

THE BUDDY CHECK GUIDE

Connection is the Mission: Support for Service Members

Isolation is a significant risk for those who have served. A simple "Buddy Check" can be the most effective way to remind a fellow veteran that they are part of a circle that still cares. You don't need to be a counselor; you just need to be a friend.

1. When to Initiate a Check

Trust Your Gut

If you haven't heard from someone in a while, or if their social media activity changes suddenly, reach out. Don't wait for a "reason"—the outreach itself is the reason.

Significant Milestones

Anniversaries of deployments, loss of unit members, or major life transitions (job loss, moves) are high-priority times for a check-in.

2. What to Say (The "Intel")

Keep it Casual

Start small. The goal is to open a door, not force an interrogation.

"Hey [Name], just thinking about our time in [Unit/Place]. It's been a while—how are things going in your world?"

Ask Open-Ended Questions

Avoid "Are you okay?" which often gets a reflexive "I'm fine." Try: "What's been the biggest challenge lately?" or "What are you working on these days?"

3. If They Are Struggling

Listen Without Judgment

You don't need to have the answers. Often, just being heard by someone who "gets it" provides the relief they need.

Know Your Support Lines

If the conversation turns serious, have resources ready. Remind them that asking for help is an act of courage, not weakness.

"I'm glad you told me. I don't have all the answers, but I know some people who do. Have you ever looked into [Resource]?"

Never Stand Down Alone. If you or a buddy need connection to specialized resources, visit our **Care Connections** page or reach out to the Veterans Crisis Line (988, Press 1).