

Change Your Approach



It seems like everybody suddenly expects overnight solutions to problems that have been rotting underneath society for generations.

Problems so deeply embedded into housing systems, healthcare systems, economic systems, mental health systems, and public attitudes that they cannot simply be swept away because people are finally uncomfortable enough to notice them.

And that is really what this is about.

A lot of the so-called "casuals" are only paying attention now because the crisis has become visible enough to interrupt their daily routines.

The suffering reached their sidewalks.

Their bus stops.

Their neighbourhood Facebook groups.

Their front steps.

Suddenly everybody has opinions.

Society ignored the crisis while it stayed hidden. Now people are angry that collapse became visible.

The problem is that many people entering this conversation are doing it from an incredibly narrow perspective.

They see the symptoms.

Public intoxication.

Drug use.

Encampments.

Mental health crises.

Visible poverty.

But they stop there.

They never ask what conditions produced those realities in the first place.

Instead the response becomes aggression.

Hostility.

Fear.

Punishment.

People harass homeless individuals for existing visibly.

They yell at addicts.

Call police.

Threaten people already operating in survival mode.

Then act shocked when those interactions escalate badly.

If you approach desperate human beings with aggression and humiliation, do not act surprised when desperation responds aggressively back.

The media constantly pushes headlines like:

“Drug addicts threaten homeowners.”

But what often actually happened?

Somebody chased another human being off a doorstep like an unwanted animal instead of speaking to them like a person.

There is this strange social double standard where compassion disappears the second somebody visibly looks poor, intoxicated, mentally ill, or unstable.

Ask yourself honestly:

would you react the same way to your neighbour sitting on your front step?

Probably not.

But the second homelessness enters the equation, many people emotionally stop seeing a neighbour at all.

The public keeps responding to social collapse with irritation instead of understanding.

Here is the uncomfortable truth:

visible addiction and visible homelessness are not problems that disappear because people become annoyed enough.

You cannot scream somebody into recovery.

You cannot shame somebody into stability.

You cannot force somebody whose nervous system has been shattered by trauma, poverty, grief, abuse, isolation, or untreated mental illness to suddenly behave according to middle-class comfort standards.

Recovery takes years sometimes.

Sometimes decades.

Sometimes people never fully recover at all.

That reality might be uncomfortable, but denying it does not make it disappear.

Addiction is not people choosing chaos for fun. Most people are trying to survive pain they no longer know how to carry sober.

Every person living in severe instability carries a history most people would struggle to emotionally survive themselves.

Trauma.

Loss.

Abuse.

Violence.

Isolation.

Death.

Poverty.

Abandonment.

Institutional failure.

Nobody wakes up hoping to become addicted.

Nobody fantasizes about becoming homeless.

People adapt to unbearable circumstances using whatever survival mechanisms remain available to them.

And society loves ignoring the fact that much of the opioid crisis itself was accelerated by pharmaceutical greed.

Massive overprescribing.

False claims about addiction risk.

Profit-driven negligence on a scale large enough to permanently alter entire communities.

Then, after people became addicted, society turned around and blamed them personally for the damage.

First people were sold the poison. Then they were taught to hate themselves for surviving it poorly.

Fear and disdain toward addiction are now so deeply ingrained socially that many people struggling

already carry overwhelming shame before the public even opens its mouth.

More judgment only deepens the isolation.

More hostility only deepens the distrust.

More criminalization only pushes suffering further underground until it reappears even more severe later.

What people actually need is dignity.

Stability.

Housing.

Community.

Respect.

Human interaction that does not immediately begin with suspicion, disgust, or fear.

People respond differently when they are treated like human beings instead of social contamination.

Society keeps trying to solve emotional collapse using punishment.

More rules.

More enforcement.

More displacement.

More incarceration.

More public shaming.

But none of those things create belonging.

And people disconnected from society stop feeling any reason to participate in it according to its expectations.

Why would somebody trust systems that abandoned them repeatedly during the moments they needed support most?

Communities improve when people feel connected to them, not when vulnerable people are treated like enemies inside them.

The media also plays a massive role in worsening public perception.

Constantly portraying addicts as dangerous, unstable, immoral, irrational, or threatening creates an emotional image people begin applying to every vulnerable person they encounter.

But most people struggling with addiction are not monsters.

They are fragile people trying to survive unbearable conditions using the only coping mechanisms that currently work for them.

Sometimes badly.

Sometimes destructively.

But still human.

Always human.

One More Thing: if society truly wants less visible public drug use, less overdose deaths, and safer communities, closing supervised consumption sites is probably the dumbest possible direction to move in.

Change your perspective before demanding people change their survival.