

We are going to start our day with introductions based on the work of Dr. Robert Cooper. In his book “Executive EQ” Dr. Cooper talks about the importance of this form of check in. As he traveled the country, he noticed that what would often happen is that leaders, whether they were executives, supervisors or managers, would often start a meeting just by jumping into the meeting and the agenda. Many of them would often arrive just in time for the meeting and jump right into business.

From an emotional intelligence standpoint, this is not a good approach because it doesn’t give anyone an opportunity to assess how resourceful and available they are.

The method Dr. Cooper utilized in his smaller training programs is called Numeric Empathy.

Numeric empathy is about calibrating. It is about assessing your current state. This is an emotional intelligence tool and we are going to begin our day today with this tool and actually practice it. Emotional Intelligence equates to being resourceful and available. So write those two words on the page next to the words empathy check in - resourceful and available. One aspect of emotional intelligence is being aware of yourself and another is being aware of others’ emotional states.

The idea of numeric empathy is that it allows the leader to check in and find out what’s going on with the people in the room to see how resourceful and available they are. When this is done, two things happen. One, the leader of the meeting has a sense of what everybody is bringing to the table in terms of resourcefulness and availability. Secondly, the people up their level of resourcefulness and availability simply by assessing themselves. A reason many leaders do not use these types of tools when they open up a meeting is usually because they do not want to hear a story from each person about what happened in the last 48 hours regarding what is going on or has gone on in their lives. If you just simply say “How are you doing”, you can hear lots of stories and before you know it, the allotted time for the meeting is over and nothing has been accomplished. The process of using a numeric check allows people to check in very quickly without having to tell any stories.

Now if you are going to use this tool of course you’ll need to teach your team about it. Tell them a little bit about why you use it, where it came from and how it works. Of importance in a numeric check in is that people need to be honest. If their personal assessment would result in a check in of a 2 or a 3 then they need to check in at a 2 or a 3. You would rather have them check in honestly so you know that they are not at the top of their game then not have them tell you the truth about it. If they do check in low then you do nothing about that other than notice it. You don’t ask questions, you don’t ask for a background story, etc. Perhaps after the meeting what you might do is check with that person and say, “I noticed that you checked in at a 3 this morning and I just wanted to find out do you need anything? Do you want to tell me a little bit about what is going on? Were you able to track everything that was going on in the meeting?”

We do this kind of a check in when we get on the phone with someone. We often start our conversations with “How are you doing?” We do a little back and forth rapport building exchange to find out how each other is doing before we get into the conversation. You may have experienced that when asking somebody that question only to find out that they are not doing very well. Based on that assessment you decided that now is not the time to have the conversation you were about to have because they are not resourceful and available enough to deal with it.

This morning we are going to use Dr. Cooper’s three digit check in. In some instances you may choose to use a single digit check in. In either case, the premise is that you want people to assess how they are doing.

If the tool is used on an on-going basis people will expect that when they come into a meeting they are going to be asked to do a quick numeric empathy check in – single digit numeric figure on a scale of one to ten or a three digit like we are going to do here today - they know that they are going to have to assess themselves. Subconsciously on their way to the meeting they are already formulating their check in even if they don’t realize that they are doing so because of the ritual expectation that there will be a “check-in” at the beginning of the meeting.

So it’s a very valuable tool to teach emotional awareness to everybody.

When we are walking through the office or throughout the plant somewhere and we pass someone we might say something like “Hey, how ya doin’?” however today, it is often very brisk without even a pause. We don’t stop for a response. So we’re not really connecting with people. And yet it is in our nature to want that connection – it is part of a core human need to have connection with other people. This is also about slowing down enough to make an initial connection at the beginning of a meeting.

When we ask “How are you doing?” and wait for the answer, we are assessing their state, the condition of their presence, before our conversation occurs.

Now from me as a leader of the meeting, what I want to hear from your check-ins is just how present and available you are. That gives me lots of information. It tells me what you are bringing to the class. If you’re distracted by other things that are going on, if you’re not feeling well or whatever, it will show up in your numbers. And that will help me be a little more on alert for what’s happening with the people in the class.

The three areas for check-in are Energy, Openness and Focus.

Energy and physiology. How is the body doing? Are you alert? Awake? Ready to go? Healthy? Strong? If so, that would be a ten. If you’re still asleep waiting for the caffeine to kick in and you can hardly keep your eyes open – that might be a one. If you have a cold, you don’t feel very well or didn’t get much sleep last night because something happened at home or something of similar nature you might check in at a 2 or a 3. So

right now, check in with your body, your energy physiology. What is your number? Write it down on your sheet.

The second area we are checking in about is attitude and openness. How open are you to being here today? In the adult learning classroom, we essentially have three kinds of learners.

There are the people we call the adventurers. These are the people who absolutely love to learn. They go to every class they possibly can because they really like to be in that type of environment and engage their minds and that sort of thing. They will go to classes on their own time – on their own dime – because they love learning. They read a lot of books or listen to audio books. They are just constantly absorbing information. That would be a ten.

Then we have the vacationers. Those are the people who go to a class because they have to do at least one class a year according to a development plan and so they chose this one. Perhaps because there is some money in the training budget, I can still get paid to go to this class, hang out for a day and not have to work the way I usually do. That would be about a five.

Finally, in some cases we have the folks who are prisoners. Those are the people who are in a class because someone said to them you need to fix your skills in this area and are told you *have* to go to this class. The boss may have decided you need better people skills and you were told to go to this class. The prisoners are here reluctantly. They are not sure they want to be here or are not really into all this stuff. That might be a one.

I've actually had some people check in at a minus two or a three because they *really* don't want to be there!

What is your number for openness and attitude? Please write it down.

The third area is focus and presence. How available are you to be totally here now? Not distracted, not worried about what's going on back at the plant or back at the office or back at home, whatever. But totally here, present at the class, not worried about the big meeting this afternoon that you are not going to be at or whatever the case might be. This area is about your ability to be in the here and now. Human beings don't spend a whole lot of time in the here and now. We frequently spend time in the past, anxious over what has happened, worried about the effects of what's happened, regretting things that have happened or obsessing over something that has happened. We think about the future worried about what we need to do, the phone calls we need to return on the break, the emails we need to check at lunchtime or the meeting that is going on without us. So if you are fully here – nothing is distracting you – that would be a ten. If there is a distraction, the number starts going down until zero where the body is here but the brain is not. What's your number?

When you share your numbers, there is no need to explain.