown, panic attack, argument, illness or complete exhaustion before you respond to yourself. The earlier signs matter too. A pause, a meal, a boundary, a message asking for help, ten minutes of quiet or changing one demand can sometimes prevent the pressure from continuing to build.

And please remember that a check-in is not supposed to become another performance. There will be days when you know exactly what you need and days when you have no idea. Curiosity is enough. Start where you are.

Recommended reading

Carl R. Rogers - *On Becoming a Person*. Foundational person-centred writing about acceptance, congruence and psychological growth.

Russ Harris - *The Happiness Trap*. ACT-informed strategies for responding differently to difficult thoughts and feelings while moving towards what matters.

Emily Nagoski & Amelia Nagoski - *Burnout*. Explores stress, emotional exhaustion and the importance of completing the stress response.

Deb Dana - *Anchored*. Accessible polyvagal-informed ideas for noticing nervous-system states and developing cues of safety.

Further support

Useful support may include your GP, NHS mental-health services, talking therapies, a qualified counsellor or psychotherapist, coaching where appropriate, occupational health, workplace reasonable adjustments, neurodivergent-affirming services and condition-specific charities. If you are in immediate danger or experiencing a mental-health or medical emergency, seek urgent help through emergency services.

Clinical notes & references

Rogers, C. R. (1961). *On Becoming a Person*. Houghton Mifflin. • Harris, R. (2019). *The Happiness Trap*, 2nd ed. • Nagoski, E., & Nagoski, A. (2019). *Burnout*. • Dana, D. (2021). *Anchored*. Sounds True. • NICE guidance on common mental-health problems should be used alongside individual assessment where clinically relevant.

Note: This is an educational coaching resource and does not replace individual medical, psychological or emergency care.

Space to Breathe Therapy - Maggie's Coaching