Physical Impact of Homelessness

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What your eyes know is different from what your heart knows which is different from what your brain knows.

What do your eyes tell you about homelessness?
Your eyes might tell you that all homelessness looks like this:
Your eyes might lead you to believe that:

• Homeless people panhandle on the downtown mall and in the medians.
• Homeless people don’t care what you think.
• Homeless people lie.
• Homeless people can’t take care of themselves.
• Homeless people are drunk or high.
• Homeless people are mentally ill.
• Homeless people are mostly single adults.
• Homeless people are criminals.
• Homeless people are bad for business.
• Homeless people smoke cigarettes.
• Homeless people are ill.
• Homeless people have no will power.
• Homeless people are socially inappropriate.
• Homeless people are mad all the time, ungrateful.
• Homeless people should be avoided.
Let’s see what your heart knows.
Your heart knows that homeless people are tired.

They don’t get much sleep. Or good sleep. They sleep in cars, on the street, next to strangers in the shelter, in the park, on concrete, under bushes, in the woods, in tents. They are afraid and uncomfortable. *What are you like when you don’t sleep well?*
Your heart knows that homeless people don’t eat well.

They don’t get to choose what they eat. They are often served high fat foods, processed foods with a lot of salt, sugary sweet foods, caffeine, and lots of simple carbohydrates. *What are you like after you have a lot of coffee? What are you like when you eat too much sugar?*
Your heart knows that homeless people are ashamed and embarrassed.

There are many aspects of homelessness that can cause people to feel shame: long-term unemployment, failure at the rat race, failure at the American dream, dependence. *Have you ever failed at something? Have you ever been unemployed?*
Your heart knows that the homeless are socially isolated.

Repeated periods of poverty and instability takes a toll on family and friend circles. Few homeless people can claim a healthy and stable support system. And they know what people think of them, they way they are judged. *What are you like without your peeps?*
Your heart knows that the homeless have no privacy, are constantly on display.

The homeless are in the public eye all the time. People are watching and judging their behavior. They have no or few places to cry, have a bad day, be quiet, have a fight with a loved one, or be grumpy. What would you be like without a safe place to call your own? What if everyone at work saw you at your worst?
Info for your giant brain!

- There were 260 homeless people at the 2013 census count.
- 28 of them were unsheltered.
- An additional 280 homeless kids were identified by area schools.
- About 70% of area homeless people claim a hometown in Central VA - homeless people are more ‘local’ than most other subpopulations.
- The fastest growing subpopulations of the homeless are intact families and unaccompanied youth between the ages of 16 and 25.
- Of the 260 people counted earlier this year:
  - 61 had a disability
  - 63 reported chronic substance abuse
  - 35 were severely mentally ill
  - 32 were victims of domestic violence
  - 16 were veterans