

Homeless During the Holidays

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For many the holidays are a time of love and happiness. You spend the days with your families eating food and opening gifts. This isn't the case for everyone, though. Often times those living in the streets or in shelters don't get a holiday, so what do they do on holidays?

Mary, whose name has been changed to protect her identity, left her husband when she was 30 years old and moved to New York City with her three-year-old daughter. Her first holiday in New York City was Thanksgiving and she spent it by sending her daughter to visit her sister. Mary said, "I couldn't handle being around a bunch of people who would judge me for my choices and blame me for putting my daughter in a shelter." Then Mary went on to describe how that first holiday made her feel, "That first holiday in the shelter was lonely and depressing because it just became a time to reflect on the what I needed to do in the short term."

There are charities that work with people facing homelessness and they understand the hardships, especially around the holidays. A program called N Street Village works directly with women and their children. N Street Village's kitchen manager cooks a Christmas feast with ham, brisket, sweet potatoes and rolls. Every woman in N Street's programs will receive a pair of pajamas, because as the program director says, "Who doesn't want brand-new, cozy pajamas on a cold winter night? For some women, that might be the only gift they get."

Giving food, blankets, and clothes directly to those experiencing homeless, or to shelters is one way to alleviate the suffering of the homeless. One year my youth group made care bags filled with snacks, warm socks, gloves, and a hat to donate to a few local soup kitchens for them pass out.

When you see someone on the street with a sign, instead of passing by and looking the other way, make eye contact. Tell them “hello” or “have a nice day.” Even a simple smile and nod of your head to show a little compassion for their situation. By doing this you could lift their spirits when they are down.

You can volunteer your time at soup kitchens that provide food for those in need. If you don't have the ability to do that you could knit a scarf or hat. This is one way that you can make connections and show people that you really care. These few, simple things will help humanise the homeless and help others realize that they are “just like us.” This could be a big step toward cultural changes that will make us more connected and compassionate.

<https://www.cosmopolitan.com/lifestyle/news/a50683/what-its-really-like-being-homeless-during-the-holidays/>

https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/christmas-can-be-rough-on-the-poor-and-the-homeless-these-groups-help/2017/12/22/d4682e88-e71d-11e7-833f-155031558ff4_story.html