



## Check-In Cheat Sheet

Most counselors start group with a check in of some kind. This is a good practice because it helps everyone in the group to give a basic status report which can set the tone for the rest of the group, whatever the topic may be. It is even a good idea to do a check in during individual therapy as well as the counselor can use the check in period to review progress toward treatment plan goals and objectives.

A **standard check in** a substance use treatment program (with rolling admission and new members regularly) may consist of something like this:

- 1) **What is your name?**
- 2) **Why are you here? (Why are you in this program – what brought you here?)**
- 3) **What was/were your substances of choice?**
- 4) **Have you used anything since last session – If so, what?**
- 5) **Briefly, how are you today? (Include any coexisting issues current being worked on in group as well as any co-occurring mental health symptoms or disorders if applicable)**

A lot of counselors like to add an item **6)** to this list which would be a thought-provoking ice breaker question of some kind. The purpose would be to get the group ready for sharing and expressing personal views, thoughts and feelings. Below is an extensive list of ice breaker questions that you, as a counselor/clinician or group leader, can choose from to add in an icebreaker to the check in:

What is one thing that you are grateful for today?

What is one goal that you have for this program today?

What is one thing (not substance related) that you do for fun?

What is one of your best memories of the last week?

How do you create more balance in your life?

What is one thing that is going right for you right now?

If you could go one place anywhere on earth this weekend for free where would you go?

What is one lesson you will never forget?

What is your favorite food?

What is your favorite color?

Who can you look for to get support in your life right now?

Who is one thing about one person that you would like to imitate in your life?

Who is one person, alive or dead, famous or not, who you find to be inspiring?

What is one thing from childhood that is a positive lesson that you would pass on to others?

Who is one person you love and why?

If you could wish something good to happen to one person today who would it be?

What is one thing that keeps you going every day?

If you could be famous for something what would you choose?

In what way are you different than most people?

What is one thing that you can say good about yourself today?

What is one positive thought that you can share with the group today?

What animal are you like and why?

If you could witness one past event firsthand which one would you pick?

If you could change one thing about yourself what would you pick?

If you could change one thing about the world what would you choose?

Who or what is something you would label as “amazing” and why?

What is one thing that will be happening in your life when you feel like you are on your way to achieving your goals

What is one thing that you feel like you deserve?

What is one thing you feel like you could give up and never look back?



What is one aspect of inner beauty in your opinion  
What is something that gets you energized emotionally in a positive way  
If you had the time and resources for one year to work on any project, what would you pick?  
What is a simple thing that makes you happy?  
What is one thing in the last week that made you smile?  
You get to choose one unhealthy food and make it healthy which one does you choose?  
What is one thing that you have learned in life about relationships?  
What is one thing that you are unusually good at?  
What is one thing that others may find boring, but you find interesting?  
What is one thing that you feel like more people should know about?  
If you ruled the world for one day, what is one thing that you would do?  
What is a line in a book, movie, or song that you really like?  
What is one of your favorite sayings? (Even if you don't know it word for word – paraphrase)  
Who or what do you feel like helps you feel inner strength?  
What is one thing you do when you feel you need courage?  
Where is one place that you can go to feel good for a little while every now and then?  
What is one thing that you find to be good, that doesn't cost anything?  
What is one act of kindness you have done for someone?  
What is one act of kindness from your past that you won't ever forget?  
If you could know the definite answer to one of life's mysteries which one would you choose?  
What is one thing that is worth the time and effort to you?  
What is one thing that you could explain to others like an expert (or close to it)  
What is a fact that you know that a lot of people do not?  
Who is one of the most interesting people you have ever met?  
What is one thing in life that you consider to be a "treat"  
Who is one person who has been loyal in your life?  
What is something that you have been doing for most of your life?  
Who is your longest friendship?  
What is one unusual positive thing that you experienced?  
What is one experience you had which you would consider "a win"  
What is one amazing idea you have had in your life (even if you never did anything about it)  
What is a well-kept secret in this world?  
What is one place that you know so well you could just about map it out from memory?  
What is one of the most peaceful non drug related experiences you have ever had?  
What is something you are proud to have let go of?  
What is one (appropriate to discuss) thing that you like to think about when you daydream?  
What is one memory that you still can laugh about?  
Who is the most successful person you know personally and why?  
What is one short story of bravery that stands out to you?  
What helps you to keep from quitting?  
What is one thing that you find to be amusing?  
Who or what is something or someone you have compassion for?  
If you had just a little more courage, what would you try?  
What is one of the best decisions you have ever made?  
What is something creative you have done?  
What is one area of focus for you in life right now?  
Who or what is something/someone you have faith in?  
What makes someone a good person in your opinion?  
What is one thing you have no problem being honest about?  
What is one thing from your imagination you are willing to share?  
Who is someone who has been kind to you in your life?  
What is one thing that you are passionate about?  
What is one thing you would describe as "powerful"?  
What is one practical tip that can help someone get through a tough week?  
What is one thing you have done that was romantic?



