

WORDS FOR WHEN YOU NEED THEM

CHECKING IN ON A FRIEND

- Hey, I just wanted to check in and see how you've been going lately. You've been on my mind and I hope you're doing okay.
- Hi, I know life can get really busy and complicated sometimes, so I just wanted to check in and see how things have been for you recently. If you ever want to talk about anything, big or small, I'm here.
- Hi, I know we haven't talked much recently but I just wanted to reach out and see how you're going.
- Hi, I know sometimes it can be hard to reach out when things feel difficult, so I just wanted to send a message and check in with you.
- Hi, I just wanted to send a little message to check in. You matter to me and I care about how you're doing.
- Hey, I've been meaning to check in with you. I hope things have been going okay, but if they haven't, I'm always here to listen.

LETTING SOMEONE KNOW YOU'RE STRUGGLING

- Hey, I just wanted to let you know I've been having a bit of a tough time lately. If you have the capacity at some point, I'd really appreciate a chat.
- Hi, I just wanted to be honest and say I've been struggling a bit recently. If you're up for talking sometime, I'd really value that.
- Hey, I just wanted to let you know I've been finding things a bit hard lately. No pressure to respond — I just thought it might help for someone to know.
- Hi, I wanted to let you know I've been having a bit of a difficult time recently, which is why I might have been a little quieter than usual.
- Hey, I just wanted to reach out and say I've been struggling a little lately. If you have the space for a chat sometime, that would mean a lot.
- Hi, I just wanted to let you know I've been going through a bit of a hard patch lately. You don't need to fix anything — I just wanted someone I trust to be aware.

RESPONDING TO CONCERNED FRIENDS

- Hey, thank you for checking in. Things have been a bit tough lately, but it really means a lot that you reached out.
- Hey, I really appreciate you checking in. I've been having a bit of a hard time lately and it would actually be nice to talk if you have the space.
- Thank you for checking in on me, that really means a lot. I've been going through a bit recently but I'm taking things one step at a time.
- Hey, thank you for reaching out and checking in. I really appreciate it. I'm not quite ready to talk about everything yet, but it means a lot that you thought of me.
- Hey, I just wanted to say thank you for checking in. Your message really meant a lot and made me feel a little less alone today.
- Hi, I just wanted to say thank you for your message. Things are a bit heavy for me right now, but I'll respond properly when I have a bit more space.

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OFFERING HELP

- Hey, I just wanted to check in and see if there's anything I could do to help you out this week. I have some capacity, so if there's anything small or big that would help, I'd be happy to.
- Hey, I have some free time today and could come over or hang out if you want company, even if it's just sitting in the same room / studying together / doing our own things side by side.
- Hi, I have some time this afternoon — would it help if I [meal prep, do dishes, go shopping, water the garden, etc.]? Totally fine if not, just wanted to offer.
- Hi, I was wondering if it would help if I [action, e.g., did some groceries for you / helped with laundry / kept you company]. Totally fine if not — just thought I'd offer.
- Hi, I could come by for a bit and just sit with you while we each do our own thing — study, work, or just hang out. I can do this for an hour or so, but I wanted to see if that would be helpful.
- Hey, I wanted to check if there's anything you'd like support with this week. I'm happy to help with small tasks, errands, or just being there, I'll keep an eye on my capacity :)

WAYS TO OFFER HELP

Offering help can be really meaningful, even in small ways. Focus on specific, manageable actions that fit your energy, and be honest about your limits. Give the other person space to accept or decline, so your support is caring without overextending yourself.

