Mental Health Checklist

Hi, I'm Stephen Beardwood. I'm a veteran who has been affected by an Operational Stress Injury (OSI).

This is my personal checklist. These are the things I keep track of to stay well, and I thought they might help you too. Take what's useful and leave the rest.

Stephen Beardwood, Chair & co-founder, Veterans House Alliance International

HOW TO USE IT

- Check in once a week, or any time things feel off. It takes about five minutes.
- Tick what's already in place. There's no score, and no pass or fail.
- Pick **one** thing to work on this week. Small steps count.
- Family and friends can use it too, for themselves or to start a conversation.

01 Supports

The people and places that can help.

- [ ] Are you connected with a peer support group, or do you know where to find one?
- [ ] Do you have a fire team partner: someone you can lean on when you're struggling?
- [ ] Do you have a doctor or mental health professional who is active in your care?
- [ ] Does someone close to you know the signs that you're not doing well, and what helps?
- [ ] Are crisis numbers saved in your phone and written down? (See page 2.)

02 Daily routine

Things you can do to help yourself feel better.

- [ ] Do you get up, wash, get dressed and make your bed each day?
- [ ] Do you get outside for fresh air and a walk every day?
- [ ] Do you move your body most days: a workout, a sport, a bike ride, whatever works for you?
- [ ] Do you connect with someone every day, even briefly?
- [ ] Do you do your laundry at least weekly, and put clean sheets on your bed regularly?
- [ ] Do you have strategies that work for you to manage anger, anxiety and stress?

03 Sleep

Rest is part of staying well.

- [ ] Do you turn off phones and screens, and keep them away from your bed at night?
- [ ] Do you go to bed and get up at about the same times each day?
- [ ] Do you have a plan for bad nights, like getting up for a while, keeping the lights low or a breathing routine?

04 Food and fuel

What you put into your body can make a big difference.

- [ ] Are you eating a healthy diet, with regular meals?
- [ ] Do you cook homemade meals, and clean up after cooking?
- [ ] Have you given up caffeine, or at least kept it to the morning?
- [ ] Are you aware of when you might be self-medicating with alcohol, cannabis or other substances?

05 Purpose

Something to get up for.

- [ ] Do you have something each week that gives you a sense of purpose, like work, study, volunteering or helping someone?
- [ ] Do you make time for something you enjoy, like music, a hobby or time on the water or in the woods?
- [ ] Have you set one small, doable goal for this week?

Need to talk now? Call or text **9-8-8**, 24/7. Veterans and families: **1-800-268-7708**, 24/7. Emergency: **911**.

WHEN IT'S HARDER

Warning signs to watch for

In yourself, or in someone you care about. They aren't a diagnosis. They're signals that it's time to check in and reach out.

- ◯ Sleeping a lot more or a lot less than usual
- ◯ Feeling on edge, short-tempered or angry more often
- ◯ Letting the basics slip: washing, meals, laundry, bills
- ◯ Taking risks you normally wouldn't
- ◯ Pulling away from family, friends or things you used to enjoy
- ◯ Drinking or using more to get through the day or night
- ◯ Feeling numb, hopeless, trapped or like a burden
- ◯ **Talking or thinking about death, or not wanting to be here**

My plan for when things get hard

Fill this in on a good day, and keep it where you can find it. Share it with someone you trust.

1 My early warning signs

The thoughts, feelings or habits that tell me I'm starting to slip:

2 Things I can do on my own

To get through a rough patch, like a walk, music, a hot shower or getting outside:

3 People I can reach out to

My fire team partner, family, friends, my peer group, with numbers:

4 Professionals I can call

My doctor or clinician, with numbers:

5 Keeping things safe for now

Someone I trust to hold on to anything I'd rather not have close by while I get through a rough patch:

6 My reasons to keep going

The people, places and plans that matter to me:

For family and friends

- Ask how they're really doing, then listen without trying to fix it.
- If you're worried about suicide, ask directly: “Are you thinking about suicide?” Asking plainly is okay, and it shows you care.
- Stay with them, and help them call 9-8-8 or the VAC Assistance Service. If they're in danger, call 911.
- Look after yourself too. The VAC Assistance Service is there for families and caregivers.

Based on the personal checklist of Stephen Beardwood. Listing a service is not an endorsement, and VHAI does not recommend any particular treatment. Phone numbers checked November 2026.

If you're in crisis

911	If you or someone else is in danger, or it's a medical emergency.
9-8-8	Suicide Crisis Helpline. Call or text, 24/7, free, in English or French.
1-800-268-7708	VAC Assistance Service. Talk to a mental health professional, 24/7. Free and confidential for veterans, former RCMP members, their families and caregivers. TTY 1-800-567-5803.

More support: veteranshouse.ca