

homeless person who will not admit mental illness is at a disadvantage in the process. The state likes to give help to those who admit defeat, but isn't as helpful to those who want to treat the homeless experience like a game.

There needs to be a study of self-discipline techniques for many of the homeless to start on this path of getting a home.

It is a wonderful thing when a person can have a second start on life. But this can only come when that person becomes totally honest with themselves about possible faults in their life. This is why true religious conversion or rededication is the thing that works so well for overcoming homelessness. This kind of person becomes someone people can trust. Everyone is basically transparent. When a homeless person is still in addiction, or is capable of stealing, or even of bringing into your house another person who is capable of stealing, such character traits are easily seen by just about anyone. It is not easy to trust a homeless person in your own house, because people have been hurt or things have been stolen. There is nothing hard about being good. There is nothing hard about having faith in God. Objections to living a religious and good life are empty. The bible nor any other culture's religious book says that life is easy or that the rich are always the good people. But it does give promises for those who have deep faith and try their hardest to live good moral and hard working lives. If you're so down that you can't put many of these ideas into practice, at least start with a continuous prayer that somehow life will help you start to be able to put them into practice.

Contact information for those serious about finding housing. Some of this information may have changed:

Men's Programs

Salvation Army — Must pass a urinalysis and breathalyzer. 1000 4th Ave.

9 Month program.

Union Gospel Mission 9 Month program. 318 2nd Ave Ext. S.

Bread of Life Mission 9 Month program. 975 S Main St.

Women's Programs

Angelina's is a good source of information. Talk to the program director at 206-441-3300. The YWCA Emergency Housing number is 206-461-4882.

Always remember: if you don't like the response you get from one person working at a service, chances are the next day you can talk to someone totally different. Good things come to those who are persistent.

If you would like a little bit of phone counseling you can call me at 206-368-0979.

Homeless Education Project

This is a short help written primarily for the homeless to understand their situation better. It is also written for advocates of the homeless and concerned citizens to help the homeless understand their situation. Some of the homeless may not be able to focus and read a booklet such as this so it is the task of others to help them understand.

It's a very interesting situation now to think about homelessness in America. Millions of dollars are pumped into this cause every year yet there are still many who will die on the street because of extremities in weather and inadequate medical attention. While it is true that there are not always enough beds to go around, many of the problems of the homeless who fall through the cracks is often the result of the homeless not focusing on a solution to their problem, because there really is no central "homeless education project." That is, it is not the day to day, hour by hour, focus of the homeless to get a home. Life on the street can become one big carnival or circus, and by the time it is 6 PM, while still enjoying the ride, one finds that one doesn't have a bed for the night.

I have studied this problem for over 20 years, befriended many of the homeless, even lived among them for a time. Here are tips that have been helpful for homeless people in getting their lives together.

1) Keeping an eye on the time. One of the best tips one can give the homeless is to learn to keep an eye on the time and know what day it is.

2) Try to have an orderly page or book for appointments. Keep them in front of oneself often, and keep reviewing appointments that are made. Steps one and two are important for such things as finding a bed for the night, making and keeping appointments with social services and charity groups.

3) Go to a support group: Go to an AA or Al Anon group even if you don't think you're an alcoholic. Al Anon is for people who have been affected by alcoholics in their life. In both groups, you can just sit quietly and aren't required to talk. These are groups of people that are focusing on making their lives better, so you will learn much from being there. There is also free coffee.

4) Make a study of what groups are offering what services. There are often services such as the YWCA, the Salvation Army, and other missions that offer programs. If you don't believe in the religions of such groups, do not tell them so. It is best to suspend disbelief or at least believe and be thankful for the beliefs of the people who give away such services. You can at least "believe" in a religion that way, that it inspires people to help the homeless. Overcoming your homelessness problem is more important than making known your opinion on religious matters. It is also said in such circles to "fake it till you make it." Maybe after some time of being helped, it will be easier to believe in a God. In your book of information or pages of information also keep a list of the free meal groups. There are sometimes trucks or groups that will feed the homeless on the street. See if you can get a phone number from them to

find out where they will be next. Sometimes job banks have free telephones you can use and you may be able to call them there. You might even try sometime to drop in on a church and talk to the secretary to see if they have any services or funding.

5) Make sure to eat as nutritiously as possible (try to get vitamins or at least a multivitamin if possible). Drink plenty of water. Don't retain water or skip going to bathroom as this is unhealthy.

