



Starting Difficult Conversations on Race

Angela Kariotis | *Writer, Teacher, Performing Artist*

**Now that we
know better,
we can
do better.**

**Get comfortable
with being
uncomfortable.**

Tips on “checking in”

Inspired by Dynasti Hunt

Stop this: “How are you doing?”

Truthfully, a lot of us don’t know how we are doing. There is quite a bit to unpack and translating emotion is hard, especially when several people are asking the same question.

Try this: “Thinking of you”

Simply say you are thinking of us. Acknowledge that you see what is happening and are showing support. Take the burden off by saying a reply back is not needed.

Stop this: “I am sorry”

Your sympathy is appreciated but the use of apologies isn’t necessary unless you have done harm to the person in question. It also puts a burden back on the person and creates an expectation of a response.

Try this: “I stand with you”

Your acknowledgement and support is enough. Similar to the first box, your check-in can be simple. If you do apologize, remember to take the burden off by saying a reply back isn’t needed.

Stop this: “What can I do?”

The short answer could be a request to join in the fight against inequality, but it’s not always a question your colleagues/friends may want to answer. Remember, a lot of us don’t know how we feel or what, if anything, we need.

Try this: Research!

If you’d like to learn more about what you can do to help the fight for reform, start your own research, understand the history, and get involved with communities/coalitions supporting the cause.

Checking in with a text:

DON'T SAY: How are you doing?

DO SAY: Thinking of you.

DON'T SAY: I am sorry.

DO SAY: I stand with you.

DON'T SAY: What can I do?

DO SAY: What can I help you fight for?

Chit chat:

**Intention does not
supersede impact.**

How to ethically check on Black people during this uprising

by Lauraberth Lima

The #BlackLivesMatter uprising has led to an increase of awareness among many communities and a subsequent rise of Black emotional labor. Here are some general tips for non-Black people who want to ethically check in on Black loved ones and colleagues during this uprising.

Assume we are not okay

Rather than asking “how are you,” let your loved one or colleague know you are here for them. Ask if they have the capacity to talk. Consider asking “what would support look like to you?” Support will look different for everyone.

Don't ask Black people for anything

Since we are intersectionally overwhelmed during this pandemic and uprising, now is not the time to ask us for resources, favors, emotional labor, or unpaid labor – especially that which you can do on your own. Allies will educate themselves.

Hold space rather than centering yourself

Do not emotionally dump on your Black loved ones or colleagues. While White people are processing their privilege (which is necessary), this is not for Black people to guide you through or process. If it is a close friend or comrade, ask for consent before sharing.

Don't change the subject

If a Black person trusts you to open up, do not diminish their reality or experiences. Do not express toxic positivity by moving onto lighter conversations for your comfort.

Consider your solidarity

Don't be surprised if a Black loved one or colleague asks how you are responding to this movement. Trust is built through accountability. Be prepared to share what you are doing to contribute to Black liberation.

Calling UP

“I think we all want a world where Black people feel safe. Where they have just as much access to opportunity. So what can we do together?”

Calling IN

“You know, I used to think the same way you did. But I know you care about people. And I want you to hear why I believe differently now.”

Calling OUT

“You know, this is unacceptable, and this is why.”

- 1 Step One:** Identify bias.
- 2 Step Two:** Decide to address the situation.
- 3 Step Three:** Take action.

Calling OUT

- When we need to let someone know that their words or actions are unacceptable and will not be tolerated
- When we need to interrupt in order to prevent further harm
- Will likely feel hard and uncomfortable, but necessary
- Allows us to hit the “pause” button and break the momentum

“I don’t find that funny. Tell me why that’s funny to you.”

“It sounded like you just said _____. Is that really what you meant?”

“I feel obligated to tell you, that wasn’t ok.”

Calling IN

- When we are seeking to understand or learn more
- When we want to help imagine different perspectives, possibilities, or outcomes
- Provides for multiple perspectives and encourages paradigm shifts
- Focused on reflection, not reaction

“How might the impact of your words/actions differ from your intent?”

“Why do you think that is the case? Why do you believe that to be true?”

“How might someone else see this differently? Is it possible that someone might misinterpret your words/actions?”

“As your friend, I would hate for you to accidentally say that again without knowing how it comes across.”



4

Step Four

Continue the conversation.

SOURCES:

“Tips on Checking-In”: an infographic by Dynasti Hunt. Follow @DynastiHunt on Instagram.

“How to Ethically Check in With Black People During the Uprising”: an infographic by Lauraberth Lima. Follow @LauraberthLima on Instagram.

“So You Want to Talk About Race” a NYTimes best-selling book written by Ijeoma Oluo.

Interrupting Bias, Seed the Way, Adapted from Oregon Center for Educational Equity: What Did You Just Say? Responses to Racist Comments Collected from the Field.

“Steps to Being an Active Bystander” by Lena Tenney.