

HOW-TO GUIDE:

HOW TO 'CHECK-IN'

What is self-regulation?

Self-regulation is a core development skill in children. The ability to know and manage feelings and emotions, and respond in situation-appropriate ways are learnt skills that with practice becomes automated. Without a healthy capacity to self-regulate young people resort to reacting, using immature problem solving (e.g. violence) striking out, controlling, acting 'in' or 'out' or remain trapped in their overwhelming emotions.

Morning check-in

After explicitly teaching the 5 Faces process follow the below steps **each morning before school**:

1. Ask students to **identify their emotional state** (this can be done as a group, prior to the start of the class or individually on sheets).
2. Ask students if they **require help or support to feel better: what do they need?**
3. Have students **implement any strategies** or support required **and check** to see if this has worked. Can they use their Smart Brain now (respond appropriately)?






Use a version of the **5 Faces** to provide a visual guide to the steps above. Use the 5 Faces to guide a morning check-in and throughout the day as required. Build empathy by using it to consider the feelings of others. Providing a clear system that is often repeated **encourages self-responsibility for the management of behaviour**. Collectively brain storm with the class **strategies to de-escalate heightened emotions**. These are best when **repeatedly practised**.



Consider the following:

- **Build emotional and feeling literacy:** labelling emotions, noticing the effects of self-regulation on the body, identifying and acknowledging feelings of self and others, understanding feelings and emotions and their influence (linking internal thoughts to feelings and external experiences), and connecting the causal relationships between emotions and thinking. One person's feelings at 1 and another person's feelings might be very different.
- **It is okay to be a 1:** it is natural and normal to feel bad it is what you do when you are a 1 that counts.
- **Brain storm with the class different strategies to support emotional self-management:** create a list and put it on the wall beside the 5 Faces. Have a strategy of the week: e.g. mindfulness, colouring in, journalling, throwing and catching (silent ball), gratitude practices, worry writing etc.
- **Practice strategies to manage heightened emotions and return to a comfortable state:** learning calming techniques, distracting and thinking strategies BEFORE a child is a 1 or 2.
- **Identify personal emotional needs** (reassurance, safety, trust, feeling valued etc.) and support students to productively seek and communicate them.

REBOOT CHECK-IN / STUDENT SUPPORT PROCESS

Student: _____ Date/time: _____


How are you feeling? (circle)	    
	1 2 3 4 5






What Speedbumps or Roadblocks did you face? (triggers)	 _____ _____ _____	 _____ _____ _____
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What do you need to feel better?

Activity?	Support?
<input type="checkbox"/> Colouring in or drawing	<input type="checkbox"/> Help me not react anymore
<input type="checkbox"/> Help someone do a job/task	<input type="checkbox"/> Positive direction or goals
<input type="checkbox"/> Talk about it	<input type="checkbox"/> Help me make more friends and get on with people
<input type="checkbox"/> Phone call home	<input type="checkbox"/> Help me deal with my anxiety/worries in class
<input type="checkbox"/> Food or water	<input type="checkbox"/> Help to understand what happened
<input type="checkbox"/> Sleep	<input type="checkbox"/> Help with things at home/ outside of school
<input type="checkbox"/> Throwing and catching	<input type="checkbox"/> Help with getting centred
<input type="checkbox"/> Play with the pillows/toys etc.	<input type="checkbox"/> Help me build a good relationship with my teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Read a book	<input type="checkbox"/> Help with my school work
<input type="checkbox"/> Listen to music	<input type="checkbox"/> First Aid Room/Sick Bay
<input type="checkbox"/> Organising task (cleaning up, categorising)	<input type="checkbox"/> Help to ignore some people's actions
<input type="checkbox"/> Glitter bottle	<input type="checkbox"/> Proof I can do it

Time?	Something else?
<input type="checkbox"/> Mindfulness practice/ breathing	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Time to chill out	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Count to 10	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> A chance to explain my story	<input type="checkbox"/>

	What Strategies might work next time you hit these Speedbumps or Roadblocks? _____ _____
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How do you feel now? (circle)	    
	1 2 3 4 5

Co-regulation and self-regulation

Create a stress-aware classroom:

- Establish an explicit self-regulation process and use visual cues on the wall. Gain greater student ownership by involving them in the choice of language, symbols and processes used in the classroom.
- Create a morning 'check in' using your classroom self-regulation process. Provide students with a school-based system to debrief or self-care if difficult things are occurring outside of school.
- Have a list of simple activities on your wall and use them as brain breaks or for de-escalation as required. Try breathing activities, mindfulness, quick fun games and brain breaks.
- Explicitly teach about stress, triggers and the impact that past stress and trauma have on perception, behaviours and learning. Also introduce healthy stress management and de-escalation techniques.
- Create the expectation that in this classroom we take responsibility for ourselves because when we don't we hurt others and ourselves. Being able to self-regulate is more rewarding and fun as it makes us feel better about ourselves and we can create harmoniously together.
- Be clear that self-regulation is a learnable skill, like a muscle, and that with more practice they will become more proficient.

