



Emotional Check-In Challenge

Encourage regular calls to loved ones to strengthen relationships and emotional intelligence

CHALLENGE DESCRIPTION:

Welcome to the Emotional Check-In Challenge! In today's fast-paced world, it's easy to get caught up in the daily grind and overlook the importance of our emotional connections. This challenge is designed to encourage you to make regular, meaningful time for someone you care about. By taking a few moments each week to connect with a loved one, you will not only strengthen your relationships but also enhance your emotional intelligence. These connections provide an opportunity to listen, share, and grow together, fostering deeper understanding and empathy.

Over the next 4 weeks, commit to reaching out and engaging in heartfelt conversations using the tips below.

WHAT IS EMOTIONAL SUPPORT?

Close your eyes and think about a time when you showed support – what were you doing? Were you helping a family member up the stairs or driving them to a doctor's appointment? Maybe you lent your sibling some money while they were in a tight spot? Were you cooking someone dinner or offering a shoulder to cry on?

All these acts of kindness are examples of support. Emotional support is just one category, and it's only recently getting the attention it deserves. Emotional support is a way of showing compassion by listening and acknowledging someone's feelings without judgment.

For some people, emotional support comes naturally, for others, it requires practice. The goal of emotional support is to help your loved ones feel safe in their feelings and more connected. Research has shown that **connection is a powerful driver of health**. Studies have suggested that social support and connection have a significant impact on your wellbeing; from controlling blood sugar levels to improving cancer and heart disease survival and reducing symptoms of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in individuals struggling with their mental health.

EMOTIONAL CHECK-IN

Check in with yourself first

Before reaching out to a loved one to offer support, it's important to reflect on your own emotional wellbeing. Simple questions like – do I have the time and emotional capacity to offer support right now? Do I feel too tired from my day to engage in active listening and be present with my loved one? Do I feel too overwhelmed by my own mental health challenges to be patient and non-judgemental?

There is a reason you're advised to put your own oxygen mask on before helping others when flying. You need to make sure your emotional tank is full before offering support to a loved one.

Ask open-ended questions

When you are reaching out to a loved one to offer support, an open-ended question is a good place to start. Instead of asking questions that can be easily answered with a "yes" or a "no", open ended questions invite further explanation and exploration of someone's feelings.

"How are you doing" or "how can I support you?" are both excellent open-ended questions, but don't be discouraged if they don't evoke a lengthy response. People don't always know what they need or how they are feeling, especially in the midst of a difficult situation. Try to take your open-ended questions one step further by including a more tailored approach:

- You seem a little upset today. Would you like to talk about it?
- I know you've been having a tough time at work. How are you holding up?
- I know you've been extra busy since starting your new job, how are you feeling about your work-life balance?

Let them do the talking

It goes without saying, showing support is not just about asking questions. It's also important to show your loved one that you're really listening to what they have to say. Active listening is an elevated version of normal listening. Show your loved one they have your full and undivided attention by:

- Displaying open body language, like turning your body towards them and keeping your legs and arms uncrossed
- Avoiding distractions like looking at your phone
- Nodding along with their words
- Asking for clarification if you don't understand something
- Summarizing what they've shared to show you understand the situation

Validate

Emotional support is different from other types of support in that people are rarely looking for someone to "fix" their problem. Emotional support hinges on emotional safety – your loved one will feel more open to sharing their feelings if they feel safe to do so. You can boost feelings of emotional safety by validating your loved one's experience. Validation helps your loved one know you really see and understand their perspective. Here are some examples of validating phrases:

- I'm sorry you're dealing with this situation – it must be so painful.
- That sounds so upsetting – I understand why you're feeling so sad right now.
- You have so much on your plate – it's ok to feel overwhelmed.

EMOTIONAL CHECK-IN

Avoid judgement

Remember – emotional support is next to impossible to deliver without emotional safety. And nothing squashes emotional safety like feeling judged. When you are talking to a loved one about a difficult situation, it's important to avoid criticism or offer opinions that may come across as judgemental. When someone is choosing to open up, it's best to deliver support in a sympathetic and compassionate tone void of any disapproval. There will always be another time to share constructive feedback, but in the midst of building an emotionally safe space, comments like “so what made them so mad at you” or “you really do need to work on your delivery” are only going to lead to disconnection and shame.

Skip the advice

Generally speaking, emotional support should be focused on feelings over problem solving. If people are looking for advice on how to fix a problem, they will usually ask for it directly. If you are going to talk through the problem, a better approach is to ask reflective questions that encourage your loved one to find a solution on their own. Examples of this include:

- Have you ever faced a situation like this before? What helped then?
- Is there anything I can do to help you feel better?

If you tend to jump into problem-solving mode when you see a loved one in distress, start by asking a simple clarifying question to understand what kind of support they're looking for. Try something like “Are you looking to talk about your feelings or have me help you find a solution to the problem?”

Remember support isn't one-size fits all

After you've listened and validated your loved one's feelings, further support depends on your relationship and the situation they're facing. Maybe you offer a hug after a difficult conversation, or you hold a loved one's hand during a stressful phone call to help them feel stronger.

Some difficult situations don't have an easy solution, some don't have any solution at all. In these cases the best support may also look like a healthy distraction. Go on a walk, play a game or bake a delicious treat as a fun low-key activity to take their mind away from their stress. Sometimes support can come in the form of a small gesture. If a loved one is going through a difficult time they may not have the capacity to deal with their usual responsibilities. Here are some examples:

- Help with chores like dishes or vacuuming
- Pick up lunch or dinner
- Bring flowers or a favourite snack
- Offer to run an errand

Follow-up

After you've checked in with a loved one to explore a difficult situation, it's important to revisit the topic a few days later to let them know you're still there for support. Even a simple text or call to say “hey, I just wanted to see how you're coping after the other day” can make all the difference. Even if your loved one doesn't feel like talking, it's often better to ask how things are going to let them know you care.

EMOTIONAL CHECK-IN

THE CHALLENGE

Now that you understand more about **what emotional support is** – it’s time to set some goals; write down specific and realistic goals that will anchor your 4-week challenge. Some examples might include:

- Call a loved one once a week for 30 mins-1hour
- Dedicate 2 hours a week to have a meal with a loved one
- Dedicate 15 minutes after spending time with a loved one to notice how you feel – did it improve your emotional wellbeing? Do you feel more connected?

Make note of your plans on the calendar below and stick to the schedule you create over the next 4 weeks.

Your 4-Week Challenge

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6	DAY 7
DAY 8	DAY 9	DAY 10	DAY 11	DAY 12	DAY 13	DAY 14
DAY 15	DAY 16	DAY 17	DAY 18	DAY 19	DAY 20	DAY 21
DAY 22	DAY 23	DAY 24	DAY 25	DAY 26	DAY 27	DAY 28

CHALLENGE COMPLETE!

Over the past 4-weeks, you’ve dedicated time to connect with someone you care about, and in doing so, you’ve strengthened your relationships and enhanced your emotional intelligence. These meaningful moments of listening, sharing, and growing together have fostered deeper understanding and empathy. Congratulations on completing this challenge and making a positive impact on your connections with loved ones! Keep nurturing these relationships and continue to build on the foundation you’ve created.



Congratulations on completing the **Emotional Check-In** Challenge

The journey of wellness is ongoing, and each step, no matter how small, is a victory to be celebrated. Keep pushing forward, embracing each day as an opportunity to live your best life.

