BILL'S HOME TECH

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VA Mental Health Apps and the Veterans Crisis Line — A Plain-English Guide

Free support tools for veterans — and immediate help when it's needed

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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THE 60-SECOND VERSION

1 The 60-Second Version

The whole thing in a breath.

The VA offers two kinds of free mental health support for veterans that are genuinely helpful and easy to reach. The most important is the Veterans Crisis Line, for immediate help when it's needed: if you're a veteran in crisis, or you're worried about a veteran, you can reach a caring, trained responder right away by dialing 988 and then pressing 1.

You can also reach the Crisis Line by text (text 838255) or by online chat (at VeteransCrisisLine.net) if that's easier. It's available 24 hours a day, every day, it's confidential and free, and — importantly — you do not need to be enrolled in VA health care or benefits to use it; it's for all veterans and their loved ones.

Many of the responders are veterans themselves. The second kind of support is a set of free VA mental health apps for your smartphone — tools the VA built to help with everyday mental wellbeing, covering things like managing stress and anxiety, coping with PTSD, practicing mindfulness, improving sleep, and tracking mood (apps with names like PTSD Coach, Mindfulness Coach, and others).

They're free to anyone, you can use them privately on your own phone whenever you like, and you find them in your phone's app store or through the VA's mental health website (mentalhealth.va.gov). One important thing to keep in mind: these apps are helpful tools to support your wellbeing, but they are not a replacement for professional mental health care — think of them as a useful supplement alongside talking to a professional, not instead of it.

If you or a veteran you know is struggling, reaching out is a sign of strength, and help — whether immediate through the Crisis Line or ongoing through a professional — is always available. (General information; in a crisis, use the Veterans Crisis Line.)

- Immediate crisis help: the Veterans Crisis Line — Dial 988, then Press 1. Also text 838255 or chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net. It's 24/7, confidential, and free, and you

don't need to be enrolled in VA benefits — it's for all veterans and those worried about one.
- Free VA mental health apps: the VA offers free smartphone apps for everyday wellbeing — managing stress and anxiety, coping with PTSD, mindfulness, sleep, and mood (e.g. PTSD Coach, Mindfulness Coach).
- Find the apps in your phone's app store or via the VA's mental health website (mentalhealth.va.gov). They're free, private, and usable whenever you like.
- Important: these apps support your wellbeing but are not a replacement for professional care — use them alongside talking to a professional, not instead. Reaching out for help is a sign of strength. (General info; in a crisis, use the Crisis Line.)

HELP RIGHT NOW

2 The Veterans Crisis Line — Immediate Help

Dial 988, then Press 1.

The most important resource to know, and to save in your phone, is the Veterans Crisis Line, which provides immediate, confidential help any time of day or night for a veteran in crisis — or for anyone worried about a veteran. If help is needed now, this is how to reach it.

- How to reach it — Dial 988, then Press 1: the Veterans Crisis Line is reached by dialing 988 (the national mental health crisis number) and then pressing 1, which connects you to responders dedicated to veterans.
- Also by text or chat: you can also reach the Crisis Line by texting 838255, or by online chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net — useful if you'd rather not, or can't, make a call.
- Available 24/7: it's available 24 hours a day, every day of the year, so help is there whenever it's needed, day or night.
- Confidential and free: the service is confidential and free to use — there's no cost and no bill.
- No VA enrollment needed: importantly, you do not have to be enrolled in VA health care or benefits to use it — it's for all veterans, service members, and their family and friends.

- For anyone worried about a veteran too: you can call not only for yourself but if you're concerned about a veteran in your life — the responders can help you help them.
- Caring, trained responders: you'll reach trained, caring responders (many of them veterans themselves) who understand what veterans go through and are there to listen and help.

The single most important resource in this guide — the one worth saving in your phone right now — is the Veterans Crisis Line, which exists to provide immediate, confidential help at any hour, day or night, to a veteran who is in crisis or going through a very hard time, and equally to anyone who is worried about a veteran in their life.

The way to reach it is simple and worth memorizing: you dial 988, the national mental health crisis number, and then press 1, which connects you specifically to responders dedicated to veterans. If making a phone call is difficult or you'd simply rather not, you can reach the same support by texting 838255, or through online chat at the VeteransCrisisLine.net website, so there's a way that works whatever your situation.

