



Why Do All People Experiencing Homelessness Always Sleep During the Day? Well they don't all sleep during the day but let me explain why some do

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Daytime sleeping is rarely about laziness or a lack of ambition. More often, it is the visible result of a long, exhausting night spent trying to survive. It is important to begin by challenging the word "always." People experiencing homelessness do not always sleep during the day, nor do they all share the same circumstances. Each person has a different history, different needs, and different reasons for being without stable housing. However, many unhoused people do sleep during daylight hours because it may be the only time they feel safe enough to close their eyes. For most of us, nighttime means locking the door, turning off the lights, and going to sleep in a place where we expect to remain safe until morning. A person who is homeless may not have that protection. They may be sleeping outside, in a vehicle, in a stairwell, on public transit, in a tent, or in another temporary location where they could be robbed, assaulted, harassed, or ordered to leave. Personal belongings must also be protected. When everything a person owns is carried in a backpack, cart, or a few bags, falling asleep can mean risking the loss of identification, medication, clothing, food, and other essential possessions. Replacing these items can be extremely difficult without money, transportation, or a permanent address. Remaining awake becomes a form of self-protection. Some people walk throughout the night to stay warm. Others move repeatedly because they are told they cannot remain in one location. A person living in a vehicle may need to relocate several times to avoid tickets, complaints, or unwanted attention. Someone staying in an emergency shelter may be surrounded by noise, movement, bright lights, illness, or unfamiliar people. Even when a bed is available, it does not necessarily mean restful sleep is possible. Trauma can make sleeping even more difficult. Many people experiencing homelessness have survived violence, abuse, loss, exploitation, or other deeply distressing events. Their bodies and minds may remain in a constant state of alertness. When a person does not feel secure, the body may resist sleep even when it is desperately exhausted. Physical and mental health can also affect sleep. Chronic pain, untreated illness, anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress, medication side effects, and addiction challenges may all disrupt a person's natural sleep cycle. Living outdoors exposes people to extreme temperatures, rain, insects, and constant noise. Hunger also interferes with the body's ability to settle and rest. By the time morning arrives, a person may have been awake for most or in some cases all night. Daytime can therefore feel safer. Public spaces are open, other people are nearby, temperatures may be warmer, and services are more accessible. A library, meal program, drop-in centre, or outreach location may provide the first calm and protected environment a person has encountered in hours. When someone falls asleep there, it may be because their body has finally decided that it is safe to rest. Unfortunately, this survival response is frequently misinterpreted. Someone sleeping on a bench or at a table may be judged as irresponsible, unmotivated, or unwilling to help themselves. What observers do not see is the night that came before. They don't see the walking, the fear, the cold, the interruptions, and the constant need to remain alert. Sleep deprivation has serious consequences. It can affect memory, concentration, emotional regulation, and decision-making. It can make completing forms, attending appointments, or following complicated instructions extremely difficult. A person who appears disengaged may simply be physically and mentally depleted. Expecting someone to make major life decisions while severely sleep-deprived is neither reasonable nor compassionate. A lack of sleep can also create a harmful cycle. Exhaustion may cause someone to miss an appointment, lose a shelter bed, or struggle during a meeting. That missed opportunity may then be interpreted as non-compliance or a lack of interest. In reality, the individual may be trying to navigate complex systems while operating in survival mode.

At DARS, we believe behaviour must be understood in context. Instead of asking, "Why is this person sleeping during the day?" we should ask: "What happened during the night?" "Did this person have anywhere safe to go?" "When did they last experience uninterrupted sleep?" "What support would help them feel secure?" This trauma-informed approach replaces judgment with curiosity and compassion. It recognizes that sleep is not a reward people must earn. It is a basic human need, essential to physical health, mental wellness, and the ability to move forward.

Sometimes the most helpful thing we can offer is a meal, a warm drink, clean clothing, a shower, or assistance finding housing. At other times, the most meaningful support is simply a safe and welcoming place where someone can sit down, stop watching over their shoulder, and rest. Sleeping during the day is not the real problem. The real problem is that too many people do not have a safe place to sleep at night. At DARS, we work to see the person behind the circumstance. We understand that homelessness is not a character flaw, and exhaustion is not laziness. Before judging someone whose eyes are closed during the day, we should consider how long they may have needed to keep them open simply to survive the night.

I want to thank "J," a resident at our farmhouse, for educating me about this topic. I too questioned it several years ago, and he patiently explained it to me. Now I know, and now I won't judge. If you want to help someone who is unhoused, share J's



Human trafficking

Human trafficking is the kind of crime many of us prefer to imagine happens somewhere else In another city. Another neighbourhood. Another family. But the evidence tells us something far more uncomfortable: it is happening here. Between 2021 and 2025, Durham Regional Police's Human Trafficking Unit conducted 1,332 investigations involving elements of human trafficking. Police identified 531 accused persons or persons of interest, laid 754 trafficking-related charges and assisted 1,175 people identified as victims or at risk of exploitation. Those numbers should stop every parent in Durham in their tracks.

Perhaps the most dangerous misconception about human trafficking is the image we have created in our minds of what it looks like. We imagine kidnapping. A stranger. A van. Someone being taken across a border. Sometimes trafficking can involve those things. But often it begins much more quietly. It can begin with affection. Attention. A gift. A new relationship. A message on social media. Someone recognizing that a young person is lonely, insecure, struggling at home or desperate to belong — and deliberately exploiting that vulnerability. Ontario's Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy says the average age of recruitment into sex trafficking is just 13 years old. Thirteen. At that age, children should be thinking about school, friendships, sports and what they are doing on the weekend. They should not need to understand how a predator can slowly transform affection into manipulation, isolation, threats and control. That is what makes grooming so dangerous. It often does not look dangerous in the beginning. And this is not merely a provincial or national problem. In March, Durham Regional Police announced arrests following an investigation involving allegations that a woman had been groomed into escorting, threatened with violence and forced to work in the sex trade across Durham and the GTA. Police executed a search warrant at a residence in Pickering and said they were concerned there could be additional victims. A month earlier, police announced the results of Project Firebird, an initiative targeting people allegedly seeking sexual services from minors in Durham Region. Six men were charged with 19 offences. Those allegations, of course, must still be proven in court. The point is not to frighten parents. It is to inform them. Parents need to have uncomfortable conversations with their children about healthy relationships, online safety, consent, boundaries and controlling behaviour. Young people need to understand that someone demanding passwords, isolating them from friends, controlling their money or threatening them with private photographs is not demonstrating love. And perhaps most importantly, children need to know that if they get themselves into a frightening situation, they can come home and tell us. Without judgement. Without shame. Without fearing that the first question will be, "What were you thinking?" Because sometimes the question adults need to ask is not, "Why didn't they leave?" It is: "How did someone manage to gain this much control over them?" We should also learn the warning signs without assuming every troubling behaviour means trafficking. Sudden isolation, unexplained expensive belongings, another person controlling someone's money, frequent hotel stays, injuries, fear or dramatic behavioural changes can all warrant attention. Awareness is not paranoia. It is paying attention. It is staying connected. It is asking questions. And it is making sure help is visible. The Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline operates confidentially, 24 hours a day, in more than 200 languages at 1-833-900-1010. In an emergency, call 911. Human trafficking thrives in secrecy, manipulation and silence. So we should make noise. Talk to your children. Share the hotline number. Learn the warning signs. Pay attention to the young people around you. You may never need that knowledge. But someone you love might.



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