

***SO YOU
MIGHT BECOME***

HOMELESS





you are strong enough to deal with this

Acceptance

When you are facing Homelessness it can be very frightening, so frightening in fact that we shut down - avoid- deny until we are knee deep in despair.

Our goal is to overcome that cycle of avoidance as much as possible.

Accept that this is the situation.

You are facing Homelessness.

Confront your biases. Know that no matter what you did to contribute to your situation, ultimately it is systems of Oppression that make it so folks have to deal with severe poverty. Acknowledge this and then ..

Plan for the future...practically.

Prevention

EXPLORE YOUR OPTIONS

After you have accepted that you are facing Homelessness, but before you plan for it, consider if there is anything at all you can do to prevent it from happening. There very well may not be but *if* there is anything you haven't tried yet, that doesn't cause you harm, now is the time to go for it. *In the end it feels best to be able to say you tried everything you could.*

- Have you tried going to your local legal aid or tenant advocacy space to make sure there is nothing you can do to fight whatever has caused your homelessness? There may be laws you are unaware of.
- Have you sat down and had a sincere talk with your landlord or bank? It is easy to avoid those in these positions of authority but ultimately this is a necessary step in trying to prevent Homelessness.
- Have you found an online space where you can talk to people who have been in similar situations? These folks are in the best position to offer advice.
- Have you made a budget you care share with others so they can visualize your struggle?



Make A Plan

DON'T FREEZE

Once a person becomes homeless it can be very difficult to plan. That is because when we are over-stressed and frightened our executive functioning capacity slows down considerably. You may even be experiencing some of that now. Know it can get worse so use this time to plan as much as possible.

Consider the Following:

- Where will you sleep?
- Do you have all your formal documents?
- Who can you ask for help?
- How will you maintain work or make an income?
- Where will you shower, eat, get wi-fi, use the bathroom?
- What are the steps necessary to overcome the situation that caused your Homelessness? If you don't know, how can you find out?
- How will you store your belongings?
- What will you do on your worst days?
- Where will you turn if you get stuck?
- Will you need Depression medication?

Communicate

TALK TO FRIENDS & FAMILY

Once you have a plan and know that you sincerely might be facing Homelessness it is time to reach out to family and friends. This can be very humbling. It can also be aggravating as people respond insensitively or with recommendations that are not useful to your situation. Often people do not want to witness their loved ones become Homeless so they will try to avoid this as a reality. You will have to be clear that you are in real danger for people to take you seriously.

Hey fam, I know it is hard to hear but I am in real danger of homelessness. I have talked with social service agencies and tried to work things out but have not been able to find the help I need. Most helpful services are full. I might need to lean on you a bit more heavily than normal as I work this out. Please know it is really hard to share this with you. I am willing to listen to advice but please note not all advice will be for me, and that doesn't mean I am not trying. Believe... I want to be safe.

The type of help I need right now is... (or.. I don't know what type of help I need at the moment, I am struggling to think clearly amidst the anxiety).

With Warm Regards, (Name)

Set Limits

BOUNDARIES ARE CRITICAL

As one becomes Unhoused it is critical to **set and maintain boundaries** to **keep yourself safe**.

CAUTION

- 1) friends who get caught up in bias about what causes Homelessness and think you are faulty/deserve it.
- 2) friends who cannot deal with the pain of having an Unhoused buddy & push you away so they can ignore it.
- 3) friends who end up taking advantage of your vulnerability, consciously or subconsciously.
- 4) over-exhausting your friendships by expecting too much from them.

TIPS

- If someone agrees to let you stay with them **get an end date in advance**.
- If someone sets up rules to stay or work with them then do the same for yourself about how they are allowed to treat you/what they can expect of you.
- Send email confirmations to get agreements in writing.
- Schedule in time to take care of you.

Call Ahead

SOCIAL SERVICES

The next thing to do is make person-to-person contact with various social services in your community. This is critical to understand: **social services almost never offer what they say they do** on their websites or what others in community believe they offer. They are, by and large, **MUCH more restrictive** than what most folks are led to believe.

Now that you know your needs you can call, or go in person, to find out:

- a) exactly what services they offer
- b) if they are open to new clients
- c) what qualifies a person as a client
- d) what gets a person kicked off as a client
- e) what they do not offer
- f) what days, times, and locations they offer assistance
- g) what documents you may need to access services



Note: Services typically only service particular demographics, for example it is common not to allow women or children at the same sites as men.

Document

START A FILE FOLDER

One of the most common issues Unhoused people face is not having the proper documents to access services or overcome their situation. Consider starting a file folder of all your important documents and begin steps to get those you don't already have. This can also help if you later need to apply for Disability.

- state issued I.D. or Driver's license
- social security card or immigration paperwork
- car registration, tags, and insurance
- medical insurance card & emergency information
- EBT Card and proof of social services
- schooling paperwork for any students
- copy of employment history with dates
- medical and mental health history of providers
- history of all social services used/reached out to
- contact list of backup care providers (kids/pets)
- birth certificates
- proof of address (even if "fake")
- if relevant jail release forms or substance abuse recovery proof of services used
- copy of rental history

EVERY time you seek care or help document it

Prepare

WORST CASE SCENARIO

In order to control your fear it can be helpful to imagine the worst living scenario you can think of. Now, plan ways to ease that burden if you should ever encounter it. Ask around, **people often have tips that you would never think of yourself.** Afterwards, look up ways to **soothe your nervous system.** This is a heavy burden.

