

PMS: Poverty, Menstruation, Stress

by Nicole Arcieri



It is no surprise that the homelessness crisis has afflicted hundreds of thousands of civilians in the United States. Individuals that do not live in permanent residences face food insecurity, high rates of unemployment, and feelings of depression and anxiety. However, homelessness can be especially daunting for people who menstruate. Menstrual hygiene products can be expensive, and in many states, they are still taxed. This leaves many individuals having to choose between buying a meal or purchasing tampons or pads. One should not have to choose between feeding themselves and ensuring they are comfortable during their period, especially for people who perhaps do not have the funds to wash their clothes frequently. Furthermore, menstruation is a biological process that is heavily stigmatized in Western society. People who

menstruate may feel ostracized from others, embarrassed, and unclean. Not only can it be isolating on a social level, but it can also be physically and emotionally draining. While menstruating, individuals sometimes experience painful side effects, such as cramping and fatigue. One's cycle can also bring on feelings of sadness, anxiety, and irritability. People that are homeless already face so many challenges in their day to day lives. No one should have to worry about how they are going to get access to basic hygiene products. Making sure that individuals who are homeless have access to menstrual hygiene products is just one of many steps we can take to make their lives just a little easier. Ending the homelessness crisis in the United States is the ultimate goal, but it is important to consider what actions we can take along the way to provide comfort and care to people that are homeless. Giving out menstrual hygiene products to people in need is a great start. It is also necessary to note that cisgender women are not the only people that menstruate. Transgender, queer, gender fluid, and nonbinary individuals that are homeless must also be a part of the conversation. If you live in a state that adds taxes onto menstrual hygiene products, you might consider calling your local representatives or starting petitions to get rid of such arbitrary taxes. It won't solve the problem completely, but it would make these products less expensive and therefore, more accessible to people that are money insecure. Finally, it is important that we keep discussing the issue. Ending the stigma around menstruation can bring these issues and many others to the forefront of people's minds, allowing more individuals to better understand and communicate with people that are homeless. It may be uncomfortable at first and somewhat shocking but imagine how uncomfortable it is for those who do not have access to basic hygiene products.