The service is available 24 hours a day, every single day of the year, which means that help is genuinely always there, including in the middle of the night when hard moments so often come. It is completely confidential and free to use, with no cost and nothing billed. A point that matters a great deal and that many people don't realize is that you do not have to be enrolled in VA health care or receiving any VA benefits to use the Crisis Line — it is for all veterans and service members, and for their family members and friends, regardless of enrollment status, so no one should ever hold back from calling because they think they're not 'in the system.' And you don't have to be calling about yourself: if you are concerned about a veteran you care about, you can reach out to the Crisis Line too, and the responders can help you figure out how to help them.

The people who answer are trained, caring responders, and many of them are veterans themselves, so they genuinely understand the experiences and challenges that veterans face and are there simply to listen and to help, without judgment. If you take away only one thing from this guide, let it be this: immediate, caring help for veterans is always available, it's as close as dialing 988 and pressing 1, and reaching

out for it — for yourself or for someone you're worried about — is a sign of strength, not weakness.

WATCH OUT

If you or a veteran you know needs help now, the Veterans Crisis Line is there 24/7, confidential and free: Dial 988, then Press 1. You can also text 838255, or chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net. You do not need to be enrolled in VA benefits to use it — it's for all veterans and anyone worried about one — and the responders (many veterans themselves) are there to listen and help. Reaching out is a sign of strength. Please save this in your phone.

WHO CAN USE IT

3 Who These Resources Are For

All veterans — and those who care about them.

A common and unfortunate barrier is people assuming these resources aren't 'for them' — that they're not eligible, not enrolled, or not in enough trouble to reach out. It's worth being clear about who can use the VA's mental health support: the answer is a very broad 'you can.'

- All veterans, regardless of enrollment: the Veterans Crisis Line is for all veterans, whether or not they're enrolled in VA health care or receiving benefits — enrollment is not required to get help.
- Service members and families too: it's also there for current service members, and for the family members and friends of veterans — including those simply worried about someone.
- You don't have to be 'in crisis' to reach out: while the Crisis Line is for crises, you don't have to wait until things are dire — if you're struggling at all, it's okay to reach out, and the free apps are for everyday wellbeing, not just emergencies.
- The free apps are for anyone: the VA's free mental health apps can be downloaded and used by anyone (veteran or not), free of charge — there's no eligibility check to use a free app.

- No shame in using them: reaching out for mental health support, or using these tools, is a healthy, strong thing to do — not something to be embarrassed about or to 'tough out' alone.
- If unsure, reach out anyway: if you're ever unsure whether a resource applies to you, the best thing is simply to reach out and ask — the Crisis Line responders can point you the right way.

One of the most unfortunate barriers that keeps people from getting help is the assumption that these resources somehow aren't 'for them' — the belief that they're not eligible, not enrolled in the right programs, or not in serious enough trouble to justify reaching out — and it's genuinely important to clear that away, because the answer to 'who can use the VA's mental health support' is a very broad and welcoming 'you can.' The Veterans Crisis Line is for all veterans, full stop, regardless of whether they are enrolled in VA health care or receiving any VA benefits; enrollment is simply not required to get help, so the common worry about not being 'in the system' is no barrier at all.

It is also there for current service members, and crucially for the family members and friends of veterans, including anyone who is simply worried about someone they care about and wants help knowing what to do. It's also worth saying clearly that you don't have to be in a full-blown crisis, or wait until things have become dire, before it's okay to reach out: while the Crisis Line is specifically for crisis situations, struggling at all is reason enough to seek support, and the VA's free mental health apps are designed for everyday wellbeing and coping rather than only for emergencies, so they're there for ordinary hard days too.

Those free apps, for their part, can be downloaded and used by essentially anyone, veteran or not, at no charge, since there's no eligibility check to simply use a free app on your phone. Underlying all of this is a message that bears stating plainly: reaching out for mental health support, and using tools like these, is a healthy and strong thing to do — not something to be embarrassed about, and not something anyone should feel they have to 'tough out' alone.

