



# Survival Guide to Homelessness

## How to Survive Being Homeless

If you find yourself homeless all of a sudden, with nowhere to go and no one you can turn to – ***LISTEN CAREFULLY!*** It is important that you do whatever it takes to keep you going until help or assistance can be given or acquired. Begin dealing with your new reality of being homeless by accepting that you pretty much don't have a choice but to live outdoors; without the comfort that you once had with your bed and a roof over your head. Everything is different now that you are homeless so think, be disciplined and practice self-control, be smart, make good decisions and above all be safe. Don't allow your current condition to define the rest of your life!

### Controlling Desperation

Here are some tips that will help you go through all of it:

1. **Step One:** Acceptance – Face the reality that you are, indeed, homeless.
2. **Step Two:** Forget regretting – Acknowledge that you can't change your new reality in your head alone, it will take work and disciplined actions to turn your life around. So STOP Regretting, this will only lead you to becoming more depressed and it will hinder you from doing what you need to do to in order to change your condition. Win the battle of your mind. Think good things; Believe good things; Do good things.
3. **Step Three:** Ignore the blame game - It doesn't matter whose fault it was; this cannot be your immediate concern. Begin thinking carefully, act now and begin making better choices.

**Consider the specific necessities** – Make a list of the things you really need to keep you going. Don't use up limited resources of water by trying to stay clean; avoid changing clothes daily; Use public restrooms; carry a bag that can store all of your bare necessities (deodorants, toothpaste, personal items, medicine, food, etc.).

### Shelters are for someone Else

1. **Shelters** - Being homeless is a serious matter. When it strikes you will hit the ground hard. Shelters are available in every local community near you; problem is that they fill up quickly. Call around and talk to the intake managers at the areas Salvation Army, local churches, or homeless services.
2. **Other accommodations** - Safe and comfortable sleep requires only a few simple elements. On occasions the police or security guards will ask you to leave your spot; so choose wisely the places you can rest (like in places where you would normally feel safe leaving your car parked overnight) without drawing attention to your presence, i.e. on a roof top of a parking garage, building, park etc.

### Get Comfortable

Sleeping – Seek a place to lie approximately flat, with your head at about the same level as your legs. If sleeping in the car, at least one window needs to be open for breathing, but it only has to be open a crack—about an inch.

Additional sleep guides:

- a. Get some padding underneath you and use extra padding to support your head.
- b. Get sufficient warmth (active or passive) to maintain your body temperature throughout the night.
- c. Seek protection from rain, insects, predators and criminals.
- d. Seek protection from loud noises and unnecessary interruption.
- e. Seek fresh air, and an opportunity for urination.

## **You Are Not A Bum – Don't Label Yourself and Don't Allow Others To Label You Either!**

3. **Money usage** - use it sparingly and only when absolutely necessary. Sell anything that you brought with you that has no value in your current condition. Save the money obtained from the sale - you will need it!
4. **Food /Incidentals** – Use spare change for food, by purchasing cheap packaged foods in the grocery store; this will keep you throughout the day. Think: peanut butter, trail mix, beef jerky, granola bars, raisins and other dried fruits, corn chips, banana chips, buns, bagels, raisin bread, peanuts, instant soups, etc. Dollar stores are good places to get these items cheaply as a choice, and they need no refrigeration. Drinking water is readily available, learn to drink it and to never to pay money for water again.
5. **Local churches, non-profit organizations, soup kitchens, shelters, and supportive social services** are designed to help you get back on your feet. Contact them, enroll in their programs (get counseling, take a class, get a certification, address issues related to chemical dependency, housing, employment, child care, medical, emergency assistance, food, etc) start the process of rebuilding your life today!
6. Find and perform jobs that are considered undesirable by most (cleaning and hard manual labor). If you are in an area with a lot of litter, pick it up and discard it. This demonstrates that you are a good citizen facing a difficult situation. Be respectful, clean and presentable and employers will be inclined to hire you.

## **Hygiene on the Road**

7. **Hygiene** - When only a hot shower will do, visit a gym, beaches, campgrounds, YMCA, or university athletic center for the day, all of which have well appointed locker rooms. The dollar store is a good place to pick up lightweight hygiene products like mini shampoo, mouthwash and toothpaste. Replace your regular towel with a small, super absorbent one; and use plastic containers for your soap, toothbrush, and pill boxes to carry Aspirin, vitamins, and any medication you need. Also use, wet naps from restaurant etc. as facial cleansing cloths, and hand sanitizers.

## **Beggars / Panhandlers**

8. **Swallow your pride!**
9. **Clean up.** Before you begin, make an effort to look clean and presentable.
10. **Make a sign.** A simple sign on a piece of cardboard makes you more noticeable and tells your story—it's advertising, plain and simple.
11. **Find a suitable location.** Location is all-important to a successful begging endeavor, and the most important facet of the location is traffic.
12. **Foot traffic:** Find a busy **sidewalk** and "set up shop" so as to be noticeable and unavoidable, but unobtrusive. Street corners, public squares (places where a lot of people tend to slow down or stop), stores where people make small purchases, i.e. **grocery**, liquor, and convenience stores, and banks are often good because people will come out with change. Don't ask for change when they go into the store, wait until they come out.
13. **Auto traffic:** Find a median or curb at a busy intersection with a long stoplight. The median should be right next to stopped cars' windows; preferably on the driver's side (every car has a driver). You can stand in place or, better yet, slowly walk up and down the median when cars are stopped at the light. See and honor warnings signs for safety considerations when dealing with auto traffic.
14. **Smile and greet people courteously.** Smiles are welcoming, and they put people at ease.
15. **Ask for money directly and softly.** You may assume that people know you want money, and most people do, but you've still have to work and / or work for it.
16. **Thank everybody.** If someone gives you money, show your appreciation. Even when people don't give you any money, thank them (implicitly) just for listening, and wish them a good day.
17. **Offer something to the courteous people, a small token of thanks.** A small knitted rose, a wood (or soap) carved heart; sometimes even a fancy painted bottle cap will do (nail polish works for this).