Support co-regulation and address the doubts:

- Address the fear that change is not possible: lots of students think that because they have been assigned a few letters from the alphabet (such as ADHD, ODD, OCD, ASD) or because their parents or siblings are a certain way they can't make positive changes. Discuss with them the possibilities, record their improvements in material form and share that with them when they doubt their ability to 'be good'.
- Reassure students (and yourself) that we are not going to get this process right all of the time and that there will be times we react. But with time the capacity to self-regulate with strengthen.
- Provide co-regulation: your posture, tone of voice and attitude to this process are key. Pre-empt student anxiety and disruptive emotions, stand beside the student and in a reassuring and slow voice help identify their feelings and emotions using the 5 Faces. Don't shame, or stand over, or use anger and control as a means to modify behaviour as it does not build individual capacity or the intrinsic motivation to self-regulate.

Create a positive classroom or school culture:

- Work on relationship and sense of belonging. The stronger the trust and relationship the more a student will want to collaborate with you and develop positive behaviour.
- Address shame when debriefing after any incidents and support the young person and other class members to consider self-compassion and compassionate responses. Use the 5 Faces to see where students are at and what they need to feel safe, calm and better after heightened emotions.

TROUBLESHOOTING

What do I do if...

- **The student doesn't want to or refuses to participate:** that is fine. Acknowledging and feeling difficult emotions can be very challenging for people. Especially if they do not yet trust that they are able to manage them. With familiarity and class momentum we find students do join in when they are ready.
- **It is obvious the student isn't telling the truth:** don't challenge the student in public. In an aside conversation let the student know it is up to them how and when they wish to participate but the activity is designed to support and help them. If you have serious concerns about a young person use your in-school processes of referral.
- **The student consistently demonstrates anxiety, panic, rage or confusion:** know your referral pathways to in-school support sources, especially in the case of any disclosure.
- **Students start to pick on each other:** emotions are not rational and can elicit a great deal of fear. Set appropriate boundaries and mutual respect prior to teaching the 5 Faces and create a culture of mutual care and support. Ask any perpetrators (in private) if they are feeling uncomfortable and why they want to feel powerful by making fun of others. We find the 5 Faces changes a classroom culture into a real culture of mutual support, or at least empathy. Use individual processes.
- **Some students show anxiety around morning check-in:** that's okay too as we all have different parts of life that make us feel anxious. Many young people who display anxiety haven't been shown clearly how to manage their 'what if' thinking and fears. The 5 Faces is a chance to show students on a daily basis that it is possible to manage your emotions.
- **Students don't know how they feel:** emotional literacy is a skill that can be taught. Practice builds self-awareness.
- **Some students are trying to impress** other students or the adults in the room. Teachers can model honest answers and explain that there are no correct or 'better' answers. How we feel is influenced by lots of external and internal factors. The feelings themselves are not to be judged, but to be managed proactively.
- **A student has experienced a major life event or loss:** it is **very normal to feel sad** and many other, sometimes conflicting, emotions in the face of loss. The 5 Faces isn't about everyone being happy all the time. It is not a tool of behaviour management by force, rather about creating greater self-responsibility through self-awareness. It is normal to experience grief until time or key concerns are resolved. These moments are excellent opportunities for discussion around empathy and handling very difficult emotions as we are all affected by loss at some point in time.

Different ways to check-in

1. Express

Explain to students that you have a lot to get through this lesson, but you would like to check-in with them to see where they are at and if there is anything you can do to help them if they are a 1 or a 2. Ask students to raise their hand if they are a 1? 2? 3? 4? 5?

Follow up: For students who raise their hands for a 1 or a 2, ask them as individuals later while the lesson is progressing a) what do they need? And b) How can I help? Invite students who do not wish to share in front of the whole class to come and see you after the class is over.

2. 5 Faces Stickers

Distribute 5 Faces stickers to students and have them stick them in school diary. Students are then to open school diary to page with 5 Faces and leave it open on their desk (this can become standard classroom routine). Explain to students that you will walk around the class once the lesson is underway and they are to point to which face they currently are to let you know how they are feeling.

Follow up: Have private conversations with students who indicate they are a 1 or 2 and as a) 'what do you need'? And b) 'is there something I can do to help'?

3. Vote with your feet

Designate an area of the room for each of the 5 Faces. Have students walk to the part of the classroom that corresponds with which Face they currently are.

Follow up: Ask the students who identify as feeling a 1 as a group a) 'what do you need'? And b) 'is there something you can do to help'? Repeat the process for the 2's. For the 3's, 4's and 5's: ask what led them to feel this way, and how you can help them keep feeling this way?

4. Heads down, hands up

Explain to students that sometimes you may not want to share how you are feeling with an entire group of people, and that's okay. Have students put their head down on the desk 'heads down thumbs up style' and hold up with their hand what number they are right now. Take note of students who are at a 1 or a 2.

Follow up: Once the class is running walk around the room to touch base with students who identified as being either a 1 or a 2, ask a) what do you need? And b) what can I do to help?