And if you are ever genuinely unsure whether a particular resource applies to your situation, the simplest and best thing to do is to reach out and ask anyway, because the Crisis Line responders and the VA can point you toward the right help — no one is

turned away for asking. The door to help is far wider open than many people fear, and it's open to you.

GOOD TO KNOW

Don't assume these resources aren't 'for you.' The Veterans Crisis Line is for all veterans whether or not they're enrolled in VA health care or benefits — and for service members, families, and anyone worried about a veteran. You don't have to wait until things are dire to reach out, and the free VA apps are for everyday wellbeing and usable by anyone at no cost. Seeking support is a healthy, strong thing to do. If you're unsure whether something applies to you, reach out and ask — no one is turned away.

Rather not do this yourself? I'll come to your home and set it up for you — a flat $99 first visit across Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities. Outside the area? I also help remotely by phone or screen-share. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042.

FREE APPS

4 The VA's Free Mental Health Apps

Tools for everyday wellbeing.

Alongside the Crisis Line for urgent help, the VA offers a set of free mental health apps for your smartphone — practical tools built to help with everyday mental wellbeing, usable privately whenever you want. Here's what they offer and the kinds of things they help with.

- Free apps built by the VA: the VA offers a collection of free mental health apps for phones, developed to help veterans (and others) with mental wellbeing — no cost, no subscription.
- They cover many areas: different apps focus on different needs — coping with PTSD, managing stress and anxiety, practicing mindfulness and relaxation, improving sleep, and tracking or managing mood, among others.

- Examples you may see: apps with names like PTSD Coach (for coping with post-traumatic stress), Mindfulness Coach (for mindfulness practice), and others for sleep, mood, and anger — a toolkit for various needs.
- Private and on your own time: you use them privately on your own phone, whenever and wherever you like, at your own pace — helpful for practicing coping skills, grounding exercises, and tracking how you're doing.
- A helpful supplement: they're great for learning and practicing techniques, building healthy habits, and supporting your wellbeing between or alongside appointments — practical, evidence-informed tools.
- Not therapy by themselves: valuable as they are, the apps are tools, not a substitute for professional care or human support (more on this next) — and not for emergencies, where the Crisis Line is the right call.

Alongside the Crisis Line's urgent help, the VA offers something valuable for everyday mental wellbeing: a collection of free mental health apps for your smartphone, developed by the VA to help veterans — and, since they're freely available, anyone — with managing their mental health, at no cost and with no subscription. These apps cover a wide range of needs rather than being a single catch-all, with different apps focusing on different areas: coping with PTSD and post-traumatic stress, managing everyday stress and anxiety, practicing mindfulness and relaxation techniques, improving sleep, and tracking or managing mood, among others, so there's a tool suited to a variety of common struggles.

You may come across apps with names like PTSD Coach, which helps with learning about and coping with post-traumatic stress; Mindfulness Coach, which guides mindfulness practice; and others aimed at sleep, mood, and anger, together forming a kind of toolkit you can draw on depending on what you need. The real appeal is that you use them privately, on your own phone, whenever and wherever you like and entirely at your own pace — which makes them genuinely helpful for practicing coping skills in the moment, doing grounding or relaxation exercises when you're feeling stressed, learning techniques, and keeping track of how you're doing over time.

They work well as a supplement to your wellbeing: a way to build healthy habits and practice evidence-informed techniques between appointments or alongside other care, putting useful tools right in your pocket. It is important, though — and the next

chapter stresses this — to understand clearly that, valuable as they are, these apps are tools rather than a substitute for professional care or human support, and they are not meant for emergencies, where the Veterans Crisis Line is always the right thing to reach for instead.

Used with that understanding — as a helpful, free, private supplement for everyday mental wellbeing rather than as therapy in themselves — the VA's mental health apps are a genuinely worthwhile thing for any veteran to know about and have on their phone.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> The VA offers free smartphone apps for everyday mental wellbeing — no cost, no subscription. Different apps help with different needs: coping with PTSD, managing stress and anxiety, mindfulness and relaxation, sleep, and mood (apps with names like PTSD Coach and Mindfulness Coach, among others). You use them privately on your own phone, at your own pace, to practice coping skills and track how you're doing. They're a helpful supplement — not therapy by themselves, and not for emergencies (use the Crisis Line for those).

