



CHECK-INS AND MOMENTS OF AWARENESS

EXAMPLE OF PRACTICE LAYER - CULTURAL DIMENSION

This is an example from the Findhorn Foundation and Community in Scotland.

In the Findhorn Foundation Community, every workday or meeting starts with a short meditation and check-in. Before starting with their tasks team members meet in a circle and spend a few moments in silence, listening within, noticing how they are, connecting to the larger purpose of their work together, and focusing their intention and awareness on the present moment, the group they are with and the tasks at hand. All team members then share a few words about how they are in that moment, and sometimes about the work they plan to do, and whom they will do it with. When all team members have checked in, the work starts.

The length of the meditation and the check-in depends on the group and its needs, taking from three to thirty minutes.

This practice has two parts that can be used separately.

- Have a minute of silence before you start an activity.
- Focus your attention on the present moment and become aware of your inner state, physically, emotionally, and mentally. It might help to close your eyes. Use your senses to become aware of the group you are with, and the intention for doing what you are doing, individually and together.
- Use some form of a signal, when group members should stop the activity. This can be a bell, a sound, a squeeze of hands, etc. The time can similarly be adjusted to what you feel is right for your group.
- Check-in by quickly sharing with the group how you are in the current moment. This is usually done verbally, but some people also choose a movement, facial expression, sound, etc.

Pay attention and listen mindfully to your team members as they check-in. Let the check-in inform everyone about the state of the team on that day.

IMPACT ON THE INDIVIDUAL LAYER



Incorporating moments of awareness and check-ins into everyday life encourages group members to pause, reflect, connect with the intention and purpose of what they are doing, and openly share their inner state with others. This can support all members' understanding of their own needs and emotions. For many, it also builds trust, empathy, and understanding of the needs of others, and the diversity of experiences present in the group.

Increasing awareness, in turn, supports the group to work together in ways that care for each individual, each other, the group, and the project. However, participating in moments of awareness and check-ins can be challenging, too. One member might have a habit of suppressing her emotions in order to be more efficient at work. Another might be convinced that revealing his inner emotional life will make him a target for attack or ridicule. The third might find it hard to listen to other people's check-ins without taking their words personally. The fourth might think it is a waste of time and that the group should just get on with the work.



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EXAMPLE OF PRACTICE LAYER

Does efficiency have to come at the price of personal connections and nurturing relationships?

Are we more or less capable of working together when we also spend time reflecting and sharing?

Are we valued as individuals only when we present a polished surface, or do we increase our sense of self and value by opening up to others?

All these questions influence how people experience and engage with moments of awareness and check-ins. They also apply directly to collective beliefs or assumptions held by the group.

IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY LAYER



Moments of awareness and check-ins are possible ways to practice communication skills and increase community glue. Practicing awareness and open communication has often proven to be a good early detection system for discontent or conflict within the group. Checking-in can also be an opportunity to celebrate good news together. By doing something together regularly, the group increases the chances of developing a strong identity and group culture, thus contributing to a sense of belonging and continuity.

INTENTIONS THAT INFLUENCE PRACTICE

Moments of awareness and check-ins can be seen as a small everyday ritual. Like all rituals, they function as an enactment and reminder of the worldview and vision that guide the group as a whole. Moments of awareness and check-ins could, for example, reflect an intention to create a group culture where each person's authentic self is considered valuable and welcome, where transparent communication is seen as key to efficient collaboration, community building, and personal growth, where regularly reflecting on personal and collective intentions is encouraged.

THE IMPORTANCE OF STRUCTURE

Some groups prefer if moments of awareness and check-ins happen spontaneously.

However many groups have the experience that check-ins have the greatest impact when they are regular, embraced as an aspect of how people meet, work together or engage in common activities. Making them a regular part of meetings provides a clear framework for personal reflection, open communication, emotional connection, celebration, and strengthening the community glue. All of these provide the ground for organizing work or making decisions in efficient and yet caring ways.

