

Andy C.: Hi everybody, uh, my name is Andy Chrisenger. I'm the Director of Coaching here at Reboot and I'm here with my colleague, Chris VandenBrink.

Chris V.: Everybody my name is Chris Vanderbrink and I'm a coach and facilitator here at Reboot.

Andy C.: Before we get started, um, Chris, do you wanna do a check in?

Chris V.: I would love to do a check in.

Andy C.: All right. How are you doing today?

Chris V.: Yeah. I would say I am yellow, but with a few green dots and the yellow is, um, is that today, and actually the last couple days with everything that's been going on with COVID-19 and... I've just been noticing that there's some days I wake up anxious and I don't have a place to put it. Um, every other day, or not always, but often, I'll also wake up feeling really rejuvenated and- and green, but today, for whatever reason, I'm just a little bit anxious. Um, and then I've got some green dots because, we had a- I had a meeting earlier this morning that was just super fun and- and I'm excited to do this call here as well, so that's how I'm doing.

Andy C.: Awesome. Thanks for sharing that, definitely resonate with a lot of what you just shared.

Chris V.: Yeah, and how are you?

Andy C.: I've been probably in the yellow with dips into red over the last week, but for some reason today, I woke up feeling really, uh, really up and encouraged. I think I have sense of why it was last night after I finished with work and after we had diner as a family, I went out back and jumped on the trampoline with the kids-

Chris V.: (laughs)

Andy C.: And my oldest daughter said, "Daddy, you're acting like a kid and I really love it." I think I realized in that moment how much I needed to be laughing and playing right now and just connecting with the kids, like, that was just good for my soul. And so, I woke up this morning, I don't know, just things, the sky seems a little bluer, (laughs) you know, things seem a little brighter. And I don't know how long that will last, it may just be for a day, but for now, I'm appreciative of it, so I'd say I'm as close to green as I've been in the last couple weeks.

Chris V.: Can I change my answer to just a little bit more towards green now after hearing that?

Andy C.: Absolutely, yeah.

Chris V.: (laughs)

Andy C.: (laughs) I'm glad to hear that. Well, thank you for doing that, and, uh, so the reason why we came together to do this call today and to record this short session was actually to

demonstrate the process that Chris and I just went through together. So what we did is something that we call a check-in, and we use the particular format that we- that we use, that we've adapted called "Red-Yellow-Green," and we'll talk about what those colors mean in just a moment. But we wanted to share this, uh, with you all now for a particular reason. It- this is the kind of tool that is valuable anytime, but particularly where we find ourselves right now, operating in collaboration with our teams.

So Chris, I thought maybe what we could start is just talk a little bit about, why share this tool now, why is it so relevant in this moment of time we find ourselves in?

Chris V.: Yeah, absolutely. So one of the things we'll talk about as to what it is, starting with a check-in is a really great way in order- that- that helps us context shift from one context to another.

Andy C.: Mmm.

Chris V.: So oftentimes, we can come into a meeting, and there's thi- there's other things that have been going on for us throughout the day, right? And all of a sudden, we find ourselves, a lot of ourselves, in completely different contexts from where we were before.

Andy C.: Mmm.

Chris V.: This is to say a lot of us are working from home now, whereas before we were in the office-

Andy C.: Mmm.

Chris V.: ... and having this ability to share, not only what you've been doing, but how you're feeling as you're doing it, can be incredibly important. And the reason we're doing this now is because we all find ourselves in completely uncharted territory.

Andy C.: Mmm, yeah, yeah. Yeah, so, um, you know, just to build on that a little bit, even before the COVID-19 situation was upon us, many of us were living busy lives, busy work days, we're blowing in and out of meetings, you know, switching contexts, uh, rapidly. And- and the- a- a meeting check-in, when we s- step into a, you know, a new session with a new group of people, to get a particular objective accomplished together, like we do with meetings, it can be supportive even in- in- in those times to slow down and ask each other, "How are you doing?"

Chris V.: Yeah.

Andy C.: "Let's just have a brief check-in, and then we can all be present and address whatever the purpose is of this meeting." But how much more so now, when every meeting that we're in, there is this big elephant with us in the room, the virtual room, so to speak-

Chris V.: Hmm.

Andy C.: ... which is this unprecedented situation that we all find ourselves in. And if we don't acknowledge that, its presence will still be there (laughs) and it will- its presence will still make itself felt. It'll just be that we're not acknowledging all the ways that it's impacting how we're showing up.

Chris V.: Yeah.

Andy C.: And so then as you were- as you were saying, our- our presence, our minds, are- are divided between what we're trying to get accomplished in this moment and the reality of all that's happening outside of work in the world.

Chris V.: Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. And I- it ma- makes me even think, you know, there is a very strong reason to do this now, the why now, but it's also something that we could be doing, and probably should be doing, all the time. Like, it-

Andy C.: Yeah. Yeah, same more about that.