FINDING & USING

5 Finding the Apps and a Key Reminder

Where to get them; what they're for.

Finding the VA's mental health apps is easy, and using them well comes with one key reminder: they support professional care rather than replace it. Here's where to find them and how to keep them in the right place among your sources of support.

- Find them in your phone's app store: the VA's free mental health apps are available in the usual app stores (Apple's App Store and Google Play) — search for the app by name (like 'PTSD Coach') or for 'VA' mental health apps.
- Or via the VA's mental health website: the VA's mental health site (mentalhealth.va.gov) lists and links its apps and explains what each does — a reliable place to see what's available and get the genuine apps.

- Make sure they're the real VA apps: get them from the official app stores or via the VA website so you're downloading the genuine, free VA apps rather than a lookalike.
- They're free — no payment needed: the VA's apps are free, so you shouldn't be asked to pay; be wary of anything demanding payment claiming to be a VA app.
- The key reminder — support, not replacement: most importantly, these apps are tools to support your mental wellbeing and your care, not a replacement for talking to a professional. Use them alongside professional help, not instead of it.
- For ongoing care, see a professional (and in crisis, the Line): for real mental health concerns, a mental health professional or the VA is the right source of care — and in a crisis, always use the Veterans Crisis Line (988, then Press 1).

Finding the VA's free mental health apps is straightforward, and the main thing to get right is simply ensuring you download the genuine apps and then keeping them in their proper place among your sources of support. You can find the apps in your phone's usual app store — Apple's App Store on an iPhone or Google Play on an Android phone — by searching for the app by its name, such as 'PTSD Coach,' or by searching for 'VA' mental health apps to see what comes up.

Alternatively, and reliably, you can go through the VA's own mental health website at mentalhealth.va.gov, which lists and links the apps and explains what each one does, making it a trustworthy place both to see what's available and to reach the genuine apps. It's worth making sure you're getting the real VA apps by downloading them from the official app stores or via the VA website, rather than picking up some lookalike, and since the VA's apps are free, you shouldn't be asked to pay for them — so be a little wary of anything demanding payment while claiming to be a VA app.

Now the most important reminder of all, which deserves emphasis: as genuinely helpful as these apps are, they are tools to support your mental wellbeing and your care, not a replacement for talking to a real person or getting professional help. They're wonderful for practicing coping skills, learning techniques, and supporting yourself day to day, but they cannot substitute for the understanding, judgment, and care of a mental health professional, and they are best used alongside professional help rather than instead of it.

So for real or ongoing mental health concerns, a mental health professional or the VA is the right source of actual care, and the apps are a useful complement to that care rather than a stand-in for it. And — to close where this guide began — in any crisis or urgent situation, an app is never the right tool; the Veterans Crisis Line always is, reachable by dialing 988 and pressing 1 (or texting 838255, or chatting at VeteransCrisisLine.net), any time, for immediate, caring help.

Keep the apps in that right place — as a free, private, everyday supplement — alongside the crisis line for emergencies and professional care for ongoing needs, and you have a genuinely supportive set of resources. (This is general information, not medical advice; please reach out to a professional or the VA for care.)

WATCH OUT

The key reminder: these apps are tools to support your mental wellbeing, not a replacement for professional care — use them alongside talking to a professional, not instead of it, and never for emergencies. Get the genuine free apps from the official app stores or via mentalhealth.va.gov (you shouldn't be asked to pay). For real or ongoing concerns, a mental health professional or the VA is the right source of care — and in a crisis, always use the Veterans Crisis Line: Dial 988, then Press 1.

QUESTIONS

6 Plain Questions and Answers

The things people ask most.

"How do I reach the Veterans Crisis Line?"

Dial 988, then Press 1 — that connects you to responders dedicated to veterans. You can also text 838255, or chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net, whichever is easiest. It's available 24 hours a day, every day, confidential, and free. You do not need to be enrolled in VA health care or benefits to use it — it's for all veterans and for anyone worried about a veteran. The responders, many of them veterans themselves, are there to listen and help.

"Do I have to be enrolled in VA benefits to get help?"