6) Once in a while you will meet a "good Samaritan" type of person. There are some people who will actually look for homeless people to buy them a meal and talk to them for a while. Such people are sometimes cautious about getting too close to the homeless. You have to remember that it is not always safe taking in a homeless person. Many people have been hurt doing so. It is not so much that the homeless are to blame, nor the "normal" people -- it is just the way it is. Having a friend is important, and such a person may give you their phone number. Be sure to respect such people and don't form a grudge against them. Everyone is fighting their own battles. Protect the phone number.

7) Prepare for accidents. Bad things can happen. What will happen if you lose all your information? Will you be able to duplicate it again?

8) Put positive thoughts in the mind, and keep the mind going in a constructive direction.

The thing that turns peoples lives around the most is having a constructive attitude. Affirmations are when you repeat something in your mind. They help you become what you focus on. "I am getting closer to getting a home by working on it daily" is one such affirmation you can use. "I am healthy, sane, and strong" is another one.

9) Be able to ask for help. Not to put a religious spin on this discussion, but often religious ideas are really just common sense ideas. "You have not because you ask not" is a religious slogan and if you look at it, you can see that the more you ask, the more chances are that you will get something. Getting off the street and even getting a job comes when one can focus on asking again and again and not giving up.

You can see, overcoming homelessness is about becoming the best you can be, even without a home. In a world where most people are fitting in one way or another, and less than one percent are homeless, there must be some type of way where people can fit in if they really try. There are options. For those who can not fit in with the religious charities who offer prolonged beds to those wishing to turn their lives around, there aren't as many options, but one fact must remain: that life is not always a party for anyone (nor a pity party if we are strong). Overcoming the homelessness problem takes some degree of self-discipline on the part of the homeless. Homeless advocacy groups who communicate with the homeless and don't drive this fact home are not a very large part of the solution.

First off, there are many homeless who — one can only say — have "attitude problems." These are the homeless that you see with signs such as "Please give me money for beer...hey, I'm honest." They are addicted, and proud of their addiction. They can't see the connection between alcohol and drug abuse and homelessness. Although I'm a politically moderate, and am not anti-moderate left or anti-moderate right, the homeless advocacy groups which seem to promote a kind of do-anything spirit contribute to making

homelessness an option for the alcoholic. Instead, they should promote the idea that alcoholism often leads to insanity and always leads to an early death. It doesn't matter whether or not a real alcoholic has a home or not, they can still die from their disease. Alcoholism and drug abuse also often lead to crime. To say that homeless people do not often have a alcohol or drug problem is not responsible. The truth is, a lot of them do. Many do not, but if we are going to conserve resources that actually do end up going for homeless services, we have to focus on enlightened treatment for the homeless who are alcoholics and drug addicts. We have to confront alcoholics with the enlightened facts of the disease of addiction. *It doesn't mean that they are bad people. It means that these are people who need to understand a disease that only they themselves can cure with long patient work.*

The second large group of homeless are the mentally ill. Many of the mentally ill however are very anti-psychiatry and even against the ideas and definition of mental health. They may have their own ideas about why they act like they do. These can center around such things as religious beliefs, beliefs about their talents ("I'm really a great musician/writer/artist/etc. and can't be concerned about working"), and other beliefs that become life disabling. You can divide the mentally ill into two types: the kind that can admit they have mental illness and the kind that can't. Of the kind that can admit they have a problem, you can divide them further into the ones that will accept medication and the ones that will not. I'm not saying that a life of medication is the best option for those with mental illness, but many people find out that it was what they needed to get back to an optimal state in their lives. Several people are dual diagnoses also, a diagnoses that can be helpful so that those who have both mental illness and addiction problems can understand themselves better.

Some of the homeless never matured to the point of successfully earning a living because of an early onset of mental illness or addiction. Recovery becomes more about discovering something new than recovering something someone once had. There can be huge areas of shame in a homeless person's life. Often they came from competitive families in which there wasn't much love and wasn't much of a chance for them to shine in life. Recovery becomes a wonderful option for them. If the homeless can get a sound enough mind to just sit quietly in a few AA or Al-Anon meetings, they can begin to feel a part of the community again. Once there they will find out the true story of addiction, the family of alcoholics in recovery, and may gain the power to either recover or if they are not addicts, restore a belief in "normal" people again.

The problem many homeless people experience is not being eligible for services such as Social Security Disability or SSI. But do many of the homeless who have been turned down have the focus or knowledge to keep on knocking on those doors, and keep on submitting applications. Even if you lost your ID or birth certificate: you are an American citizen and it is your right to have a valid ID card. Many homeless believe that if you are turned down once, you are not allowed to re-submit your application. Also, a homeless person who does not admit they are addicted or have a mental illness is at a great disadvantage in the process of getting government benefits. (Anyone who drinks alcohol in the daytime can often call themselves an alcoholic in our country: most alcoholics have a denial that their drinking is normal). Likewise, a