Chris V.: Well, I feel like, and I heard you say this a while ago actually, that we often jump into meetings or jump into new gatherings acontextually-

Andy C.: Mmm, mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chris V.: ... right? Where we assume that the content is all that is needed to drive the meeting forward without knowledge of where everyone else is coming from.

Andy C.: Right, yep.

Chris V.: And especially to what you said, this elephant in the room with COVID-19, it becomes really important to recognize that people are carrying more than just the content into their- into these meetings, right?

Andy C.: Right. Right.

Chris V.: Caring more of who they are as humans. And so, why now is because there's a huge elephant in the room and why not all the time is because we're always bringing parts of ourselves that useful to share with others.

Andy C.: Absolutely, yeah. And- and when we fail to recognize that, and we just, you know, blow into a meeting and try to get down to business, we end up treating each other in transactional ways, you know, where we- we- we assume that, like you said, the content of- is all that matters, we're not meeting each other as human beings, we're meeting each other as means to an end, and- and we- and we really don't get the best out of our collaboration when we're interacting in those ways.

Chris V.: Yeah. Yeah. It- yeah.

Andy C.: So let's talk about, uh, this particular method of checking in that we call "Red, yellow, green," and Chris, would you take us through this methodology, how does it work? What do the colors mean?

Chris V.: (laughs) I would be gla-

Andy C.: Just walk us through it. Yeah.

Chris V.: So as you can probably infer, the "Red, yellow, green" comes from a stoplight metaphor, right?

Andy C.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chris V.: Where each color signifies a different state or stance that perhaps we're coming into the meeting, or into our- our check-in with, and green, often, we associate with feeling present, or resourced, or having had, uh, a bevy of good experiences recently that are just making us feel really good in the moment-

Andy C.: Mmm.

Chris V.: ... right?

Andy C.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chris V.: Yellow might be somewhere where we're a- we're here, but we're also distracted, right?

Andy C.: Right.

Chris V.: And it could be distracted based on something that's going on in our life, or something that's going on in the world, like right now-

Andy C.: Mmm.

Chris V.: ... and it kinda signals to people that you are here, but there's this other thing that would be helpful for me to tell you so that you know.

Andy C.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chris V.: And then red is, "I'm triggered," right? "And something that has gone on for me, in my life, is really star- is really affecting how I'm showing up today, and so even though I may appear distracted, nervous, it doesn't have anything to do with you, but this is what I'm bringing to this meeting."

Andy C.: Mmm. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chris V.: Right?

Andy C.: Yep.

Chris V.: And, I'll say, we can get creative with this as well. Doesn't have to be a- a mono-block of color. It can get, uh, in between, lime green, or orange, if you're between red and yellow. And that just goes a long way to helping people understand that it's not just one state, but many states that you're coming in with.

Andy C.: Yeah, like you checked in a- just a bit ago-

Chris V.: Yeah, like today.

Andy C.: ... yellow with green dots, right?

Andy C.: Yeah. Yep. So the color serves as a bit of a short-hand, uh, to help people understand how we're doing emotionally and where we're at. And, like you said, we can get creative with the colors. And this can happen pretty quickly, right? It doesn't have to- we don't have to share a whole back story. It can be very simple. But even just sharing a little bit lets the people that we're meeting with know that if I'm yellow, or even if I'm red, uh, it's not necessarily because of what's happening in this room right now. But when we don't say that-

Chris V.: Yeah.

Andy C.: ... all of our mirror neurons are firing, and- and, uh, it- it- we can often create stories in our minds that, "Hey, my colleague is showing up agitated. It must be about me, or this situation, or the project that we're working on-"

Chris V.: Yeah.

Andy C.: ... maybe- maybe, but often that's not the case.

Chris V.: Often it's not. And giving other people in the room the opportunity to not make it about them is actually a gift.

Andy C.: Yeah, (laughs) absolutely, absolutely.

Chris V.: And a- as a quick build, it also behooves us to check in with ourselves so that we know how we're doing, and really settle into our bodies, uh, as we embark in this next endeavor, whether it's a meeting or whatever the case may be.

Andy C.: Yeah, great point. In- in that sense, a check-in is a bit of a mindfulness practice, isn't it?

Chris V.: Yeah.

Andy C.: It's noticing and naming where we are, which is valuable for us and valuable for our colleagues. And in keeping with the mindfulness principle of noticing and naming

without judgment, it's also important to say here that there's no value judgment associated with these colors, right? So the goal is not to show up green. The goal-

Chris V.: Yeah.

Andy C.: ... or- or to avoid showing up as red. The goal is simply to notice and name with authenticity where you are. And we don't have to try to fix each other, or move each other from red to green-

Chris V.: Yeah.

Andy C.: ... although knowing that a colleague is in the red, it can be helpful to just ask a follow-up question. "Hey, I recognize that you're triggered right now. Is there anything you need in order to- to be here?" Or it could also be the sort of thing where you recognize, "What we were hoping to accomplish today is probably not gonna get done when half of us are in a triggered state. So what might it look like to re-group and come back, and address this at a different time when we're feeling more resourced?" But it's not, uh, the kinda thing where anyone needs to feel shame for being yellow or red, or- there's no value judgment associated with the colors, right?

