

The Five-Minute Team Check-In

A meeting opener for teams under pressure, with a PAUSE card to keep.

WHY USE IT

Meetings often start at full speed. This opener gives people a minute to arrive, a simple way to say how they are, and a shared habit for the moments when pressure builds. It takes five minutes and needs no preparation beyond reading this guide.

It works for any team, in person or on video. Use the same prompt for a few weeks before changing it, so people have time to get used to it.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- **Participation is a choice.**
Anyone can keep their eyes open, breathe normally, pass on a prompt or sit out any step.
- **Keep the breathing easy.**
Natural, relaxed breaths only. No breath holds, and nothing fast or forced.
- **Skip step 1 if it does not suit.**
If anyone has a medical condition that affects breathing, they can skip step 1 and join from step 2.
- **Go first, and keep it short.**
If you lead, your own answer sets the tone. One honest sentence is plenty.

Five minutes, four steps

1

Arrive 1 minute

Invite everyone to settle, with feet on the floor and shoulders loose. Take three easy breaths, letting each out-breath be a little longer than the in-breath. Eyes open or closed, as people prefer.

2

Notice 1 minute

In silence, each person asks themselves: Where is my attention right now? What is my body telling me? What is my pace this week?

3

Name it 2 minutes

Each person offers one word or one short phrase in answer to the week's prompt, or passes. No discussion, no fixing. A simple thank you is the only response.

4

Close 1 minute

The lead names one thing the team will try in this meeting, such as pausing before replying or asking one question before offering an answer. Then move to the agenda.

PROMPTS FOR STEP 3: CHOOSE ONE EACH WEEK

Stress	What is taking up the most room in my head today?
Emotional intelligence	One word for how I am arriving, and one thing that would help me contribute.
Creative thinking	One question I would like fresh thinking on this week.

TIPS FOR THE LEAD

- Same time each week, so it becomes a habit rather than an event.
- Rotate who leads once the team is comfortable.
- If a prompt falls flat, change the prompt, not the format.
- If someone shares something heavy, thank them and offer a conversation afterwards.

THE PAUSE CARD | CUT OUT, PIN UP OR SHARE

PAUSE

Five questions for a moment that needs a considered response.

P

Perceive

What is happening right now?

A

Acknowledge

What am I noticing in myself?

U

Understand

What might be influencing my response, and what does this situation need?

S

Select

What response would be useful here?

E

Engage

Take the step and notice what follows.

USE IT

Before a difficult conversation. After feedback. When your attention is scattered or a decision feels rushed.

Sometimes the right response is to act at once. PAUSE is for creating choice, not for slowing down every interaction.

WHEN YOU NEED A STEADIER STATE

Three easy breaths, with each out-breath a little longer than the in-breath. Stop if it does not feel comfortable.

Want your team to practise this together? Workshops and partnerships are available.