Retiree Crisis Readiness Checklist

***A companion to* "Surviving Financial Crises in Retirement"** by William Hart

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Introduction

Retirement should be a time to relax, but as we've all learned the hard way, the economy doesn't always play nice. Markets crash, inflation rises, and the cost of everything—from groceries to gas—can creep up faster than we'd like.

This checklist is designed to help you find out **how ready you really are** for the next financial downturn. Think of it as a personal "financial fire drill." If you can check off most of these boxes, you'll sleep a lot easier at night. And if you can't—don't panic. That's exactly why I wrote my book.

Grab a pen, pour yourself some coffee (or something stronger, I won't judge), and let's get started.

Financial Stability Check

1. Emergency Fund

- Do I have at least **6–12 months of living expenses** saved in cash or a money-market account?
- Is that money easily accessible without penalties?
- Bonus points if I can sleep at night knowing it's not tied up in the stock market.

If you checked "no," don't worry. Start small and build it up monthly. The peace of mind is worth more than the interest rate.

2. Debt Checkup

- Have I eliminated all **high-interest debt** (especially credit cards)?
- Is my mortgage manageable—or ideally, paid off?
- Have I avoided co-signing loans for anyone (even those adorable grandkids)?

Debt in retirement can turn a drizzle into a hurricane during a crisis. Paying it down now gives you more freedom later.

3. Income Sources

- Do I have **at least three reliable income streams** (pension, Social Security, investments, part-time work, etc.)?
- Have I diversified beyond one main source?
- Would my income survive if the market dropped 20%?

If not, it might be time to explore alternatives like annuities, part-time consulting, or rental income. Your money should work for you, not the other way around.

Investment Resilience

4. Asset Allocation

- Is my portfolio properly balanced between **stocks, bonds, and cash**?
- Have I rebalanced in the past year?
- Do I understand how much risk I'm really taking—or am I just hoping for the best?

If you're unsure, this is a good moment to revisit your mix. "Hope" is not a retirement strategy.

5. Market Protection Plan

- Have I considered a **"safe bucket"** strategy for the next 2–3 years of withdrawals?
- Could I ride out a bear market without selling investments at a loss?
- Have I explored low-risk assets like TIPS, CDs, or short-term treasuries?

Remember, cash is not lazy, it's your shield during tough times.

6. Professional Help

- Have I consulted a **fiduciary financial advisor** (not a salesperson)?
- Have I reviewed my financial plan in the last 12 months?
- Does my spouse or partner know how to access our accounts and understand our plan?

If not, don't wait until the next market headline to make a call. Financial planning isn't a one-and-done event, it's a living process.

Cost of Living & Lifestyle Readiness

7. Budget Reality Check

- Do I track my monthly expenses regularly?
- Do I know my *true* cost of living (not just the number I hope it is)?

- Have I trimmed non-essentials like unused subscriptions, premium cable, or my "collector's coffee habit"?

Retirement budgets often get derailed by lifestyle creep. A good rule: spend on joy, cut the rest.

8. Inflation Defense

- Can I adjust my spending if inflation spikes?
- Have I invested in assets that rise with inflation (such as dividend stocks or real estate)?
- Do I review my grocery and utility bills at least twice a year?

Inflation is sneaky. The best defense is awareness—and a willingness to pivot.

9. Housing & Downsizing

- Is my current home affordable, energy-efficient, and easy to maintain?
- Could I comfortably downsize if needed?
- Have I considered alternatives like home-sharing, renting part of my home, or relocating to a lower-cost area?

A smaller home can mean a bigger life. It's not about less—it's about *less stress.*

Health & Protection Planning

10. Health Insurance & Medicare

- Do I fully understand my Medicare plan, deductibles, and out-of-pocket limits?
- Do I have supplemental insurance or a Medigap plan?
- Have I reviewed prescription coverage for upcoming renewals?

A health crisis can drain savings faster than any market crash. Keep your coverage up-to-date and know what's included.

11. Long-Term Care Preparedness

- Have I researched long-term care options and their costs?
- Have I considered insurance or alternatives (like hybrid life/long-term care policies)?
- Do my loved ones know my preferences for care if I become unable to decide?

Planning for this early spares your family from tough choices later.

12. Legal & Estate Documents

- Do I have an up-to-date **will and living trust**?
- Have I designated **powers of attorney** for health and finances?
- Do my beneficiaries match my current wishes?

If you can't remember when you last reviewed your will, it's probably time.

Emotional & Lifestyle Resilience

13. Purpose & Community

- Do I have a clear reason to get up each morning besides checking the stock ticker?
- Am I part of a social circle, club, or volunteer group?
- Do I nurture my relationships with friends and family regularly?

Emotional wealth is just as important as financial wealth. A strong support network keeps you grounded during uncertain times.

14. Adaptability Mindset

- Can I handle change without panic?
- Have I practiced living on less for a few months just to test my flexibility?
- Do I see challenges as problems—or opportunities to learn something new?

Retirees who adapt thrive. Those who resist, struggle. Think of adaptability as your retirement superpower.

15. Peace of Mind Score

Take a deep breath. Ask yourself honestly:

- Do I feel secure about my finances, health, and future?
- Am I sleeping well at night?
- If a financial storm hit tomorrow, would I know exactly what to do?

If you answered "yes" to most of these, **congratulations**—you're ahead of the curve. If you didn't, that's okay too. The first step toward confidence is awareness, and you've already taken it.