Chores / errands

- Grocery shopping with or for them
- Running other errands
- Picking up prescriptions or essentials
- Laundry / folding / ironing
- Cleaning a room / tidying up
- Washing dishes
- Taking out trash / recycling
- Watering the garden
- Pet care (feeding, walking, litter box)

Companionship / presence

- Parallel play / study
- Body doubling (working side by side)
- Sitting together / hanging out
- Staying over for company or support
- Going for a walk / gentle exercise
- Driving / accompanying to an appointment
- Attending a low-key event together (movie, class, online)
- Gentle conversation / check-in calls
- Encouraging journaling or creative activity together
- Sitting outside or in nature together

Self-care & rest

- Napping together
- Encouraging or doing a self-care activity together
- Guided relaxation / meditation
- Listening to music or audiobooks together
- Doing a calming hobby side by side (drawing, knitting, puzzles)
- Distraction / watching a show, listening to music, playing games

Food / nourishment

- Meal prep / cooking together
- Eating a meal together
- Bringing snacks or drinks
- Baking or preparing small treats together
- Grocery bag unpacking / fridge organisation

Other practical supports

- Help with organising tasks or planning
- Light administrative support (emails, scheduling)
- Reminders for appointments or tasks
- Helping research or find resources (online or local)
- Light tech support (setting up apps, online forms)

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COMMUNICATING NEEDS & BOUNDARIES

- I'm not able to [attend/participate/respond] today — thanks for understanding.
- I wanted to let you know that I'm feeling a bit overwhelmed and need some quiet time. It's nothing personal — I just need to focus on myself right now.
- I need to set a boundary around [topic/situation], so I won't be able to [action]. I hope that's okay — I just need to take care of myself.
- I'm feeling a bit overwhelmed, so I might need help with [specific task]. I wanted to let you know ahead of time.
- I want to be present, but I'm only able to [specific action or timeframe] right now.
- Things are a bit heavy for me at the moment, so I may not respond quickly. I'll reach out when I can.

EXAMPLES OF NEEDS & BOUNDARIES

It's okay to have boundaries and express your needs — this helps protect your energy and allows others to support you in ways that actually help. You don't need to over-explain; simply stating what works for you is enough.

Personal time & energy

- Alone time / quiet time
- Limits on texting, calls, or social media
- Maximum number of social engagements per week
- Scheduled breaks for self-care or rest
- "Do not disturb" periods for focus or recovery

Emotional needs

- Safe space to express feelings without judgement
- Requests for reassurance or validation
- Not being pressured to share before ready
- Not discussing certain topics that are triggering
- Being listened to without advice or solutions unless requested

Physical / sensory boundaries

- Personal space (distance, hugs, touch)
- Limits on physical activity or exposure to crowds
- Noise/light sensitivity considerations
- Specific environment needs (temperature, seating, quiet spaces)

Communication boundaries

- Preferred times/methods of communication (text vs call)
- Response time expectations (e.g., "I'll reply when I can")
- Topics that are off-limits
- Limits on how often someone checks in or messages

Social boundaries

- Declining invitations without needing to explain
- Saying no to group events or outings
- Choosing who to spend time with
- Limits on social media interactions (viewing, posting, commenting)

Task / responsibility boundaries

- Requests for help or delegation of tasks
- Limits on taking on others' responsibilities
- Clarifying availability for favors or support
- Asking for breaks from obligations (work, study, volunteering)

Health & recovery boundaries

- Food or meal boundaries (e.g., not discussing diet, following ED recovery rules)
- Medication or treatment boundaries (e.g., reminders, discussions)
- Sleep or rest requirements
- Therapy or mental health appointment needs

Digital / tech boundaries

- Limits on screen time or app use
- Notifications management (muting, do-not-disturb)
- Not sharing private content without permission
- Limiting online interactions that feel draining

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SAYING NO

It's completely okay to say no — doing so is an important way to protect your energy, maintain your boundaries, and take care of yourself. You don't need to over-explain or justify your choice; a polite, clear response is enough. Saying no doesn't mean you don't care — it just means you're prioritising your wellbeing, and you can still suggest alternatives or future plans if you want.

- Hey, I won't be able to [attend/participate] this time — thanks for understanding.
- Hi, I need to say no to [plan/task] this time. I hope it goes well, and I appreciate you thinking of me.
- Hi, I won't be able to [attend/participate] this time. I just wanted to let you know so you can plan without me — thanks for understanding.
- Hi, I'm really swamped with [work/study/other responsibilities] and can't make it to [plan], but I'd love to get together when things calm down a bit.
- Hi, I can't make it to [event/plan], but I'd love to catch up another time or chat later this week instead.
- Hey, I'm going to have to pass on [plan/task] — I need some time to rest and focus on myself.
- Hi, I can't make it on [day] because I'm working / busy, but I'd love to catch up another time — maybe [alternative day or plan]?
- Hey, I won't be able to [attend/participate] this time. I'd still really like to catch up soon — can we plan something next week?