No. The Veterans Crisis Line is for all veterans whether or not they're enrolled in VA health care or receiving benefits, and also for service members, families, and anyone worried about a veteran — enrollment isn't required. The VA's free mental health apps can be downloaded and used by anyone at no cost, with no eligibility check. So the common worry about not being 'in the system' is no barrier to getting help.

"What do the VA's mental health apps do?"

They're free smartphone tools for everyday mental wellbeing, with different apps for different needs: coping with PTSD, managing stress and anxiety, practicing mindfulness and relaxation, improving sleep, and tracking mood (apps with names like PTSD Coach and Mindfulness Coach, among others). You use them privately, on your own phone, at your own pace — to practice coping skills and track how you're doing. They're a helpful supplement, not a replacement for professional care, and not for emergencies.

"Where do I get the apps, and are they really free?"

Find them in your phone's app store (search the app name like 'PTSD Coach,' or 'VA' mental health apps) or through the VA's mental health website, mentalhealth.va.gov, which lists and explains them. They're genuinely free — no cost, no subscription — so get them from the official app stores or the VA site, and be wary of anything demanding payment while claiming to be a VA app. And remember they support, rather than replace, professional care.

WRAP UP

7

Help Is Always Available

Reaching out is a sign of strength.

For veterans and those who care about them, two kinds of free mental health support from the VA are worth knowing about, and both are easy to reach. Most important is the Veterans Crisis Line, for immediate, confidential help any time, day or night: you reach it by dialing 988 and then pressing 1, or by texting 838255 or chatting at VeteransCrisisLine.net.

It's 24/7, free, and — crucially — open to all veterans and those worried about them regardless of VA enrollment, staffed by caring responders, many of them veterans themselves. The second is the VA's free mental health apps for your phone — tools for everyday wellbeing covering stress and anxiety, PTSD, mindfulness, sleep, and mood, usable privately whenever you like, found in your app store or through mentalhealth.va.gov.

Keep one thing clearly in mind: these apps are a helpful supplement to support your wellbeing and your care, not a replacement for talking to a professional — and never the right tool for an emergency, where the Crisis Line always is. Don't let worries about eligibility hold you back: the door to help is far wider open than many fear, and if you're ever unsure whether something applies to you, simply reach out and ask.

This is a sensitive subject, and if you or a veteran you know is going through a hard time, please hold onto this: reaching out for help is a sign of strength, not weakness, and caring help — immediate through the Crisis Line, ongoing through a professional, and everyday through these free tools — is always available to you. (This is general information; for mental health care, a professional or the VA is the right source — and in a crisis, use the Veterans Crisis Line: Dial 988, then Press 1.)

- Immediate crisis help: the Veterans Crisis Line — Dial 988, then Press 1 (or text 838255, or chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net). It's 24/7, confidential, free, and open to all veterans and those worried about one, regardless of VA enrollment.

- Free VA mental health apps: smartphone tools for everyday wellbeing — stress and anxiety, PTSD, mindfulness, sleep, mood (e.g. PTSD Coach, Mindfulness Coach) — free, private, found in app stores or via mentalhealth.va.gov.
- Key reminder: the apps support your wellbeing and care but are not a replacement for professional help, and never for emergencies — use the Crisis Line for those and a professional for ongoing care.
- Don't let eligibility worries stop you — help is open far more widely than people fear; if unsure, just ask. Reaching out is a sign of strength, and caring help is always available. (General info; in a crisis, use the Crisis Line.)

GOOD TO KNOW

If you or a veteran you care about could use support, please know help is always there. For anything urgent, the Veterans Crisis Line is 24/7, confidential, and free — Dial 988, then Press 1 (or text 838255, or chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net) — and you don't need to be enrolled in VA benefits to use it. For everyday wellbeing, I'm happy to help you find and set up the VA's free mental health apps on your phone, from the official app stores or mentalhealth.va.gov. And please remember these tools support, rather than replace, professional care — for ongoing concerns, a professional or the VA is the right place. Reaching out is a sign of strength.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this page handy. It points you straight to what to do for each task.