Tip: Ask local Unhoused people about how to find safe places to sleep, get food, and find a bathroom.

Create a Go-Bag

It can be helpful to put together an **emergency "go bag"** so that if you are left with no place to sleep you aren't completely without tools for survival. You can put together a basic kit and then slowly add to it over time. You can include information about yourself in case you have a medical emergency. The bag should look distressed so it is less likely to get stolen. It can also be helpful to find a friend, even someone online, anyone who you can talk to about what is going on.

Law Enforcement

Knowing how to deal with law enforcement is very useful when you are facing Homelessness. The fact is that Unhoused folks are **highly policed**. It is really difficult to act rationally when anxious so knowing what to do before you are actually Unhoused is critical skill building.



Avoiding contact with the police is the best thing we can do.

If you sleep outside or in your car:

- Keep a **clean space**
- Do **Not Stay** in one place too long
- Be **quiet** and do not attract attention to yourself

Please take a **Know-Your-Rights course**. They are usually free. At the end of the class ask your teacher for specific information that might be helpful for the Unhoused.

Law Enforcement

Tips for dealing with Police -

- Always keep your hands in sight.
Do not reach for anything without asking first.
- As hard as it is - Remain polite.
- Make eye contact.
- Use the formal "Sir or Ma'am".
- **Do not run away.**
- Do not confess to anything.
Offer no extra information. Only respond to questions the officer asks directly. If you are guilty do not say so.
- If needed say "I do not consent to this" (especially for searches).
- If you are taken to the station ask for a Lawyer.
- **And most importantly...** *even if they are wrong...* in the moment the police are always right. You can fight them after you are safe.

Note: As annoying as it is, treat security guards as police.

Community

Isolation is a friend of Homelessness. Most people don't become Unhoused when they have community, family, friends they can count on to care for them. So one of the solutions to Homelessness is to **build that community**. Seek out friendship and support from spaces **outside the State social service system**.

IDEAS

- church
- cultural group
- lgbt group
- support group
- volunteer group
- hobby group
- barter group
- study group
- parenting group
- music scene
- art scene
- meetup.com
- festival culture

HINT

Start by making friends and let them offer help to you until you know them better. If you go into new relationships wanting too much from others, because of respectability politics, it can be a hinderance more than a help. Emphasize bonding.

Skill Building

One thing we can do with our time while Homeless, or fearing Homelessness, is **spend some of our extra time skill-building**. Invest time in learning a sellable skill so that there is something to fall back on for income. Some skills may not provide enough income for housing but might provide enough income in emergency situations to **survive**.

IDEAS

- Learn Screenprinting to make T-Shirts
- Learn Fiber Arts (Knitting, Embroidery, etc..)
- Learn how to start a Cleaning business
- Learn Woodworking and make items to sell
- Learn basic Carpentry and be a handy person
- Learn Grant Writing and find some funding
- Learn to make Jewelry in a style you like
- Learn Coding so you can apply for tech. jobs



Inspiration

Homelessness often feels like a hopeless situation because it involves a great deal of humility and **loss of control**. The tools we need to survive in a healthy way are ripped from us. Thus depression, anxiety, extreme sadness often accompanies Homelessness and the fear of it. **To provide hope it can be extremely helpful to seek inspiration.** Actively look for stories and people who remind you that your suffering doesn't have to last forever.

IDEAS

- Follow folks on Social Media who are also Unhoused or who were formerly Unhoused. If they have overcome Homelessness send a message asking for tips.
- Watch some movies about folks who overcome extreme hardship.
- Go to a Support Group meeting.
- Practice speaking daily mantras to yourself.
- Remind yourself how small you are in the Universe.

**You Absolutely Can Do This.
You Are Strong Enough.**

Your Toolbox

THE TOOLBOX

Since it is really hard to think when you are scared...whenever you have free time... think about what tools you might add to your toolbox in order to help you get through your situation in the best way possible.

If you don't know what you need to learn reach out to the Unhoused community, in person or online.

SAFETY

When I was Unhoused I was **harassed A LOT** by housed people. Do you need a legal taser? Do you need practice being loud? Make a plan for how you will keep yourself safe.

FUNDRAISING

Asking for money online or running classic fundraisers like bake sales and raffles are both really helpful ways to get money for your survival. It takes humility but sometimes it is our only path forward.

DEPRESSION

Clinical Depression often accompanies Homelessness, or the fear of it. It can be really useful to read up and remind yourself of the symptoms and what to do if you notice them.

You Deserve Better Than This Struggle

TIP:

Canva is a great app to use to create posts or flyers for fundraising requests or asks for help.



For most of human history housing was a resource that everyone had free access to. We are now facing the highest rates of Homelessness on record. This struggle affects you but ultimately is not your fault. You are caught up in the middle of a class war. This is true even for folks who have made mistakes that led to their Homelessness. We should be able to make mistakes and still remain housed. It should not be this way.

**HUMAN
RIGHTS**