PULLING OUT OF PLANS

It's okay to change your mind or cancel plans, even after agreeing to them. Your wellbeing comes first, and giving yourself permission to step back is an important part of self-care. Being honest, polite, and clear lets others know your decision without guilt — you don't need to over-explain.

- Hey, I'm really sorry, but I won't be able to make it to [plan] today. I'm feeling overwhelmed and need to focus on my mental health. I hope you understand.
- Hi, I wanted to let you know I can't make it to [plan] — I just don't have the capacity today. I hope we can reschedule soon.
- Hey, I'm so sorry to change plans last minute, but I need to pull out of [plan]. Thanks for understanding — I really appreciate it.
- Hi, I won't be able to make it to [plan]. I'm sorry for the short notice and hope that's okay.
- Hey, I can't make it to [plan] today. Would you like to [reschedule / catch up another time]?
- Hey, I know I said I'd come, but I'm just not feeling up to it today. I hope that's okay — I'd love to see you another time soon.
- Hi, I'm really sorry, but I won't be able to make it to [event] as planned. Something's come up, and I need to take care of myself. I hope you understand, and I'd love to catch up another time.
- Hi, I wanted to let you know I won't be able to take on [task / meeting] this week. I'm currently at capacity and need to focus on my other commitments. I'm happy to contribute in a smaller way or help reschedule if that works.

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CALLING OUT OF WORK SICK

Your health matters — both mental and physical reasons are valid for taking a day off. Feeling overwhelmed, exhausted, or struggling with mental health is just as legitimate as having a physical illness. Taking the time you need to rest and recover helps you show up more fully later and is an important part of caring for yourself.

- Hi [Manager], I'm not feeling well today and won't be able to come in. Thanks for understanding.
- Hey [Manager], I'm feeling under the weather and won't be able to make it in today. Sorry for the short notice, and thanks for understanding.
- Dear [Manager], I'm feeling unwell and need to take a sick day. I'll ensure any pending tasks are covered or rescheduled. Thank you for your understanding.
- Hi [Manager], I'm feeling unwell and need to take a sick day. I'll check emails / messages if urgent. Thanks for understanding.
- Hi [Manager], I'm unwell today and won't be able to work. I'll keep you updated if I need additional time off. Thanks for your understanding.
- Hi [Manager], I'm not feeling well today and need to take a sick day. Thank you for understanding — I'll be back tomorrow / when I'm feeling better.

Tips for sending sick day messages:

- Keep it brief and polite; no need for medical detail.
- State clearly that you won't be in.
- Offer minimal follow-up if appropriate (catch up later, remote availability if possible).
- Send as early as you can to give your team time to adjust.

RESCHEDULING PLANS / WORK

- Hi [Name], I need to reschedule our [appointment/plan]. Would [alternative date/time] work for you?
- Hey [Name], something's come up and I can't make our [plan/appointment]. Are you free to meet on [alternative date/time] instead?
- Hey, I need to postpone our [appointment/plan] — I'm not feeling up to it today. Would [alternative date/time] work for you instead?
- Hi [Name], I'm really sorry, but I need to move our [plan/appointment]. I wasn't expecting [reason, e.g., my schedule/energy] to be this tight. I hope we can find another time soon that works for both of us.
- Dear [Name], I'm unable to attend our scheduled [meeting/appointment] on [date]. Could we reschedule to [alternative date/time] at your convenience? Thank you for your understanding.
- Hey [Name], sorry for the inconvenience — I need to postpone our [plan/appointment] due to [reason, e.g., scheduling conflicts / needing a mental health break]. Would [alternative date/time] work for you?

