

**From:** [Joshua Maurice](#)  
**To:** [Council Clerk – Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** Criminalization of homelessness: not the best or smartest solution  
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Homelessness, drug abuse, and mental illness are distinct but partially overlapping problems. With some people, drug abuse has contributed to them becoming homeless. With some, it's been just the reverse. Some have been homeless without abusing drugs, and some have abused drugs without being homeless. Similar statements can be made about the connections between homelessness and mental illness, and between mental illness and drug abuse. And sometimes two or more of these problems arise with no clear direction of causation between them.

### Mental illness

Shortages of mental health resources – facilities and services – and shortages of mechanisms for placing and connecting people with appropriate resources, have, over many years, left many people to deteriorate further and further. We have a complicated history, in which mental health facilities, policies, and practices have themselves sometimes been harmful for the patients, but in recent decades the large-scale unavailability of resources and mechanisms has been disastrous.

### Drugs

Our exquisitely sensitive, complex, delicate bodies are affected in a vast variety of different ways by different substances. Part of learning and growing as a species is that we as individuals are increasingly able to program our bodies and minds in multitudes of ways, including via chemical regimens. As we evolve beyond our legacy of highly centralized, authoritarian ways of managing regimens and safeguarding our health, it's important for individuals to gain more comprehensive knowledge and tools for optimizing our use of drugs.

We have a very heterogeneous group of substances that have often hitherto been classed and treated as illicit 'recreational' drugs. Some, like opioids and methamphetamine, do, based on their chemical properties and the physiological effects they produce, seem to merit extreme caution, skepticism, and avoidance. The state of the world we live in, our struggles to be comfortable in our skins, political/economic conditions, etc., help explain the prevalence of these drugs, but friends feel the urge to warn each other when such potentially seductive but demonstrably dangerous choices are readily available.

Other substances that have often hitherto been classed and treated as illicit 'recreational' drugs, like cannabis and psychedelics, can often be benign or even highly medicinal or therapeutic. Not that there's no potential for abuse or misuse with these also - there can be,

but also, these are substances that seem to have major potentials for positive personal/social transformation when deployed intelligently.

It seems crucial to affirm these sorts of distinctions between different drugs, while also remembering that the results in each case depend on multitudes of other situational factors in addition to the chemical properties of the substances.

## Homelessness

There's much that can be said about the "role," and the often harsh realities, of homelessness throughout history. At the current moment it seems salient to mention that criminalization policies like camping bans and feeding bans actively prevent people from building concrete solutions on the ground. If better solutions than outdoor camping and feeding are not suppressed, then people naturally adopt those solutions.