5. 5 Faces cut-outs

Have placed at the front of the classroom a box/boxes with cut-outs of each of the 5 Faces. Students are to take a cut-out of the number they are currently at. If a student's mood changes during the lesson, they can return their current face and take a new one.

Follow up: Once the class is running walk around the room to touch base with students who identified as being either a 1 or a 2, ask a) what do you need? And b) what can I do to help?

6. Share with a friend

Have students hold up the number of fingers that corresponds to where they are at right now. Have students look around the room and take note of people who are at the same number. Have students walk around the room to find someone the same number (if uneven number then form groups of 3). In pairs/groups students are to share why they are currently at that number, and what they think may make them feel better.

Follow up: Touch base with groups of students at a 1 or a 2, ask a) what do they need? And b) what can you do to help?

7. Pass the ball/pig

Have students stand up. Throw a soft ball/pig to one student at a time. When students receive the ball/pig they are to share what number they are currently at, and (optional) why. They then throw the ball/pig back to you so you can pass it to another student. Once students have had a turn they are to sit back down.

Follow up: Once the class is running walk around the room to touch base with students who identified as being either a 1 or a 2, ask a) what do you need? And b) what can I do to help?

8. Confidential note

Explain to students that not everyone is always comfortable sharing how they feel with large groups, and that is okay. Have students write down what number they are on a small piece of paper and fold over. Once class is running walk around and collect the pieces of paper to see what number students are at.

Follow up: For students who identified as being either a 1 or a 2, ask a) what do you need? And b) what can I do to help?

9. Progressive learning check-ins

After each lesson or piece of learning, have students hold up on their hand what number they would 'rate' that learning experience. Explain to students their rating is not on how 'good' the lesson was, but rather how they felt while learning and how confident they feel in regards to it.

Follow up: Ask students who rated the learning experience a 1 or a 2 a) what they would need to feel better about the learning experience, and b) what can you do to help them feel more confident in their learning next time.

10. Day so far

Model to students describing what your mood has been today so far (i.e. 'I woke up at a 2 because my alarm was very loud, but I went up to a 3 when I ate breakfast...'). Either have students share their day so far with the class, or to the person next to them.

Follow up: Once the class is running walk around the room to touch base with students who identified as being either a 1 or a 2 now or earlier in the day, ask a) what do you need? And b) what can I do to help?

11. Diary check-in

At the beginning of each lesson have students write down in a designated space in their diary what number they are. This allows you to both walk around the room and see where are at for that particular lesson, but also allows you to see when a student is at a 1 or 2 for an extended period of time.

Follow up: Touch base with students who identify they are at a 1 or a 2 and ask a) what do you need? And b) what can I do to help? For students who are frequently at a 1 or 2 consider engaging them in a more extended conversation or checking in on them more frequently.

12. Positive and negative triggers

Model to the students the process of identifying something that always (or usually) makes you a 1 (i.e. peak-hour traffic), and what always makes you a 5 (i.e. quality time with family). Have students find a partner in the room and share what always make them a 1 or a 5. Ask for volunteers to share their responses with the class.

13. Check-in buddy

Have students pair up (ideally someone they usually sit next to or near). Explain to students that this person is going to be their 'check-in buddy'. At the beginning each class there will be time for you to have a 2-minute chat to this person to share what number you are at, and why you are feeling that way.

14. Walk around check-in

Once class is running walk around the room approach individual students and ask them where they are at. Students can share by either by holding up fingers or pointing to their 5 Faces wristband.

Follow up: For students who identified as being either a 1 or a 2, ask a) what do you need? And b) what can I do to help?

15. Tennis ball check-in

Pass a tennis ball around the room. Students are to bounce the tennis ball the number of times that corresponds to where they are at (i.e. 3 bounces if you are a 3).

Follow up: For students who identified as being either a 1 or a 2, ask a) what do you need? And b) what can I do to help?

16. Whiteboard check-in

Have columns on the side of the white board for each of the 5 Faces. As they walk into the room students are to write down their name in the column that they are at.

Follow up: Once the class is running walk around the room to touch base with students who identified as being either a 1 or a 2 now or earlier in the day, ask a) what do you need? And b) what can I do to help?

17. Express verbal check-in

Have students verbally share where they are at on their way into the classroom. Students who are a 1 or 2 (sincerely) can take a minute to engage in some approved self-regulation activities before they start the class.

Follow up: Students who share that they are a 1 or a 2, as they enter ask them a) what do you need? And b) what can I do to help?

18. Equation check-in (Maths class)

Have students share where they are at as a maths equation (i.e. a student at a 4 may answers 2×2).

Follow up: For students who identify as being either a 1 or a 2, ask a) what do you need? And b) what can I do to help?

19. Syllables check-in (English class)

Have students share what number they are by saying a word with the number of syllables that corresponds to where they are at (i.e. students at a 2 may say 'hello').

Follow up: For students who identify as being either a 1 or a 2, ask a) what do you need? And b) what can I do to help?