

The Five Pillars Check

A basic systems check for human wellbeing

Important

This checklist is a basic systems check, **NOT** a diagnosis or treatment plan. It does not attempt to explain why someone is struggling and it does not replace medical, psychological or specialist care.

Its purpose is simply to identify where fundamental human needs may be under strain, especially in situations where labels, advice or treatment have not helped.

Many conditions - physical, neurological or psychological - are real and valid. This checklist simply asks whether the foundations needed to cope with them are currently in place.

How to use this checklist

For each pillar, answer honestly based on the last 2-4 weeks.
Do NOT overthink it.

Mark each as:

-  OK
 -  Strained
 -  Compromised
-

1. Sleep

Are you getting regular, restorative rest?

Consider:

- Falling asleep
- Staying asleep
- Waking rested
- Consistency

If sleep is off, everything else is harder.

OK Strained Compromised

Comments: _____

2. Food

Are you reliably fueling your body?

Consider:

- Appetite
- Ability to eat
- Tolerance to food
- Regular intake (**not** “perfect diet”)

This is about energy availability, not food quality or willpower.

OK Strained Compromised

Comments: _____

3. Connection

Do you experience meaningful connection?

This can include:

- People
- Animals
- Nature
- Shared spaces (online or offline)

You can feel lonely even when surrounded by others.

OK Strained Compromised

Comments: _____

4. Expression

Do you have a way to express what's inside of you?

This might be:

- Talking
- Writing
- Art
- Music
- Movement
- Making or building

Expression is how pressure leaves the system.

OK Strained Compromised

Comments: _____

5. Meaning

Does your life feel oriented or coherent in any way?

This does **not** mean happiness.

It can include:

- Purpose
- Values
- Curiosity
- Responsibility
- Belief systems
- A reason to continue

Meaning is direction, **not** motivation.

OK Strained Compromised

Comments: _____

Interpreting the check

- One strained pillar can destabilise others
- Multiple compromised pillars compound suffering

- Struggle does **not** imply personal failure

Suffering is a signal of unmet conditions, **not a flaw in character**.

This check does not explain **why** a pillar is compromised - only where attention is needed.

How the Pillars Interact

The Five Pillars function as a system, not as isolated parts.

When one pillar is strained, the others must compensate.

When multiple pillars are compromised, the system becomes unstable.

For example:

- Poor sleep reduces emotional regulation, appetite, motivation and social tolerance.
- Lack of food or irregular eating worsens fatigue, mood and sleep.
- Isolation reduces resilience and makes stress harder to discharge.
- Blocked expression increases internal pressure.
- Loss of meaning removes direction, even if everything else is present.

This checklist does **not identify causes**.

It identifies **load points** — where pressure is currently being carried.

Stabilising pillars does not “fix” a person.

It creates the conditions where coping, clarity and recovery become possible.