

THE CONDITIONS CHECK-IN

A simple reflective guide from The Conditions Lens™

The Conditions Check-In is a simple way to pause before reacting, judging or trying to fix what we see.

It begins with one grounding question:

What conditions are shaping what is happening here?

This guide can be used by parents, educators, childminders, practitioners, students, policymakers, leaders, or anyone trying to better understand behaviour, relationships, stress, conflict, disconnection, resistance, exhaustion or change.

It is not a diagnostic tool, a behaviour-management programme or a script. It is a way of looking around and beyond a visible moment and asking what conditions may be relevant, without assuming hidden causes or inner states.

HOW TO USE THE CONDITIONS CHECK-IN

Use it on your own, write into it, talk it through with someone else, or use it to structure a conversation. The aim is not to find a perfect answer. It is to widen attention and make a more proportionate judgement about the conditions actually supported by the information available.

Understanding conditions does not excuse harmful behaviour or remove accountability. If harm has occurred, it still needs to be named and responded to through appropriate safeguarding, professional or organisational procedures.

Do not make the condition bigger than the evidence.

Here, “shaping” does not mean proving cause. A condition may form part of the context in which something happens without being its sole cause or revealing what happened inside the person.

USING THE CONDITIONS CHECK-IN WITH AI

AI check: I may fill gaps, turn ordinary observations into professional or psychological categories, infer motives or feelings, or suggest familiar interventions that are not actually supported by the information you gave me. Treat my response as a reflection aid, not a factual judgement. Check what I observed, what I inferred, what I assumed, and what remains unknown.

If I introduce a condition, explanation or solution that is not supported by the information provided, challenge it and keep that point open.

The Check-In is designed first as a human reflective guide. AI can help organise reflection, identify missing information and widen attention, but its responses are suggestions rather than facts.

If you use AI, give it the full Check-In and ask it to work through the steps in sequence. The AI must begin its response with the AI check above. If Step 2 identifies important missing information that could meaningfully change the reflection, AI must stop at Step 2, ask for that information, and wait for the user's reply. It must not continue to Steps 3-7 in the same response. Information is not 'unavailable' simply because it was not included in the first prompt; treat it as unavailable only if the user says they do not know or cannot provide it.

AI can fill gaps, broaden a small observation into a larger claim, translate ordinary events into professional categories, or suggest familiar interventions that the evidence has not established. To reduce this drift:

- For this reflection, use only the information provided through the reflection to decide what is happening in this situation. Do not use anything you know from outside the information provided to fill a gap, make an assumption, strengthen an inference or establish a condition. Do not draw on other work, theories, frameworks, professional ideas, typical practice, general knowledge, common patterns, probability, or what usually happens. Outside knowledge may help identify a question worth asking, but it must never supply the answer.

The Conditions Lens™ Reflection guide

- Keep unknowns unknown. A reasonably supported inference must come from the specific information provided in this reflection, not from what is common, likely, typical, expected or familiar. If the reflection does not establish a condition, do not treat it as present.
- If outside context is needed to understand or apply The Conditions Lens™, use the current materials at conditionslens.com as the primary reference. These materials may guide the method, but they must not be used to fill gaps or establish what is happening in the specific situation.
- Prefer ordinary descriptive language. Do not replace a direct observation with a broader professional, psychological, relational, behavioural or theoretical label unless the evidence supports it.
- Carry a claim forward only at the same level of certainty unless new information in the reflection directly changes it. An answer to one question resolves only what that answer actually establishes; it must not be used to resolve other unknowns or generate new motives, needs, skills, categories or conditions.
- Propose changes only to conditions that are observed, communicated or reasonably supported.

When checking an AI response, ask: What here was observed? What was inferred? What was assumed? What remains unknown? What evidence supports the condition or change being suggested?

The aim is not to let AI make the judgement for you. It is to help widen what your judgement attends to. Human judgement, safeguarding duties, professional responsibility and appropriate human support remain essential.

1. WHAT AM I NOTICING?

Start with what is visible. Describe what was directly seen, heard, recorded or communicated before trying to explain it.

Keep track of how certain each statement is:

- Observed: directly seen, heard or communicated.
- Reasonably supported: a small inference that follows closely from the specific information in this situation, without filling a gap from what usually happens.
- Possible: an interpretation suggested by the information that could fit, but remains open.
- Unknown: there is not enough information to say.

A useful test for “reasonably supported”: if the claim could be false while every observed or communicated fact remained true, keep it Possible or Unknown. If you would need to ask for more information before knowing whether a condition is present, it is still Unknown.