What is an area that you are very understanding about?  
What makes someone tough in your opinion?  
What is something witty you can share with the group?  
What is one adventure you would like to go one?  
Who or what is something you find it easy to have affection for?  
What is a situation that you have a lot of empathy for?  
What is something some did for you that was generous?  
What is one invention this world needs?  
What is something sensible you have heard in your life?  
What is something that you would describe as awesome?  
After a job interview, what is one positive person the interviewer should say about you?  
What brings you joy?  
What is adorable to you and what is deplorable?  
What is one thing that you are confident that you could say from the heart?  
Who or what has been a positive influence in your life?  
How have you been a positive influence on someone else?  
How do you relax?  
What is something small that you appreciate?  
What is one area of life that you have organized?  
What is a topic you enjoy discussing (and why)?  
What is one quality that you have that could make you a leader?  
What is one area you feel self-confidence about?  
What is something that you are a lot better at now than you used to be?  
What is something that you achieved that you may not have believed you would when you were younger?  
How are you still like yourself when you were a child?  
What is one area which you have grown or matured in?  
What is one thing you have seen that you would describe as beautiful?  
What brings you comfort?  
What is one thing you are curious about?  
What is worth fighting for in life?  
What brings harmony to people's lives?  
What is one thing you are motivated about today?  
What is one thing that helps you be resilient?  
If there was one app you could invent to make your life easier what would it be?  
If someone made a movie of your life, what would they call it?  
What is one thing that you want to know more about?  
What are three words that describe you?  
What is one thing that you strive to do on a daily basis?  
What is one way that past failure was a learning experience for you?  
How can you still find happiness even when you are bored or lonely?  
What is something unique about you?  
When are you happiest?  
What is a recent accomplishment you've experienced?  
What are three qualities of successful people in your opinion?  
Besides luck, why do people succeed, what are some of the difference makers?  
How would you describe your attitude toward why you are here?  
What is an example in your life where you have refused to quit?  
What are three things on your bucket list?  
What are three habits that would improve your life?  
What does a good relationship look like to you?  
What is one thing worth waiting for?  
What is one of your favorite memories?  
What is your favorite thing about being you?  
What would be your idea of paradise?  
Why does love mean nothing to a tennis player?



Fill in the blank options:

It's time to quit when \_\_\_\_  
It would be a dream come true if \_\_\_\_  
The day I find out \_\_\_\_ is when I will finally \_\_\_\_  
If I only could \_\_\_\_ a little better, then I would finally \_\_\_\_  
The key to being able to \_\_\_\_ is to first learn not to \_\_\_\_  
I have heard them say that \_\_\_\_ is true, but if you ask me, I would say \_\_\_\_  
The only thing better than \_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_  
More people would be friendly if \_\_\_\_  
People could say I am versatile because I can do \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_  
People would say I am a hard worker if they could see me \_\_\_\_  
My intuition often tells me \_\_\_\_ but still I end up \_\_\_\_  
Sometimes I \_\_\_\_ just to \_\_\_\_  
I want to say thank you to \_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_  
I feel that I don't judge others for \_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_  
People can depend on me for \_\_\_\_  
One area of life that I am decisive is \_\_\_\_  
I am determined not to \_\_\_\_ at this point in my life  
One thing that I need to get through today is \_\_\_\_  
If I had the time and the money, I would \_\_\_\_  
I would much rather \_\_\_\_ once than \_\_\_\_ a dozen times  
You will know I have made it finally when I \_\_\_\_  
If I could build up the courage, I would \_\_\_\_

Rating Scale Check in Options -

➤ **START WITH:** "Using a scale of 0 to 10" ...

How would you rate your current overall progress?  
How satisfied are you right now with where you are in life?  
How important is sobriety to you right now?  
How confident that you will one day realize your goals?  
How likely are you to successfully complete this program?  
How good of a day are you expecting to have today in this program?  
How would you rate how your morning went so far?  
How excited are you for the weekend, any why?  
How easily influenced are you by others?  
How strong of a person do you feel you are?  
What was the strongest love you ever felt?  
How focused on success are you right now in your life?  
How important is it to you that you get regular exercise?  
How creative are you?  
How motivated are you at this point in your life?  
How important to you is it to be self-aware?  
How productive have you been this week?  
How comfortable are you with your life?  
How patient of a person are you?  
How much do you need the internet?  
How good is your imagination?  
How positive is your attitude?  
How dedicated are you at this point in life?  
How resilient of a person are you?  
How hard of an effort do you put in on most days?  
Where are you in "the process"?



