

# Group Application – Starting Each Session

**Learning Objective:** This is a helpful guide for how to start each group application module. The recommendation is that each group begin with a check in, and brief reminder of the definition of CBT.

## Part 1: The Check In

Purpose: Participants will each have an opportunity to speak about what they are thinking and how they are feeling, guided by the program's core emotions as outlined in the curriculum. The check-in helps participants to become aware of their feelings and provides a place to practice sharing emotions in a healthy way. Open sharing gives permission for other participants to share – thus creating a safe space through shared experience, grounding participants to the program.

## Part 2: How to “Check in”, the Facilitator Script:

- “Today we’re going to learn how to ‘Check in.’ As humans, we often need to pause before moving on to the next thing in our lives. Check-ins are a way to pause, a way to ‘check in’ about how I’m feeling, a way to be kind to myself.
- Before we begin the activity or lesson for each group, everyone in the group is going to “Check-In.”
- A check-in is simple, anyone can start but for the first few groups I will start.
- When the first person is done checking in, the person to their left will check in until we go around the whole group.
- To check-in, start by saying ‘My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I’m checking in.’
- Then tell the group how you’re feeling today using P.I.E.S. – physically, intellectually, emotionally, spiritually.

Physically – how does my body feel? (tired, sore, energetic)

Intellectually – what’s on my mind, what I’m thinking about?

Emotionally – what emotions am I feeling right now? (happy, sad, mad, afraid, ashamed)

Spiritually – what am I connected to that is greater than myself?

- When you’re done checking in, say ‘I’m in.’
- After you say, ‘I’m in’, we’ll all say ‘Safe’ which will let everyone know that we heard their check-in and that what they said is safe in the circle (you can also add the persons’ name after saying safe, for example, “Safe, Michael”).
- Respect is important during check-ins; only one person checks in at a time, no crosstalk (advice, laughing), no gossiping, be honest. If someone is checking in and you have felt something similar to them before, or right now, just raise your hand silently to let them know you’re with them.
- P.I.E.S. check-ins are the type of check-ins we’ll use for most of our groups, but sometimes we’ll switch into different forms, but we’ll learn those together when we get there.

Check ins can be done in many ways. Use the following examples for shorter check ins:

- High/low – What was the best thing that happened this week, what was the hardest thing that happened this week
- Rose/Bud/Thorn – Name the best thing that happened this week, something you are looking forward to, and the hardest part of the week.
- Name a feeling – happy, mad, sad, afraid, ashamed
- One word check in – Just use one word to describe your current state as you sit in this group.

## Part 3: Beginning Check ins

Begin Check-Ins by modeling for the participants. Be authentic and remember to follow guidelines for appropriate self-disclosure. Speak slowly and model thoughtful reflection. The participants might be tempted to rush through the check-in with one-word answers (“I’m okay”, “I’m good”) or copy the answers of their peers. Probe where appropriate,

especially as they get used to the P.I.E.S. check-in process throughout the program. Coach each participant through the process as they struggle to remember and define each word of P.I.E.S.

#### **Part 4: Group Agreements**

The groups of people we spend time with help to define who we are. In this program, we'll be working to find our inner voice. It's hard to learn how to be an adult, how to figure out which paths to follow. It was really hard for me (and I'm still learning). This is a special time we'll have together. This program isn't going to tell you how to be an adult, or what values you should have, or what to do - you're going to define that for yourself. You get to choose to share."

When we meet as a group, we'll follow 4 basic guidelines:

1. Have fun
2. Respect everyone in the circle
3. Challenge yourself
4. What is said here, stays in here.

Is there anyone in the group who cannot agree to these four guidelines?

We'll work together to uphold these agreements, and if they are broken, we'll address it here in the group (peace circle).

#### **Part 5: CBT**

In this program we use CBT. CBT stands for Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Don't let the long name scare you:

- Cognitive means thoughts
- Behavioral means actions
- Therapy means a way to help ourselves

[Draw the CBT Triangle on a board if possible]

Our thoughts affect how we feel and what we do. Like a chain reaction: Bad situation → Negative thought → Feel awful → React badly. But we can break this chain. Think of your thoughts like TV channels. Sometimes they play negative shows, but you have the remote control - you can change the channel.