Use the smallest supported wording that is still useful. A specific observation does not establish a wider pattern, category or condition without additional evidence.

Before moving on, ask:

- What did I directly observe?
- What have I interpreted or assumed?
- What remains unknown?
- What would I need to know before drawing a stronger conclusion?

2. WHAT CONDITIONS CAME BEFORE THIS?

Look backwards. What events or conditions came before the visible moment?

Consider only what is known, observed, communicated, or specifically worth asking about because something in the situation points to it. Earlier does not automatically mean causal.

Ask:

- What known earlier conditions appear relevant?
- What important information is still missing?
- What is the smallest question, or set of questions, I need to ask before going further?

If important missing information could substantially change the reflection, pause and ask for the smallest set of questions needed before continuing. Stop at Step 2 and wait for the reply. Do not continue to Steps 3-7 in the same response. Do not treat missing information as unavailable merely because it has not yet been provided. If the user says the information is unavailable, continue with what is known. Any unanswered question stays Unknown until new information actually answers it. When the user replies, update only what their answer directly establishes. Do not use one new fact to infer a wider story or resolve other unknowns.

3. WHAT DO WE ACTUALLY KNOW ABOUT THE CONDITIONS AROUND THE PERSON?

As you widen the reflection, you may find it helpful to look through the Four Doorways:
Emotional Climate • Adult Presence • Child Agency • Environment

These are not categories that must all be filled. Use only the doorway or doorways that the information makes relevant. Describe only conditions around the person that are directly observed, communicated or reasonably supported. Keep conditions as conditions rather than turning them into explanations of motives, needs or inner states.

Ask:

- What conditions around the person are directly observed or communicated?
- What, if anything, is reasonably supported by that information?
- Which supported conditions appear relevant here?
- What remains unknown?

Do not create or populate a category simply because it could apply. “None established” is a valid answer. Space, movement, sensory conditions or containment may matter, but consider them only when the available information gives a reason to do so.

Behaviour does not happen in empty space. It happens inside conditions.

4. WHAT CONDITIONS ARE STILL UNKNOWN OR WORTH ASKING ABOUT?

Some important parts of the situation may still be missing. Keep uncertainty open rather than filling it with assumptions.

Ask:

- What do I still not know?
- What information could change how I understand this situation?
- Is there something I could ask the person directly?
- Is there something I need to observe for longer?
- Am I treating a possible explanation as more certain than the evidence allows?

You do not need complete certainty before acting. When the available conditions are clear enough to support a reasonable and proportionate judgement, move toward action while keeping what remains unknown open. What happens next may confirm, complicate or change the reflection.

Make the judgement about the supported conditions, not about the character or hidden inner state of the person.

5. WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE CONDITIONS AROUND THE ADULT OR OTHERS INVOLVED?

Adults and other people are part of the conditions too.

Ask:

- What conditions around me or the other person are directly known or communicated?
- Which of those conditions appear relevant?
- What remains unknown?
- What would I need to ask or observe before drawing a stronger conclusion?

Describe actions and known circumstances without inventing an explanation for why someone responded as they did. Do not infer the opposite of a condition simply because it was not visible: absence of visible evidence does not establish absence.

People affect the conditions around others, while also being shaped by conditions themselves.

6. WHAT CONDITIONS COULD BE CHANGED?

Move from reflection toward action. You may not be able to change everything, but one or more conditions may be changed, softened, removed, restored, protected or created.

For each possible change:

- Name the condition already established as observed, communicated or reasonably supported.
- Name the smallest change that responds directly to that condition.
- Check that the change does not depend on another problem, explanation or condition that has not been established.

If the condition behind a proposed change remains Possible or Unknown, omit that change. Do not import a familiar intervention, technique, strategy, programme, professional concept or solution from outside the reflection simply because it could be useful. A proposed change must be traceable to a condition established in this reflection.

You do not need an exact explanation of cause before making a reasonable, proportionate change to a condition that is sufficiently supported.

7. WHAT MIGHT BE WORTH TRYING, CHANGING OR NOTICING NEXT?

Choose one or more changes already justified in Step 6 and return to real life. Do not add a new intervention here simply because it seems plausible.

Try, then notice again:

- What shifted?
- What became easier or harder?
- What stayed the same?
- What became newly visible?
- What happened after the condition was changed?

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Ask openly rather than writing the expected outcome into the question. A change that does not help is not a failure; it gives you more information about the conditions shaping the situation.

Then return to the central questions:

What conditions are shaping what is happening here?

What conditions can I change, soften, protect or create?

THE TRACEABLE LOOP

Observe → identify supported conditions → keep unknowns open → judge supported conditions → change a supported condition → notice again