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ASKING FOR HELP

- Hey, I could really use some help with [task]. Would you be able to [specific action]?
- Hey, I'm struggling a little with [task/situation] and thought of you. Would you have the capacity to [specific help]?
- I'm trying to find support for [specific need] — do you know of any resources or people I could reach out to?
- I'm finding [task/situation] a bit hard at the moment. Would you be able to [option A] or [option B]? Totally okay if not.
- I'm feeling stuck and could use your perspective. Would you be able to give me feedback on [situation / thoughts]?
- Hey, I've been feeling a bit off lately. Could we make some time to chat when you have the capacity?
- I could really use someone to listen. Would you have some time to talk or sit with me soon?
- I'm feeling a little overwhelmed today. Would you be able to sit with me or just hang out while I process things?
- Hey, I know you might be busy, but I could really use some help with [task]. Only if you have the capacity.
- Hi [Clinician], I hope you're doing well. I'm wondering if it would be possible to schedule an extra session this week — I've been struggling with [general issue / feelings] and feel it would help to check in sooner.

WHEN YOU NEED IMMEDIATE HELP

- Hey, I'm really struggling and need support right now. Can you come or talk with me?
- I need someone to sit with me / talk on the phone / help me calm down. Can you come?
- I'm feeling unsafe / overwhelmed and need support right now — can you help?
- Hey, I'm in a really hard spot and feeling unsafe. I could really use someone to just be with me / sit with me / help me get through this right now. I've already reached out to crisis supports, but I really need a familiar face.
- Hi [Name], I'm not feeling safe / I need urgent medical help and need to get to the hospital. Could you please drive me there?
- I know this is sudden, but I really need support right now. Could you be there or talk with me?
- I don't feel safe / okay right now and need support immediately. Please respond if you can.
- I'm feeling [panic/anxious/unsafe/etc.] and need help immediately. Can you check in with me when you see this?
- I'm struggling a lot and need help immediately. I've contacted my therapist / Lifeline but could really use someone physically with me or on the phone. Can you come or call me right now?
- Hey [Name], I'm struggling a bit and need to talk. Could you call me as soon as you can? I'd really appreciate it.

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ASKING SOMEONE TO CHANGE THE TOPIC

- Can we switch topics? How's [different topic] going?
- That topic's a bit heavy for me — tell me about [different topic] instead.
- Oh, that's interesting! Speaking of [related but safe topic], have you seen/heard/done [something else]?
- Haha, that's one way to put it! By the way, did you hear about [fun or neutral topic]?
- Hmm, that's a thought. You know, I've been meaning to ask you about [topic they care about / neutral] — I'd love your opinion.
- I'm not comfortable discussing that. Let's move on.
- That conversation isn't okay for me. Let's talk about something else.
- That reminds me of something — actually, have you ever [experience/story]?
- Interesting point. Speaking of things I've been up to, I've been trying [hobby / activity] lately — have you tried anything new recently?
- Interesting! How's [something in their life / work / hobby] been lately?

RESPONDING TO UNHELPFUL COMMENTS

- I know you might not mean it this way, but comments like that can be a bit stigmatising. I'd really prefer to talk about something else right now.
- I know it might seem casual, but that kind of comment can be triggering. Can we shift the conversation to something else?
- I'm not comfortable discussing mental health like that. Let's move on — I'd love to hear about [neutral/safe topic] instead.
- Diet culture comments can be really triggering for me. I'd appreciate it if we could avoid discussing food, weight, or appearance. Let's focus on something else instead.
- Mental health struggles aren't a joke. Let's shift the conversation.
- That comment isn't helpful for me. Let's move on.
- I understand you might not realize it, but those kinds of remarks can feel hurtful. Could we change the topic for a bit?
- I know you might not mean harm, but comments about food or weight can be really triggering for me. I'd prefer if we could talk about something else for now.
- I know you might be joking, but diet or body comments aren't something I want to engage with. Let's talk about something else for now.
- I'm not comfortable discussing food, weight, or body in that way. Please don't.
- I understand you might not be aware, but those kinds of jokes or comments can be really hard for people who've struggled with mental health issues. For me personally, it hits close to home. I'd really appreciate if we could focus on something else for now.