Chris V.: Absolutely not. And- and actually, the invitation to share as much or as little as you would like, and share it honestly, is where a lot of the value is derived-

Andy C.: Absolutely.

Chris V.: ... right?

Andy C.: Yeah.

Chris V.: I- in the sharing honestly, then we can correlate the experience that we're seeing to the one we're feeling, and calm ourselves down and calm those around us down.

Andy.: Absolutely. Yup. And r- self-regulation and collective regulation is really important right now-

Chris V.: Yeah.

Andy C.: ... uh, for teams and, uh, as we're trying to- to get work done and respond to the- the different challenges that this- this, uh, COVID-19 situation is presenting for our organizations. Uh, so maybe let's close with this. If I'm a leader out there, I'm listening to this, and I say, "Hey, I'd love to bring this into my team culture, and our rhythms together. Uh, how- how might I do that?"

Chris V.: Yeah, really good question. The answer is, a lot of different ways.

Andy C.: Hmm.

Chris V.: So we've had clients do this in their organizations as a precursor to every meeting that they do-

Andy C.: Yup.

Chris V.: ... or they-

Andy C.: That's what we do at Reboot.

Andy C.: Yup.

Chris V.: That's what we do at Reboot. And the time that we- we take is dependent on what we're trying to accomplish that day or in that meeting-

Andy C.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chris V.: ... so sometimes the whole meeting is just for the purpose of check-ins.

Andy C.: Yup.

Chris V.: And you could make an argument that in this time, having meetings just for that can be a really beneficial way to build resilience and to build understanding in your organization.

Andy C.: Yeah.

Chris V.: Right? All the way to, just really quick check-ins, where you have an opportunity just to say, "Here's how- here's how I'm checking in. I don't really wanna go into why, but here's where I'm at, but I still wanna move through this meeting and get some stuff done."

Andy C.: Yup.

Andy C.: Yeah, I would say, sometimes, uh, leaders will- will, say, come to a boot camp, where they're exposed to regular check-ins, and they'll want to take this back to their teams, and they'll try, but then the team kind of rejects it. Or- or it just doesn't take hold, you know, it doesn't have to be a negative thing, it just doesn't seem to resonate for folks. And what I say in those cases is, you might just start in your one-on-ones. Try this out before you dive into your agenda in one-on-ones.

Chris V.: Oh, that's a great idea.

Andy C.: And just- just begin to set the tone in those smaller meetings before bringing this into larger meetings. And also re- remember that "Red, yellow, green" is just one format. There are all sorts of different formats that you might use, uh, and- and you can find one that works with the culture of your organization. Um, uh, sometimes, you know, I'm trying to think of other formats that I've seen companies use.

Uh, there's one that's maybe even a l- uh, a- a little bit more on the- on- on, you know, further down the touchy-feely spectrum, which is people start meetings with, "If you really knew me-"

Chris V.: Mmm.

Andy C: ... and they would- they'll say something. Maybe a little bit more on the conservative side, it might be something like, um, "Uh, just sharing one thing that I'm grateful for related to our- our team collaboration over the last week." Or, you know-

Chris V: Yeah.

Andy C: ... like, sharing kudos to start a meeting could be- could be something. So there's all different- different ways you could do this, but establishing a ritual that works for your team culture can be super helpful. Any other thoughts that you have on that?

Chris V.: Um, yeah, there's just one, which is, I have also heard clients, uh, state a worry that, "If I give my team the opportunity to talk more about their feelings, then it might derail the conversation of what we're trying to accomplish-"

Andy C.: Mmm.

Chris V: ... right?

Andy C.: Yeah, yeah.

Chris V: And I think your idea about doing it in the one-on-ones is a great way to still allow the whole human to be brought forth and to be heard without having to do that. And then I think setting some parameters, if useful, could be valuable to- to let people know that this is a way to check in, and we also have some other context that we're here for. Right?

Andy C.: Yup. Absolutely. Yup. Yeah, I think as leaders, if we're- if we're- we wanna model this behavior in meetings, we can also acknowledge the person who might be checking in red without... We can let them know we hear them, and that we wanna make space to support them outside of this meeting, and we will, even- and it doesn't have to derail the purpose that we're here for-

Chris V: Absolutely.

Andy C: like, it's not that binary of a choice. It's not, "Let people talk about their feelings and never get anything done," or, uh, or, "Keep feelings out of this so we can just get shit done."

Chris V: Yeah.

Andy C.: It doesn't have to be that either/or.



Chris V: Absolutely. Nicely said.

Andy C: Yeah. Well, thank you all for listening. We hope this is a helpful resource for you. If you're not doing check-ins with your team, we encourage you to give it a try. You might even find that you are operating more productively and more efficiently as a team, even though it might feel like slowing down in the beginning. It's really a "slow down to go faster," um, exercise. So reach out to us if you have questions, if we can be helpful. We're here, and everyone, stay well during this bizarre time that we find ourselves in.