



# THE CHECK-IN.

**A VAUGHN'S WAY GUIDE TO  
STARTING THE CONVERSATION**

You don't need all the answers.  
Sometimes you just need to show up.

VAUGHN'S WAY INC.

STRENGTH STARTS WITH SPEAKING UP.

# SOMETIMES THE HARDEST THING TO SAY IS: “ARE YOU REALLY OKAY?”

A lot of people want to help when someone they care about is struggling. The hard part is knowing how to start.

You may notice that someone feels different. More withdrawn. More overwhelmed. Less like themselves.

You don't have to diagnose what they're going through. You don't need the perfect words.

**The goal of The Check-In is simple:**

3-4X

In 2024, the suicide rate among males in the United States was nearly four times the rate among females.

Source: CDC / National Center for Health Statistics, 2024 final mortality data.

48,824

people died by suicide in the United States in 2024.

**NOTICE.**

**ASK.**

**LISTEN.**

**KEEP SHOWING UP.**

**BEHIND EVERY NUMBER IS A PERSON,  
A FAMILY AND A STORY.**



— WHY VAUGHN'S WAY EXISTS

# TURNING PAIN INTO PURPOSE.

Vaughn's Way was created in honor of Vaughn Parker Jr.

After Vaughn lost his battle with mental health, his wife, Tasha Holmes-Parker, and stepson, NFL defensive lineman Jalyn Holmes, made the decision to turn their loss into action.

Their goal was never simply to talk about mental health. It was to create more conversations, reduce the stigma around asking for help and make sure more people know they do not have to struggle alone.

**"IF LOSING VAUGHN COULD SAVE EVEN ONE LIFE OR BRING AWARENESS TO SOMEONE STRUGGLING, HIS DEATH WOULDN'T BE IN VAIN."**

— Tasha Holmes-Parker, Co-Founder, Vaughn's Way

The Check-In is one small way to help start those conversations.

# YOU DON'T NEED TO BE A THERAPIST TO CARE ABOUT SOMEONE.

A check-in isn't about diagnosing someone or forcing them to open up. It's about creating enough space for an honest conversation.

## NOTICE THE CHANGE.

Things worth paying attention to can be as simple as someone seeming:

- more withdrawn than usual
- unusually overwhelmed
- quieter or less engaged
- unlike themselves
- disconnected from people or routines they normally care about

One change does not tell you what someone is experiencing. You know the people in your life. If something feels different, checking in can be a good place to start.

## MAKE SPACE.

Choose a time that feels:

**PRIVATE**  
**UNRUSHED**  
**LOW PRESSURE**

Avoid trying to have a serious conversation when you're both distracted, surrounded by people or rushing somewhere.

**YOU DON'T HAVE TO KNOW WHAT'S WRONG TO LET SOMEONE  
KNOW YOU'RE THERE.**

# SHOW UP. LISTEN. KEEP SHOWING UP.

01

## NOTICE + MAKE SPACE

If someone seems withdrawn, unusually overwhelmed or unlike themselves, make time for a private, unhurried conversation.

You do not need to diagnose what is happening to show that you care.

02

## START WITH SOMETHING REAL

You do not need a perfect opening. Try:

*"You haven't seemed like yourself lately. How are you really doing?"*

*"I've been thinking about you. How have you been?"*

*"I'm here if you want to talk. You don't have to have the right words."*

Avoid assumptions, pressure or comparisons.

03

## LISTEN WITHOUT TRYING TO FIX EVERYTHING

Put distractions aside. Let them finish. Instead of immediately trying to solve the problem, try:

*"That sounds really hard."*

*"Thank you for telling me."*

*"I'm glad you told me."*

*"What would feel helpful right now?"*

**LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND.**  
**NOT JUST TO RESPOND.**

# 04

## ENCOURAGE PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

A trusted healthcare provider or qualified mental-health professional can help. Offer to:

- look for options together
- sit with them while they make a call
- help them make an appointment
- support them in talking with someone they trust

A conversation with a friend is important, but it is not a substitute for professional care.

# 05

## KEEP CHECKING IN

One conversation is a beginning. **Text tomorrow. Call next week. Ask again.** Keep your commitments.

Specific support can feel easier to accept than “Let me know if you need anything.” Try:

*“Want me to check on you tomorrow?” · “Want to grab food this week?” · “Do you want me to go with you?”*

# 06

## WHEN SUPPORT IS NEEDED NOW

If you are worried about someone’s immediate safety, take it seriously. In the United States:

**988**

**CALL OR TEXT · AVAILABLE 24/7**

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. Chat at [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org)

**CALL 911**

For immediate physical danger or a medical emergency, or go to the nearest emergency room.

**Do not promise secrecy if you believe someone’s safety may be at risk.**

# YOU DON'T NEED THE PERFECT WORDS.

Here are a few places to start.

## START THE CONVERSATION

"You haven't seemed like yourself lately. What's going on?"

"I wanted to check on you. How are you really doing?"

"You don't have to explain everything. I just want you to know I'm here."

## WHEN YOU'RE WORRIED

"I care about you too much to ignore this."

"Can we find someone to talk to together?"

"I'm going to stay with you while we figure out the next step."

## WHEN THEY OPEN UP

"Thank you for telling me."

"That sounds like a lot to carry."

"I'm listening."

"You don't have to figure everything out tonight."

"What would help you feel supported right now?"

## THINGS TO AVOID

✗ "Just get over it."

✗ "Other people have it worse."

✗ "You have so much to be grateful for."

✗ "You're fine." "Just think positive."

✗ "Why would you feel that way?"

**YOU AREN'T TRYING TO  
WIN THE CONVERSATION.**

You're trying to make it safer for someone to keep talking.

— KEEP SHOWING UP

# ONE CONVERSATION ISN'T THE FINISH LINE.

Checking in matters. Checking in again matters too.

People don't always tell you everything the first time you ask. They may not be ready. They may not know what to say.

They may simply need to know that someone is still there.

- CHECK IN.
- LISTEN.
- FOLLOW UP.
- ENCOURAGE SUPPORT.
- KEEP SHOWING UP.

# STRENGTH STARTS WITH SPEAKING UP.



Learn more: [VAUGHNSWAY.ORG](https://VAUGHNSWAY.ORG)

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## — CRISIS SUPPORT

Call or text 988  
[988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org)

Educational only. Vaughn's Way does not provide diagnosis, therapy or emergency care. For immediate physical danger or a medical emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.