**Feelings** – Some clinicians like to do a feelings check in as part of the overall check in process. One of the challenges is that often group participants answer the question “How are you feeling?” with **thoughts** rather than actual **feeling words**. Some clinicians use a feeling chart for this. Below is a brief feeling list based on some of the common reactions that group members may have to the check in question – **How are you feeling?** To use the chart, substitute the phrase in bold at the top of each box with a feeling word below it

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>“I’m OK/fine/pretty good” ...</b></p> <p>Calm Relaxed Content “Chill” Composed Peaceful Interested Focused Glad Upbeat</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>“Not so good”</b></p> <p>Worried Stressed Annoyed Irritated Disappointed Sensitive Anxious Frustrated Upset Lonely</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>“I’m good”</b></p> <p>Satisfied Pleased Happy Grateful Enthusiastic Confident Interested Proud Relieved Amused Happy</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>“Bad”</b></p> <p>Depressed Sad Hurt Sensitive Hopeless Discouraged Angry Overwhelmed Guilty Lonely Disgusted</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>“Great”</b></p> <p>Excited Ecstatic Hopeful Joyful Optimistic Inspired Motivated Successful Valued Positive Thrilled Wonderful Appreciative Elated</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>“I don’t know”</b></p> <p>Insecure Confused Vulnerable Isolated Disconnected Numb Withdrawn Afraid Hesitant Troubled Out of control Unsure Indecisive Shy</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>OTHER</u></b></p> <p>Eager Shocked Curious Empowered Serious Jolly Surprised Amazed Respected</p> <p>Jealous Pessimistic Embarrassed Remorseful Resentful Cautious Vulnerable Disillusioned Apathetic</p>	



**Integrated Check In** - The following information may not apply to your program now but perhaps in one day will. Programs that are including medical care along with substance use and mental health care require a **fully integrated check in process** that accounts for medical and physical healthcare in addition to mental health and substance use (behavioral healthcare). Programs such as Certified Behavioral Healthcare Clinics (CCBHC) follow this fully integrated model of care.

The future of the behavioral health field is moving toward **integration** of mental health, substance use and physical health issues being addressed throughout all episodes of care. Some agencies have made more progress than others when it comes to integrating services. If as a clinician, you want to be on the cutting edge of this field it makes sense to start working toward viewing health in an integrative manner with your consumers. After all, mental health, substance use and physical health are all important and interrelated when it comes to the overall health and well-being of our consumers. One basic way to start practicing integration as a clinician is to use an **integrated check in**. Rather than just asking about substance use in substance use programs, it is important to be comfortable asking about a consumer's mental and physical health as well. The following is a basic guideline for practicing an integrated check in during groups & counseling sessions.

Substance Use	Mental Health	Physical/Medical
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you used any substances?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What has been a challenge for you? (regarding substance use/relapse)</li> <li>○ What has been working for you?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are you feeling?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What struggles have you experienced? (mentally/emotionally)</li> <li>○ What coping skills have helped you mentally?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How's your health been?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What do you need to work on or improve? (Health related symptoms/concerns)</li> <li>○ What are you doing to stay healthy?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *MEDICATION –               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Have you been seeing your doctor/prescriber?</li> <li>○ Have you been taking MAT as prescribed?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *MEDICATION –               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Have you been seeing your doctor/prescriber?</li> <li>○ Have you been taking psych meds as prescribed?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MEDICATION –               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Have you been seeing your doctor/prescriber?</li> <li>○ Have you been taking health related meds as prescribed?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

\*MEDICATION has been put in a separate box because asking about medication would depend upon the nature of the program for a group setting. Clinicians should get in the habit of asking about medication in individual therapy. In groups it would depend upon the type of group. For example, if it was more of a weekly educational group then asking about medication may not be appropriate in group especially if the consumers do not have a close rapport. However, in programs like IOP or residential programs where consumers are working closely together several hours per week or more, then asking about medication should be part of the program.

**When to probe further:** The chart below lists some issues to watch closely as a clinician during the check in process. If any of these or any other risk or safety issues are present, it is advised to follow up with the consumer to further assess for immediate risk or potential danger to self or others:

Substance Use	Mental Health	Physical/Medical
Risk factors – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overdose</li> <li>• Hazardous use</li> <li>• Progression to more serious substances</li> <li>• Adverse reactions</li> <li>• Arrests/serious consequences</li> <li>• Current withdrawal or intoxication</li> </ul>	Risk Factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suicidal or homicidal ideations</li> <li>• Hallucinations</li> <li>• Delusions</li> <li>• Violence</li> <li>• Aggression</li> <li>• Abuse Potential</li> <li>• Serious impulsivity or mood instability</li> </ul>	Risk factors – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty breathing</li> <li>• Chest pain</li> <li>• Sudden numbness or weakness</li> <li>• Wound/injury not properly cared for</li> <li>• Intense localized abdominal pain</li> <li>• Coughing or vomiting blood</li> <li>• MORE – <a href="#">NIH click link</a></li> </ul>
MEDICATION – risk factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nonadherence to meds</li> <li>• Serious side effects</li> <li>• Adverse reactions</li> <li>• Out of meds/running out</li> </ul>	MEDICATION – risk factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nonadherence to meds</li> <li>• Serious side effects</li> <li>• Adverse reactions</li> <li>• Out of meds/running out</li> </ul>	MEDICATION - risk factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nonadherence to meds</li> <li>• Serious side effects</li> <li>• Adverse reactions</li> <li>• Out of meds/running out</li> </ul>