



What to say to check in after a hard day

Cut out the card along the dashed line (6 by about 4 inches). Say one line, then stop and listen. Use your own words when they come.

Checking in after a hard day

1. Phones away first. Say it out loud.
2. Ask: "How was today, really?"
3. Offer timing: "Eat first, or talk now?"
4. Both had a bad day? Take turns, no contest.
5. Follow up the next morning.

All the lines, and when to use them

Rough one here. I'll be home by 6:30, and I might need a few minutes before I'm human. (A text on your way home after your own bad day. It warns your partner so your quiet does not land as being about them.)

Phone's in the drawer. How was today, really? (Once you are both home. Putting the phone away out loud signals that you are actually available, and "really" invites more than "fine.")

Want to eat first and talk after, or get it off your chest now? (They walk in visibly drained. Giving a choice about timing respects that some people need food or quiet before words.)

What was the worst part, and was there any part that was okay? (They have said it was bad but nothing more. Two specific questions are easier to answer than an open "what happened?")

I had a hard one too. Can we each get ten minutes to tell it, and then do something easy together? (Both of you are depleted. Taking turns prevents the evening from becoming a contest over whose day was worse.)

I'm not ready to talk about it yet. It's not you. Can you just sit with me for a bit? (You are the one who had the hard day and do not want questions. Saying so keeps your partner from feeling shut out.)

Anything from today you're still carrying that you'd like to set down before we sleep? (Before bed, if the day never got talked through. It gives one last opening without pressure.)

How are you feeling about going back in today, after yesterday? (The next morning. Following up shows you remembered, which is often what makes a check-in feel real.)

Phrases to avoid

"How was your day?" (while looking at your phone): The words invite talk but the screen says you are not really there. Most people answer "fine" and stop.

"At least you have a job.": Perspective offered too early sounds like a request to stop complaining, and it ends the conversation.

"My day was worse.": It turns the check-in into a competition. Take turns instead.

"Why are you in such a mood?": It treats their tiredness as an attitude problem aimed at you, and makes them defend their mood instead of describing their day.

If you are afraid of your partner, scripts are not the answer: call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or text START to 88788. In danger, call 911.