I want to...	Do this...
Crisis help, now	Veterans Crisis Line: Dial 988, then Press 1
Also text or chat	Text 838255, or chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net
24/7 and confidential	Any time; you needn't be enrolled in VA benefits
Free VA apps	Free phone apps for stress, PTSD, mindfulness, sleep
Where to find them	App stores and mentalhealth.va.gov
Not a replacement	Tools support — not replace — professional care
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

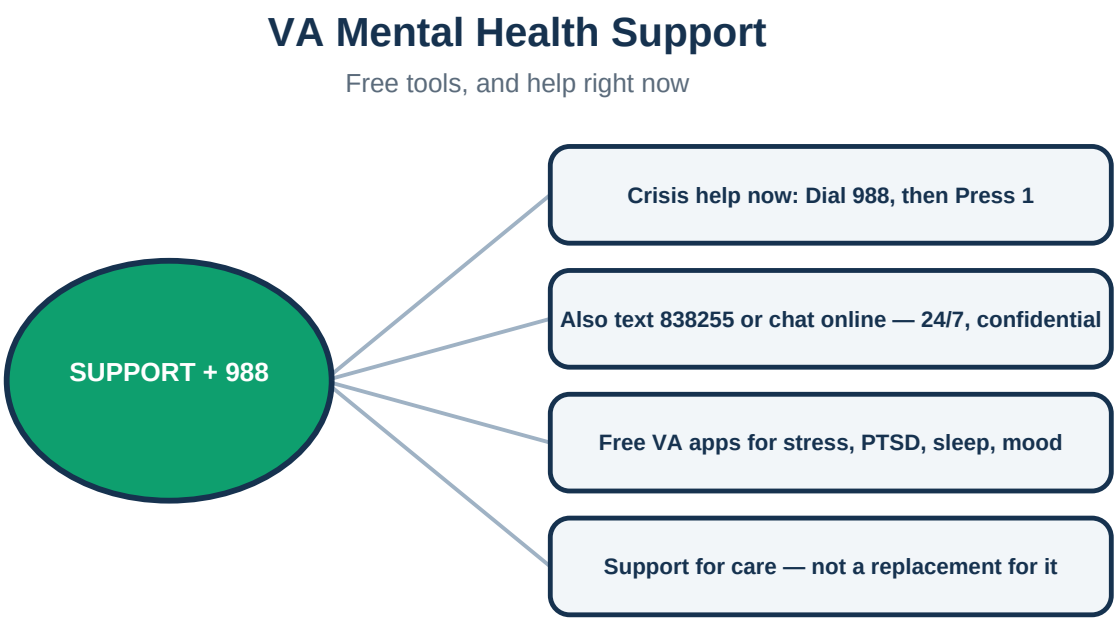


Illustration — a schematic. Set-up screens differ; each takes only a few minutes.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

Reaching Support

Four steps

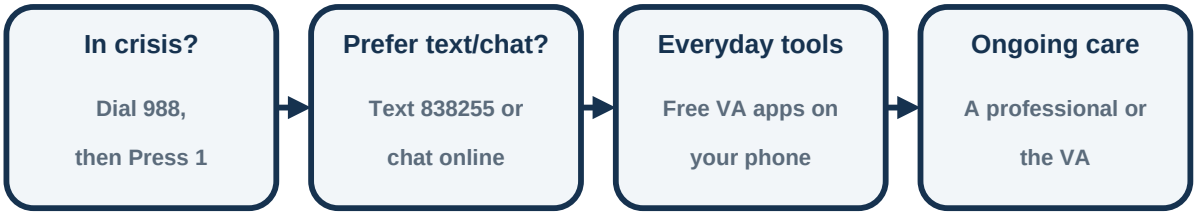


Illustration — a schematic. The order is a suggestion; do one box at a time.

A schematic of the plan — company steps vary; the order does not have to.

BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.

HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

You don't have to remember all of it — just that a friendly, patient person is one call away, whenever you'd rather have a hand.

KEY SPECS

In your home — $99 flat for the first visit, no contracts and no surprises, with a 30-day come-back-free follow-up. In-home visits cover Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities.
Outside the area? Remotely — $49 for a screen-share session (free for Support Plan members, $39/mo), refundable if I can't fix it — and credited toward a visit if you'd rather have me in person. Book either at billshometech.com/book.

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full $99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Whenever you're ready, I'll come to your home anywhere in Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities, at your pace. Too far for a house call? I also help remotely. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042. — Bill

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