

How to Guide: Check-In & Check-Outs



Learn It, Lead It!

Integrating Art-Based Practice
in Settlement and Healthcare



Access Alliance
Multicultural Health and Community Services

Check-In & Check-Out Activities

Art-based practices encourage imagination and offer alternative ways to build rapport with participants by fostering trust and safety through multiple forms of expression. This document serves as a starting point for creative “check-in” and “check-out” activities that can be used to open and close any program session or group gathering.

Objectives of the Activities:

- Support the development of a therapeutic relationship between staff and community members.
- Help participants attune to and activate their five senses.
- Offer new ways to express thoughts and feelings non-verbally.
- Open and close sessions with creativity, reflection, and imagination.
- Be easily integrated into existing service provider practices.
- Be adapted or modified to meet participants’ needs, abilities, and capacities.

Check-In Activities

Activity	Instructions
Name Gesture	Invite participants to introduce themselves by expressing their name through a gesture using their hands or entire body. In a group format, ask the group to mirror each participant’s gesture while saying their name aloud. Repeat the gesture twice before moving on, continuing until all participants have had a turn.
Melodies of Mood	Invite participants to express themselves by playing a melody on the tong drum (or whatever instrument your agency has) that reflects their current mood or how they are showing up in the session. They do not need to explain their choice. Encourage participants to listen intentionally to others, focus on their breathing, and notice how the melodies make them feel. Pass the tong drum around circle for each participant to play their own personal melody.
Rhythm Together	Provide each participant with a rhythm stick or another sound-making instrument. Start by demonstrating a simple rhythm and ask participants to follow along. Then, invite participants one by one to create their own rhythm for the group to mimic. Continue around the circle until every participant has had a chance to lead and share their rhythm.
Dance Ribbons	Provide the participants with 1 -2 dance ribbons or scarf. Activity options: a. Gesture: Create a gesture and everyone mimic the gesture back b. Parade: Walk around the session space pretending they are birds in the sky c. Mirroring: Participants break into pairs and take turns mirroring one another’s actions Question Prompts: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• how do these gesture feel in your body?• what is your body needing?• where is their tension or ease in your body?

Check-In Activities

Activity	Instructions
Group Sigh	<p>Invite participants to breathe together, following the facilitator and one another.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take three deep breaths together • Shrug your shoulders up, then drop your shoulders and exhale • Bring your arms up half-way, then drop your arms and exhale louder • Raise your arms as high as you can, then drop your arms and exhale loudly
Nature Stretches	<p>Guide participants through nature-inspired stretches. Examples: Crouch down like a seed, reach upward like a growing tree, stand tall like a sunflower, spread out like a bird. Invite participants to make their own nature-inspired stretch.</p>

Check Out Activities

Activity	Instructions
One Word or Sentence	<p>In a circle formation, ask participants to share one word or sentence responding to the following prompt. Facilitators can use words or sentence as feedback if documented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the sensation in your body? • What is a take away or learning? • How did this session make your feel?
Collective Poem	<p>Participants are given a pen and strip of paper to respond to the above reflective prompts. Once complete, they take turns reading aloud and placing at centre of the group. When all papers are in the centre, a volunteer are ask to read the “poem” aloud to the group.</p>
Talking Objects	<p>Gather objects from around the room. Place objects accessible to all participants. Invite participants to choose an object that best responds to the question prompt.</p> <p>Example prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What object describes your mood? you talent? • What object represents you? safety? Why? • What object represents someone you trust? • Invite participants to share 1 - 2 min. about their objects and why they chose it based on prompt.

NOTE: Check-In activities can be used as check out activities by changing the prompt questions. Remember have fun in the process! Want to share more, contact: arts@accessalliance.ca